

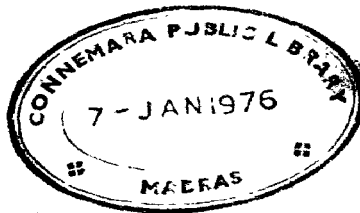
**BULLETIN OF
THE INSTITUTE OF
TRADITIONAL CULTURES
MADRAS**

1975
JANUARY TO JUNE



**UNIVERSITY OF MADRAS
MADRAS-600005 INDIA**

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**UNIVERSITY OF MADRAS
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Institute of Traditional Cultures
University Buildings, Madras-600005.

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P R E F A C E

This number of the Bulletin closely follows the principle mentioned in the previous issue, viz. to devote greater attention to Tamil Traditions and Tamil Culture and, at the same time, emphasise the bonds of the traditional cultures of the other regions of South and South East Asia.

In view of the larger number of articles from scholars and the length of the proceedings of the Seminars, some sections like 'Institutions, Scholars and Artists' had to be omitted. As in the previous issue, the authors were left free to use such diacritical marks as conformed to the system they followed, in view of the separate systems of transliteration in languages like, Tamil and Sanskrit.

The Institute is grateful to all scholars who have contributed a variety of articles on Culture and Traditions which appear in this issue. It had to hold over some valuable articles for consideration of space, for publication in the next issue.

The Government of Tamil Nāḍu and the Government of India have kindly continued the financing of the Institute and its activities. The University of Madras continues to accommodate the Institute in its building, providing it with the concomitant amenities and, the full and hearty co-operation, of all its Departments in the activities of the Institute. It also bears the cost of paper and printing of issues of the Bulletin. The Institute is grateful for all this valuable help, which has enabled it to continue to function and carry on its activities.

The Institute is proud that Dr. S. Malcolm Adiseshiah who was responsible for the starting of this Institute, has since taken charge as Vice-Chancellor and is the ex-officio President of this Institute.

The Executive Committee has also given valuable assistance in running this Institute. Due to the increased costs of printing and paper, a cut in the distribution has become unavoidable. There has been unavoidable delay at the printing stage of this Bulletin due to various reasons resulting in its rather late publication.

Madras, }
12—12—1975. }

Dr. K. K. PILLAY,
Director.



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ARTICLES

A STUDY OF THE CULTURE AND HISTORY OF THE KĀRKĀTTĀR

Thiru M. ARUNACHALAM, M.A.

I. INTRODUCTION

The origins of any community of people in India with a historic past are shrouded in myths and lost in the mists of pre-history. This is not peculiar to India alone. The Greeks, the Romans, the Scandinavians, the Anglo-Saxons, the French and even the Persians trace their origin to some myth. The stories connected with Zeus and Jupiter, Thor and Odin, King Arthur and his Round Table, Charlemagne, and Sohrāb and Rustum are legion. No wonder the origin of the Kārkāttār community amidst us in Tamiṇ-nāḍ is also shrouded in myth and legend.

The Kārkāttār community now is generally a middle class agricultural community which clustered certain areas in the Chōḷa-nāḍ; the members of that community occupy whole areas in Tanjāvūr district in the Sirkāḷi, Māyūram, Kumbakoṇam and Nannilam taluks; large areas in Kāraikkāl, in Nāgappaṭṭinam and Pāpanāsam taluks; whole areas in the Chidambaram and Vriddha-chalam taluks of South Arcot district; large areas in Uḍayār-pālayam, Tiruchi, and Lāḷguḍi taluks in the Tiruchirappāḷḷi district; they occupy large pockets in the Tirunelvēli, Tenkāsi and Amba-samudram taluks of Tirunelvēli district; Madurai and Nilak-kottai taluks of Madurai district and Sāttur, Srivilliputtūr and Aruppukkottai taluks of Rāmanāthapuram district. The first world war had dislodged them from their pinnacles and sent them job-hunting and settled them in, urban areas like Madras, Tanjāvūr and Tiruchirappāḷḷi. The second world war and the series of new land laws which were ushered in the wake of that war and of Indian Independence have snatched away all the land from them and left them one of the most economically backward classes;

No chronicle of the history or evolution of the Karkāttār had ever been written. The present account is only an attempt to present legendary accounts, popular traditions, available historical references and literary material in the form of a connected narrative. If history were to depend only on fully recorded and documented evidence, then no history of any South Indian Community is possible. Our elders, at all levels of society considered matters of the spirit and of culture as the only important factors in society. They attached scant importance to recorded history. Hence we have no history and have therefore to reconstruct history afresh, to embrace all the available sources of the past and all the institutions of the present, consistent with factual veracity and cultural unity and development. The following is such a reconstructed account.

This account applies to the condition of the Kārkāttār up to the first quarter of the twentieth century, that is, upto the end of the first world war; the war ushered in many major revolutions in the life and outlook of the people at all levels and the Kārkāttār were no exception.

2. SOME LEGENDS AND TERMINOLOGY

The Vēļāļar in general

At the outset one thing has to be clearly borne in mind. The so called Āryan-Dravidian unification happened in Tamiḷnādu in pre-historic times. We would be wrong if we think of the Vēļāļar in terms of Āryan or Dravidian; we would be equally wrong if we try to apply the standards of Varṇa in the Āryan culture to the Vēļāļar we know today. Very brave attempts have been made in Tamiḷnādu in the past firstly to equate the Vēļāļar with the third Varṇa and call them the Bhūvaiśya (the other two being the Govaiśya and Dhanavaiśya). According to these attempts, a Dhanavaiśya is the real Vaiśya, a trader; Govaiśya has been called the cowherd; the Bhūvaiśya is the agriculturist. This theory gained ground from among those who accepted the Āryan Varṇa theory but did not like to accept that the Vēļāļar were Sūdras.

Another attempt was made by very learned Śaiva writers to accept the Vēļāļar as Sūdras and then make a division among

them as Sat-Sūdras (the elite) and the Asat-Sūdras (the masses). On the face of it, this classification seems to be quite absurd. The Kārkāttār with whom we are concerned here had been the most enlightened, cultured and aristocratic group in the land and to call them Sūdras is ridiculous. The only logical way out is not to apply the Varṇa theory to them at all. This is actually also the correct factual position. The caste system of the Āryans does not apply to these people. They were outside the pale of that classification. We do not wish to be drawn into any controversy here regarding race or language, or Varṇa. The term Vēḷālar has nothing to do with the Varṇa classification.

One learned scholar Mr. M. Raghava Aiyangar has written a book on this subject entitled *Vēḷir Varalāru*. According to the legend that Vēḷālar are Vaiśyas, he has tried to prove that the Vēḷir mentioned in the Sangham literature are a princely clan of Yādhas who came into Tamiḷnādu from Dvāraka along with Kṛiṣṇa. This may appear quite plausible as an academic discussion, but faced with the communities as they exist today, it will be seen that the Yādhas are different and that they cannot be equated with the Vēḷālar.

Leaving apart these discussions, we shall just refer to the mention of the Vēḷālar in some books of the first millennia after Christ. Maṇimākhalai has been quoted below. The word *Vēḷānmai* which we take to mean as agriculture, was interpreted as benevolence, helping others, in the early period. The Kuṛaḷ says that the householder's business in life is to feed the guests and help others. Another book says, "He is a Vēḷāla who would not take his food, keeping a guest hungry outside". This has been praised as the real characteristic of the Vēḷālar in all subsequent literature.

The early lexical work, *Divākaram* equates Kāārālar and Vēḷālar with Sūdra, in accordance with the belief of those times. On the same basis, it defines the duty of the Vēḷālar as six; tilling the soil, tending the cattle, trade, music, weaving and service to the twice-born. Though the twice-born, the Brahmin, was held in great esteem, the status mentioned for the Vēḷālar

was not a reality but was only a reflection of Vēdic concept of Varṇa ; this was far from the reality. The same Nighaṭṭu (lexicon) says in another place that the nature of the Vēḷāḷar may be defined as the ten ; carrying out the command of the king, supporting the fallen, working with the arms for discharging their duties to the State, having sympathy and mercy in the heart for the weakness and the suffering of the others, supporting kith and kin, ceaseless industry, paying the taxes, good neighbourliness, feeding the newcomers and upright conduct. Surely these are the codes of conduct for the nobility in any land, not for the slaves or the Sūdras. Thus we realize that there was a confusion caused by the attempt to apply the Varṇa Dharma to the indigenous Vēḷāḷar's life and culture. The confusion has been recognized by the later *Çūḍāmaṇi Nighaṭṭu* (16th century) which drops the Sūdra concept and merely says that the Vēḷāḷar are those that give. We also learn that Vēḷ is not the same as Vēḷāḷar, but that it was a title conferred on the Vēḷāḷar by the king.

During the later years, many different classes began calling themselves Vēḷāḷar. The Kārkāttar, who were the only Vēḷāḷar in the pre-historic past, gave rise to many divisions which were Vēḷāḷar and yet called themselves by different names. Some of these have been commented upon elsewhere. But in the recent past, very many communities have begun calling themselves Vēḷāḷar, so much so, that one unacquainted with their history cannot know if one was a Vēḷāḷar at all. The surname has now become so popular that when one is particular to call himself a Vēḷāḷar, we have to presume that he is not a Vēḷāḷar. The new aspirants to the title had become so many, that a natural indication seems to have been adopted in the last century. These aspirants call themselves Vēḷāḷar and name the others as the original or orthodox Vēḷāḷar, or Śaiva Vēḷāḷar. This term will be explained later.

The Vēḷāḷar are called the children of the Gaṅga ; probably this refers to the remote past, when the Tamilians held sway over the whole of the Bharata-kanda and had brought the Gangetic plains also under cultivation. With the passage of time, they happened to be confined to the south, but yet the memory of the

past is preserved in the legend that they are the Gangā-putra ; this does not mean that they migrated from the Gangetic valley, but only means that their area of occupation included those areas also.

The term Kārājar

Kārājar is the term used to denote the Kārkāttār community from very early times. *Maṇimēkhalai*, one of the five great Epics in the Tamil language, makes use of the term twice in the phrase, *Kārājar Saṅbai* meaning the city Sīkāli of the Kārkāttār. Saṅbai is one of the 12 names of Sīkāli made immortal by Saint Jāna-sambanda in his song sung before the Pandiya prince of Madurai, saying that he hailed from Sīkāli the holy place with twelve names. It was called *Saṅbai* because of the wild growth of the elephant grass, *sambankōrai* in the place. Sīkāli was then a seat of the Kārkāttār and so was called Kārājar Saṅbai in the epic. The history of Tamil literature and the history of the Śaiva religion tell us that the city was the headquarters or the capital city of the Śaiva religion from very early times upto the fifteenth century A.D.

The term Kārājar means, those engaged in agriculture ; it has had the same connotation through the centuries even upto the present day. *Kār* meant the steel blade of the plough, or ploughshare ; *kār-āpmai* meant the utilization of the ploughshare, i.e., agriculture ; and *kār-ājar* meant those who were masters of the ploughshare and they were naturally the Kārkāttār. Later Nighaṇṭu or lexicographical works defined Kārājar as Bhūvaiśyar, when they sought to bring the Kārkāttār under the Vaiśya varṇa of the Āryan four varṇa classification, making it into three as Bhūvaiśya, Govaiśya and Dhanavaiśya. Here we would just state that Kārājar is Kārkāttār. Even today we find members of the community styling themselves as Kārājar in the transfer of property documents registered before a government registrar of assurances ; the phrasing invariably is : so-and-so, son of so-and-so, Kārājar, Śivamatam, mirāsu (although they have been stripped of all mirāsu by the post-war land tenure laws). No other community calls itself Kārājar. These practices indicate that all the literary references to Kārājar are to the Kārkāttār.

The title Kāraik-kāṭṭār

The Kārkāṭṭār are widely known by the two titles Kāraik-kāṭṭār and Kārkāṭṭār; the second occasionally extended as Kāraik-kāṭṭār. However, even informed persons are not sure today which is the correct title. They believe that Kāraikāṭṭār is merely a corrupted form of the title Kārkāṭṭār which is literary and pure. But we shall here show that both the terms are correct literary forms and that they represent two distinct pre-historic legends pertaining to the origin of these people.

In the very distant past, Śiva and Pārvati indulged in a sport for the benefit of mankind, particularly the people of Tamilnādu. Pārvati coming behind Śiva closed His eyes with her two palms. As His eyes are the Sun and the Moon, this closure resulted in the shutting off of all light from the Sun and the Moon and consequently the whole universe was enveloped in darkness. All activity stopped and there was a temporary panic. As Pārvati removed her hands, again there was light and, activity was resumed. Śiva rebuked Pārvati saying, "My dear, you have caused a temporary panic and misery to the universe by your prank. This is not proper. You have to make amends." With a feeling of remorse She replied, "What shall I do?". He ordered: "The only amends is to worship us. You go to the earth and perform due worship for us there. Of the 1008 sacred places on earth, Kāśi and Kāñci are equally holy. Go to Kāñci. There you will find us seated in liṅga form under the single-fruited mango tree. Worship us there. In due time, we shall appear before you and take you back to Kailāś".

So Pārvati came to Kāñci with Her maids and began a ritualistic worship of Ēkāmbara-murti, i.e., the form of Siva enshrined under the mango tree on the banks of the river Kampa. Her maids raised a flower garden for Her there and supplied Her with all the accessories for the pūja. Pūja did not mean mere worship of the image; it also implied the practising of the traditional 32 charities or duties. In practising these she was assisted by many families of Vēlājar who were servants under Her. Those families lived in Kāraikkāṭṭu, an area close to

Ekambam where Pārvati's pūja was being performed. It was called because it was overgrown with the sharp spined scrub, kārai (*canthium*; kāḍu-jungle). This place was also a separate Śiva temple where Śiva is named Satya Vrata Kāraikaṭṭar and His consort is Kāmākṣi. It has been sanctified in the hymns of Saint Thirujānasambanda. The purāṇas of Kānci mention this shrine called Tiruk-kaccineṛi Kāraikkāḍu, as next in importance to Ekāmbaram. These Vēḷālar living in Kāraikkāḍu and assisting Pārvati in Her pūja were naturally called Kāraikkāṭṭar, 'the people of Kāraikkāḍu.' (Dr. U. V. Swaminatha Aiyar has mentioned this derivation in many places in his writings).

Pārvati's pūja continued for some time and the day came when She was due to return to Kailāś. She then received two measures of paddy seeds from Śiva. She gave it to these servants of Hers and told them: "My children, use this paddy to produce agricultural wealth from the soil in order that the traditional 32 duties may be continued by you on earth." From that day the Kāraikkāṭṭar has been tilling the soil and rearing the paddy with the seeds given by Pārvati and fostering *dharma* on earth.

Kāraikkāḍu seems to have had considerable importance not only in Dēvāram but also in other literature. The Virutti, commentary on *Yāpparuṅgalam*, (both by eminent Jain writers of the 11th century) cites a verse in praise of Śiva at Kaccineṛik-kāraikkāḍu. This is obviously taken from a larger work; the original is not extant now. The verse ends with the words

'niḷalaḍainḍār tammai - neṛikkārai kkāṭṭān'

meaning that Śiva of Kāraikkāḍu will not direct those who go to His feet, along the hard path of thorns. The full verse is in *maḍakku*, a kind of pun where the end part of each line is repeated in the next; it is a fine piece of lyric.

The surname Piḷḷai

The Kārkāṭṭar living in all the areas in Tamiḷnādu are known as Piḷḷai. There is considerable significance in their use of this term as a surname. Piḷḷai means son; because the Kāraikkāṭṭar inherited the duty of performing all the thirty two dharmas

on earth from Śakti Pārvati the Supreme Mother, they stand in the relationship of a son to Her. Grammar will tell us that Piḷḷai is the term applicable to the young ones of the humans and some other species in God's creation, the animal and the vegetable kingdom included. The term Piḷḷai not only signifies this idea of succession like a son, but is also meaningful in other ways.

We know Gaṇeśa is the Mūṭta-Piḷḷaiyār (the elder son, *yār* being merely an honorific suffix) and Muruga is the Iḷaya Piḷḷaiyār (the younger son). The term Piḷḷaiyār used without any attribute means Gaṇeśa. We have again another valuable literary tradition; Tiru Jñānasambanda, who drank deep of the milk of Grace from Pārvati is always called as Piḷḷaiyār, Tiru Jñānasambandapiḷḷaiyār by Sēkkiḷār in his *Periya purāṇam*; another term is Āḷuḍaiya Piḷḷaiyār, the son who was taken as a servant by God, and who takes us all as his servants. Sambanda is the first spiritual preceptor of the followers of Śiva. Again the legend relating to Caṇḍeśa is well known. Born as a Brahmin child, he was worshipping a liṅga in sand on the banks of the river, bathing it in the milk obtained from the cows left to his care, when his father kicked the milk pot, thinking that the boy was wasting the milk. Caṇḍeśa saw this obstruction to his worship and with a stick lying nearby, chopped his father's leg into two. For this act of dedicated service, today, Caṇḍeśa has a unique place of honour in the Śiva temple where it is ordained that, only a worship of Caṇḍeśa will complete Śiva worship. The story of Caṇḍeśa is the 26th in the *Periya purāṇam* of Sēkkiḷār. Here he refers to the young Brahmin devotee the Śeyñālūr-piḷḷaiyār. (Śeyñālūr is his village). The term Piḷḷaiyār here, as in the case of Sambanda, is not only a term of endearment, but also one of adoption, as he says in the next verse (1269) that the young boy became the son of Hara even with this physical body.

It is quite evident that the Śaivas who were great lovers of the *Periya purāṇam* and who never failed to read it in their daily pūja and prayers, were moved by this term and adopted it as their surname. We find Tiruṇṅirambalamuḍaiyān Perumān Nambi, who was a trusted commander of King Rajarāja II (1146-63) being

called Perumān Nambipillai. The story of this commander is given later. The term has remained and from that day to this, Pillai had come to mean a Karkattar.

The term Pillai had then acquired such a great repute that we find in the Vaiṣṇava tradition many Ācāryas calling themselves Pillai-Nampillai, Periyavāccānpillai, Tūppulpillai (Vedānta Dēśika), Naḍuvil Tiruvdhip-pillai, Vāḍakkut Tiruvdhip-pillai. Pillai Lōkacārya, Viḷāncolaip-pillai, Tiruvāymoḷip-pillai and so on. This indicates the great esteem which the term had come to acquire in society.

The honorific suffix 'ār' as in Mudaliyār and Chettiṅyār is not added to the word Pillai; the implication is that the mere word Pillai is sufficiently significant and respectable; ār is added only when the word is required to denote the sons of Śiva, as Pillaiyār or Ilaya Pillaiyār. When at a later date, an honorific suffix was sought to be added to the word, the word aiyān was added to Pillai to sound like "Pillaiyān"; this was the surname by which Veḍamalaiyappa of the 17th century was referred.

The esteem that was attached to the term Pillai is also seen from another example. In an account of the Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam Veḷājar, we find that they are invariably referred to as Mudalip-pillai. The Toṇḍamaṇḍalam people are generally known as Śaiva Mudaliyār; but here we see that the term Mudalip-pillai was thought to be more significant in connotation.

Of course in the later centuries, the term had become cheap and any one who had no traditional or community background began to call himself a Pillai. New converts to Christianity called themselves Pillai, just as priests among them called themselves Aiyars. This only points to the veneration that had attached itself to the term Pillai.

A further note may be added here. The Karkattar are always known by the title or surname Pillai. It so happened that a few generations back, a few Karkattar went out to several places outside their usual settlements and took to trade. In consonance

with the general nomenclature of the traders everywhere, they also were called Cheṭṭiyār. Large groups of them are found in Kumbakoṇam. They are all really Kārkāttār, preserving the gōtra title and other characteristic features. Somehow, their origin had been forgotten in the recent past. But now they are recalling their past, and are taking steps to join the main stream of their fold. Several marriages also are taking place having this integration in view.

The title Kārkāttār

As time passed, the Vēlājar began to expand and migrate to the south. They settled themselves in the entire Coḷa territory and became the back-bone of the life, culture and administration of the area. It may be of some interest to note that the South Car Street of Tiru-Ārūr is still known as Kāraikkāṭṭār Vidi and Pukaj-ābharapat-tiruvīdi.

In further course of time they moved further south and a section of the spreading wave of the Kāraikkāṭṭār settled in Pāṇḍinād and its capital city, Madurai. All this happened in the ages prior to recorded history. These people were all devotees of Śiva; their one vocation in life was agriculture; their culture consisted of fostering the thirty two dharmas or acts of charity. They followed in all the areas where they settled down, the highest moral code which won for them the respect and esteem of all members of the society, including royalty everywhere.

During this period, some of the legendary sports of Śiva took place at Madurai. In answer to the prayers of Malayadvaja Pāṇḍiya, ruler of Madurai and his queen Kāñcanamālai, Śakti Pārvati was born as their daughter Mīnākṣi whom Śiva wedded in the name of Sundara Pāṇḍiya and ruled over Madurai. After some time Sundara Pāṇḍiya and Mīnākṣi handed over the administration of the State to their son, Ugrakumāra Pāṇḍiya and went over to their celestial abode, Kailāś.

Indira, Lord of the celestials, was jealous of the glory of Ugrakumāra Pāṇḍiya. This prince unlike the others, did not bow

before Indira as the Coḷa and the Chēra princes did. This enraged Indira who caused sufficient rains on the Coḷa and the Chēra territories, and stopped all rains on the Pāṇḍiya State. There was severe drought here, but the Pāṇḍiya prince would not beg a favour of Indira. One day however, the clouds strayed into his air space; Ugrakumāra immediately imprisoned them. As the clouds were not free, no showers fell now on any land. Indira fought with Ugrakumāra but was vanquished. He now sent a messenger to the Pāṇḍiya praying for the release of the clouds and guaranteeing rains. But Ugrakumāra would not heed his words. So some-one had to appear and intercede with the Pāṇḍiya on behalf of Indira and the clouds. The Vēḷāḷar, who did their tilling operations with the help of the rains were naturally friends of the clouds and their master Indira. So they now came forward and stood surety for the future good behaviour of the clouds and of Indira. The Pāṇḍiya accepted the surety of the Vēḷāḷar, as he believed that they were persons who always kept their words and were upright in conduct. The clouds were released. They showered water on all the States and the land was once more prosperous. From that day, the Vēḷāḷar came to be called the Kār-Kattār, 'the Saviours of the clouds'. Indira was also much pleased and he showered many presents on them, chief of them being his own white elephant Irāvataṁ and his own horse Uchaisravam. In memory of this incident, these two can still be seen during the Kārkattār marriage ceremonies installed at the centre close to the *homa* fire-place, round which the newly wedded bride and bridegroom walk three times.

The term Kārkattār had since come to mean the protectors of the clouds (*kār*), i.e. those who stood surety for the *kār*. Another meaning is also given. The steel blade at the tip of the plough (the ploughshare) is called *kār*. The plough made of wood may decay and break with a year's work. But the steel blade is strong and continues to function for a number of years. When the plough became useless, the share is detached and attached to a new plough. These Vēḷāḷar in times of yore set their heart on this blade which turns the soil and makes it cultivable. Hence they were called Kār-kattār, those who waited for the *kār*,

or, those who had the custody of the *kār*. Kāttār here means waited (for the *kār*).

3. THE POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE KĀRKATTĀR

We had stated earlier that the attempt to equate the Kārkattār (Vēļājar) with the Yādavas is not correct and the attempt to group them under the Vaiśya of the Ārya Varṇas into a separate clan as the Bhū-vaiśya is also not correct. *Tolkāppiyam* lays down that the Vēļājar were agriculturists and that weapons of warfare and floral wreaths worn in battles were conferred on them by the ruling princes. The Vēļir had the privileged relationship of giving their daughters in marriage to the ruling princes in the Tamiḷnāḍu. Iḷanchēṭ Cenni, a Coḷa monarch married a Vēļājar bride from Aḷundur, and his son Karikāl Coḷa married a Vēļājar bride from Nāṅgur, both flourishing places in Coḷanād even today. Pāri and such other Vaḷḷals (patrons) of the Saṅgam age were the ancestors of the class of people who came later to be known as the Vēļājar.

As stated above, we find in the later period, particularly in the days of the imperial Coḷas of the 9 to 14th centuries, illustrious Vēļājar chiefs giving their daughters in marriage to the Coḷa princes. Besides these, there have been also many illustrious chiefs of Vēļājar who had led campaigns against the Coḷa enemies and come out victorious.

There was a long succession of illustrious army chiefs under all the Coḷa emperors. For want of definite recorded history we are unable to have here a continuous account of all such heroes and their achievements. However, we shall mention briefly the glory of four of such chiefs whose names have been handed down to posterity as *gōtra* titles.

Vijupparayar :

He was an illustrious commander under Rājadirāja I (1018-54). During the period, the western Čālukyas under their king Āgava malla was a source of constant menace to peace in the Coḷa country. There were several engagements between the

Çālukya forces and the Çoġa forces and in a pitched battle in 1054 at Koppam, Rājādirāja himself was killed while fighting seated on the back of an elephant; his younger brother Rājendra II took over the command immediately on the battle field and put to route the Çālukya forces. In an earlier campaign, Viḷuppararaya had engaged Jayasiṅga, son of Āgava malla on the battle field and slew him and the Çālukya forces fled. In recognition of this significant service, Rājādirāja gave Viḷuppararaya the title of Jayasiṅga kulakāla (annihilator of the Jayasiṅga tribe) and presented him with a village of several acres of land in Māyūram taluk and named it as Jayasiṅga kulakāla nallur. The place exists today as Kēsingan. The descendants of Viḷuppararaya, who took their family or *gōtra* name from him had lived in the same village near the Śiva temple at Attur till about four decades back when the last of the family who had only a female issue gave her in marriage and left the village. Many families exist today in the Čidambaram taluk and in Batlaguṇḍu in Madurai who are the descendants of this Viḷuppararaya. History tells us that he was also a high administrative officer under Vira Rājendra (1063—1070), last brother of Rājādirāja.

Munaiyatarayar: This is another magic name to conjure with. He was one of the heroic commanders who assisted Karuṇākaratoṇḍamān in his expedition against the north Kaliṅgas by about 1105 A.D. and celebrated by Jayamkoṇḍār in his *Kaliṅgattu-pparaṅi*; he has also been praised by Oṭṭakāttar. In the days of Vikrama Çoġa, he was administrative officer at Tirukkaṇṇapuram in Tanjāvur district. He was an ardent worshipper of Viṣṇu.

Once there was a severe famine in the area. Taking pity on the misery of the people around, Munaiyataraya distributed all the paddy from the State granary under him to the hunger-stricken people. Tale bearers were there in plenty, as now, and they poisoned the ears of Vikrama Çoġa against this officer. The enraged king clapped him in prison without even an enquiry. The loving wife of the chief sent messengers to represent her husband's case to the king and do justice. She was herself a

poet. She wrote a fine lyrical verse saying that if Munaiyataraya did not return to her the next day, he might not see her alive. Legend had also taken a hand in this story. Because of his piety and devotion, Sourirajap-perumaḷ, the Lord of Kaṅṅapuram, appeared in a dream to the Coḷa that night and instructed him to release the devotee. The king was amazed at the intervention of the Lord and so released him the next morning and sent him home with all honours. His wife was very happy at his return and in gratitude prepared a delicious *poṅgal* in ghee as food offering to the Souriraja worshipped in their home. When Munaiyataraya was offered this food, he found it extremely sweet and declared, "let this be dedicated to Souriraja." When the temple priests opened the *sanctum* in the morning they found the crumbs of *poṅgal* strewn all round the *mūrti*. They reported this immediately to the king who caused an investigation to be made. The crumbs were found strewn from the temple to the house of the chief. The king took this to be God's own recognition of the devotion of Munaiyataraya and from that day ordered that the same *poṅgal* be offered as food for Sourirajaperumaḷ at noon. It came to be called the *Munaiyatarayan poṅgal*; this is being done even today. An image of Munaiyataraya is installed in the temple and the *poṅgal* after being offered to Sourirajaperumaḷ is also being offered to the Munaiyatharayan image today with all honours.

This Munaiyataraya was probably a descendant of Narasiṅga munaiarayan, who brought up Saint Sundara when he was a child and, who was himself a canonized Saint. The term Munaiyataraya became a *gōtra* name later and is common among the Kārkāttār in the Coḷa Nādu and also Pāṇḍinād today. Munaiyaḍuvār, the Saiva Nayanār, Saint of Nedūr, might have been an ancestor of these chiefs.

Kāliṅgarāyar: He was a commander under Kulottunga I (1070-1120) and then under his son Vikrama (1118-1133). He helped the kings to win many battles. Originally he came from Manavil a place in Toṇḍainad. He was known by several names such as Manavil kūtṭan, Naralōkavīraṅ, Arumbākkīlan etc. The

title of Kāliṅgarāya was conferred on him by the Coḷas for his meritorious war service. His valour is also attested by Oṭṭakkūttar. Today Kāliṅgarāya is remembered for his scores of services to the Cidambaram and Tiru-Adikai temples. 36 veṇbas inscribed in the Cidambaram and 25 in the other temple enumerate his services. He gold-plated many parts of the roof of Natarāja's hall; gifted many lamps; had many ghee abhiṣēkas performed. He constructed the hundred-pillared hall and many other halls and the steps on the banks of the Sivagaṅga tank in the temple. He raised a flower garden in the temple. He constructed the Sivakāmasundari temple thereunder the orders of Kulottunga II (1133-1150). He caused the Dēvāram to be inscribed on copper plates. He also constructed a hall for Dēvāram singing. Similarly he constructed the Śakti shrine in Tiru-Adikai, the Natarāja shrine, the Vāgiśar shrine and performed other services. He also rendered similar services to many temples in Toṇḍai Nāḍu and in Coḷa Nāḍu.

His descendants have since come to be known as Kāliṅgarāyars. There are numerous families in the Tanjāvūr and Tirunelvēli districts bearing this *gōtra* title. The famous poet Śaiva-Ellappa Nāvalar (16th century) belonged to this *gōtra*.

Pallavatarayar: Perhaps this officer was the most important political chief of the period. He was a minister and military commander under Rājarāja II (1146-1163): He was known by several names such as Kuḷattūruḍaiyan, Tiruchiṭṭambalamuḍaiyān, Perumān nambi etc. He was given the title Pallavataraya by Rājarāja. He is also mentioned by Oṭṭakkūttar in his songs. He belonged to Kuḷattūr: this has become a *gōtra* title, Kuḷattuḍa, some times corrupted as Orattuḍa. Kuḷattūr is now known as Pallavarāyanpettai in honour of the residence of this chief and his descendants in the 12th century.

In 1163, Rājarāja was on his death-bed in the Paḷayārai palace near Kumbakonam. He had no children. Perumān nambi knew that the king would not survive. So he was anxious that succession to the throne should happen smoothly without any political confusion and that peace should reign in the land. With the King's permission he took the two children who were in

Gaṅgai-koṇḍa-Coḷapuram palace to Paḷayāṟai. The children were the grandchildren of a daughter of Vikramachōḷa, grandfather of Rājarāja. There he had the first of the children crowned as King, in 1163 as Rājādhirāja II (from 1163-1178). Rājarāja died on the second day after Rājādhirāja's coronation. During this prince's reign, Perumān nambi acted as regent.

The whole story of this regent and this episode is recorded in a long inscription of the Pallavarāyanpet temple. This place is a well known suburb of Māyūram today. Perumān nambi had secured significant victories over the Chēras and the Siṅgalas (in Ceylon). He was a very loyal follower of Rājarāja in whose name he had built the existing temple of Pallavarāyanpet which was then known as Rājarājesvaram. During Rājādhirāja's rule, he fought many battles in Pāṇḍinād and placed on the throne Kulasēkhara Pāṇḍiya who had come to him for help. He died in 1171. Forty vēlis of land (more than 260 acres) in the area were gifted by the king to the widows and children of Perumān nambi.

Looking back into the pages of the history of a period of 800 years ago, we see in Perumān nambi a loyal and powerful chief who was responsible for saving the land from chaos at a time when there was no direct heir to the throne and for arranging a succession with great forethought. History tells us that this succession lasted for more than 100 years after him, till Rājendrachōḷa died in 1279 without a heir.

A study of the inscription of the ruling dynasties in Tamil-nādu is certain to bring to light many more such Kārkattār heroes who have illumined the pages of the history of the land.

Vadamalaiyappa-Piḷḷaiyan

We had dealt earlier with the migration of the Kārkattār from Kañcipuram to the Kāvēri delta and later to the Pāṇḍinād. All this was in the pre-historic times. We may mention here a further migration of the Kārkattār to the southern tip of the peninsula which took place in recent times; it is part of recorded history. When Tirumalai Nāyak was ruling over Madurai and the

south, he was not able to collect the revenues from the Tirunelvēli area and so was on the look out for a capable officer who could be put in command of the southern regions for collection of revenues. He came to hear of the administrative ability of Kavai-Vaḍamalaiyappa Piḷḷai, who was then living at Nīḍar, a small place with a Śiva shrine close to Māyūram. It was then a Kārkāttār village having sixty families, all related to one another who were all industrious, capable and honer and whose leader was Vaḍamalaiyappa. Tirumalai summoned Piḷḷai to Madurai, and immediately put him in charge of the southern area with headquarters at Tirunelvēli. Piḷḷai took all the sixty families from Nīḍar to Tirunelvēli and stationed them in all the important trouble-centres in the area as village karṇams and his task of administering the area became comparatively easy. Nāyak held him in high esteem.

Vaḍamalaiyappa belonged to the *Nāranakkuḍa gōtra*. He was a devout follower of Murugan and the temple at Tiruccendūr naturally attracted him. During that period, the first half of the 17th century, the Dutch carried away the image of Muruga from the temple and threw it into the sea.

Some time after Vaḍamalaiyappa assumed charge, he had a dream in which Murugan of Tiruccendūr appeared and told him to go out to the sea and search for his image in a place where a lime fruit would be found floating on the waves. So he set out on a *kattamaram* with a few divers and reached the indicated spot, where he found the lime fruit floating and also the Brahminy kite circling over-head. Tying up his clothes tightly, he jumped into the waves, went to the bottom and found the image. Lifting it up in his arms, he came to the surface. The image was then brought to the temple and installed with due ceremonies and pomp. A contemporary poet by name Venṅimālaik-kavirāya, who was one of the priests privileged to perform the pūja in the temple and who had also written the purāṇa for the temple, wrote a *kirttanam* to celebrate the occasion; this begins with the words: "This is an auspicious occasion for all of us, when you deigned to return to the temple, Muruga." The

poet mentions the year as Saka 1576 (A. D. 1654) and mentions therein the devotion of Vaḍamalaiyappa. This *kirttanam* is the first *kirttanam* in the Tamil language. Vaḍamalaiyappa Piḷḷai was thence forward called Piḷḷaiyan. (Piḷḷai-Ayyan, the great among the Piḷḷais) and this title is still given to all the members of his family. In any domestic function today in the Tirunelvēli area, the first seat of honour is reserved for a member from this family.

In honour of this achievement, Piḷḷai was then given the privilege of the first worship (archanai and maṇḍakappaḍi) in the Murugan temple on the day of the temple festival. This practice goes on to this day. As if to emphasize this, an anecdote relating to Kaṭṭabomman is also narrated in Tiruḥcendūr. One day at the time of a festival there, Kaṭṭabomman had camped at Tiruḥcendūr. He desired pūja to be done on his behalf first that day. The temple priests refused to do it. Naturally he was much enraged. He rode up to the temple and hauled up the priests for disobeying his words; they meekly submitted that the first pūja was always the privilege of Vaḍamalaiyappa and then narrated to him the events. When he heard them, he was very much moved. He allowed the first pūja to be done as usual and agreed to have his, done next.

During the period when the Murugan image was under the sea, no one knew where it was thrown. So an attempt was made to cast a fresh image and install it in Tiruḥcendūr. But by the time it was cast and by the time it was actually on its way to Tiruḥcendūr, Vaḍamalaiyappa had recovered the original and installed it. The new image had by that time reached a place now called Murugan-Kuṟicci; it was installed there in a newly built temple which took its name after Muruga; it is now kept in the Pālayamkoṭṭah Śiva temple.

The *Mūla mūrti* (Idol of *sanctum sanctorum*) in Tiruḥcendūr was desecrated by the Dutch. In its place a new image carved from the rock on the west bank of Tambraparai on which Piḷḷaiyan's mother used to perform her pūja, was installed; a second image carved from the same rock was installed in the

place which is now celebrated as the Kurukkuttuḡai temple in the river bed.

Today there is a large cluster of the Kārkāttār population in and around Tirunelvēli. Many of the village karḡams still continue in the villages where Piḷḷaiyan had established them. Some of them however had left their stations to look for more advantageous jobs in the towns.

Other Patrons and Chiefs

Along with such eminent chiefs of the Coḷa period, there were other such chiefs and patrons. We shall here notice two such patrons.

Saḡaiyappa Vaḷḷal: He was the patron of Kambar; he lived in Tiruveḡḡainallūr and was a Kārkāttār. This place is not to be confused with the place of the same name associated with Sundaramūrti, the Samaya āchārya, and with Meykaḡḡa Dēva, some centuries later. Saḡaiyappar is the name of the Lord Śiva enshrined at Tiruppanandāḷ; it is a name commonly found among the Kārkāttār. The founder of the charities now known as the Anbanāthapuram Family Charities which runs the AVC college at Māyūram was a Saḡaiyappar. Saḡaiyappar is a name of Śiva, the Lord "who wears the matted locks." During the days of Kambar, the crown of the Coḷa emperors was always in the custody of the Kārkāttārs. On the death of the ruling monarch, when the successor was installed, it was brought from the custody of the Kārkāttār concerned at the time of the coronation and given to the Śivāchārya to be placed on the head of the newly anointed ruler. It was always the Śivāchārya who did the coronation. The Kārkāttār was recognized as the real producer of wealth in the land and so he was given the custody of the crown, the most important insignia of royalty. Kambar remembers this contemporary tradition very well and invokes it for the coronation of Rāma at Ayodya after his return with Sita from exile :

"The crown was handed over by the forefathers of Saḡaya, Vasiḡta received it and placed it on the head of Rama"

The concept that the crown is in the custody of the Kārkāttār, the agriculturists as the real producers of wealth, is most significant. There are many stories connected with Saḍayappa Vaḷḷal; they are well known and do not need a repetition here.

Neṟkunṟam Kiḷār: He was a poet and patron of poets who lived in 12th century in a village in Toṇḍainad, known as Neikunṟam (meaning a hill of paddy). Many stories abound praising his gifts to poets and his sensitivity to poets' poverty. There is one fine story. Asking for help always demeans one. Kiḷār was able to sense this feeling of reluctance on the part of the poets to ask anything. So he had spread sand in the courtyard of his house. Poets who came to him for help were simply to write their request on the sand. He would see the writing from a concealed place and would immediately grant the request. Kiḷār belonged to the *Kaḷappāḷa gōtra*. We may remember that Meykaṇḍār the exponent of the Śaiva Siddhānta philosophy, came also of the *Kaḷappāḷa gōtra*; we know his father's name was Achyuta, the *Kaḷappāḷa*; probably he came of a different branch of the same *gōtra*. He also lived about the same time. Kiḷār was also a poet. He has written an *antadi* poem on Śiva enshrined at Tiruppugaḷūr in 100 verses.

Neṟkunṟam kiḷār had given a daughter in marriage to Perumān Nambi Pallavatarayar. She was also one of the beneficiaries under the grants made by Rājādirāja on the death of Pallavataraya.

We hear of many other Kārkāttār chiefs who were patrons of poets. There was one Uттаṇḍan in Taiyūr on whom a *kōvai* poem was sung the 16th century; one Ellārkkū Nainār in Tirunelvēli, 'of the Kāraikāttār family' who is celebrated in poems of the period of Vaḍamalaippan, besides many others.

4. MORE LEGENDS

The Mukkuḷam Legend

A tradition relating to the Kārkāttār has been recorded in the *Coḷa Maṇḍala Satakam*. The Mukkuḷam (three tanks) of Tiru-

venkaḍu near Kāverippaṭṭinam in the Coḷanāḍ has been extolled even in the songs of Thiru Jñānasambanda (7th century). It is a well known story that Achyuta Kaḷappāḷa of Pennāḡadam was directed by his preceptor to bathe in the Mukkuḷam when he prayed to God for the boon of a child. (12-13th century). The Satakam records a much earlier legend. When the Coḷa prince Karikāḷa was to be crowned, the question as to who were entitled to crown him arose. It was then ascertained that the Kārkāṭṭār were of 64 families, and that, only they were entitled to this exclusive privilege. The legend says that before the actual coronation ceremony, the Kārkāṭṭār were required to bathe in the Mukkuḷam with a lighted lamp on their head, and they actually did so and came out with the lamp unextinguished by the waters of the tank, and they were asked, after this water ordeal, to crown the Coḷa prince. This legend is still preserved in some Talaṭṭu songs (lullaby). This will also substantiate the statement of Kambar that the forefathers of Saḡaiyappa Vaḷḷal were given the custody of the crown of the ruling dynasty of the land.

The Paḷaiyanūr legend

The Kāraikkāṭṭār who were in Kaccinerik-kāraikkāḍu began to expand and colonise other areas. Several of them went and settled around the modern Tiru-Ālankāḍu shrine, and it had come down in history as Paḷaiyanūr (the old village). A tragic incident took place in that village which is always held up as a monument to the honour and probity of the Kārkāṭṭa Vēḷāḷar. A Cheṭṭi had for some reason killed his wife. She took the form of a ghost and caught hold of him once when he was going along the road there and, in the guise of a pretty woman claimed him as her husband. He realised she was a ghost and tried to run away. But she took hold of him and brought him before the Council of Elders at Paḷaiyanūr and put forward her plea for being restored to her husband; she also produced in evidence 'their' child (made up by a ghost trick) which ran up to the Cheṭṭi and clung to him. This evidence seemed to be conclusive and so the Council of Elders which consisted of 70 Kārkāṭṭa Vēḷāḷar asked him to take back his wife. But when he remonstrated that the woman

was, in reality a ghost, they offered to stand surety for her good conduct. Accordingly, they shut up the man and woman in a house for the night. But at day break they found only the bones of the Cheṭṭi; the woman had disappeared with her child, having eaten up the Cheṭṭi. The horror-struck Vēļāļar could do nothing now; so they gave up their lives in a fire, as they were unable to act up to their promise of safety to the Cheṭṭi.

A long time after the incident, the three ruling princes Čēra, Cola and Pandiya heard of it and went to visit the site of the fire pit. Moved by the sense of honour and sacrifice of the Vēļāļar, each prince sang a song on them.

St. Umāpati Śivam, writing on the story of Sēkkiļar who composed the *Periya Purāṇam*, mentions the above incident and remarks that the greatness of the Vēļāļar could not be limited by him in words. He further adds: "When the seedlings transplanted in the fields by the Kārālar grow up luxuriantly, the golden crown worn by the ruling princes also will flourish; the sway of the sceptre of the princes is controlled by the little whips used by the Vēļāļas for goading the plough oxen."

5. THE CULTURAL HISTORY OF THE KĀRKĀTTĀR

The term Śaiva

Until the first half of the 20th century (marked by the end of the Second World War and Indian Independence), the term Śaiva had only one connotation: the vegetarian, (as well as a few other limited groups of vegetarians) from time immemorial. Tamil fanaticism which rose to prominence at the close of that period pulled down many happy turns of expression and elements of values and called the Śaiva way of food, the *marakkai upavu* (Vegetable food); this was a vulgarization in the ordinary spoken language.

Now coming to the other meaning of Śaiva,—the follower of Śiva, we can point out to certain associations. The Śaivas are said to be of seven classes: The Ādi Śaiva — the temple Archaka or Gurukkaļ; Anādi Śaiva — He who had no beginning

that is Śiva Himself; Aṅu-Śaiva — the Kshatriya or Vaiśya who has had Śiva dikṣa; Avāntara Śaiva — the Sūdra who has had the Śiva dikṣa; Mahā Śaiva — the Brahmin who has had Śiva dikṣa; Antya Śaiva and Pravara Śaiva — the mixed tribes who have had Śiva dikṣa. The simple term Śaiva without any attribute means, the Kārkāttār (as well as a few other limited groups of Veļālar); it does not occur as one of the seven, because it is the *real* Śaiva.

Another point may be noted. The Sangham poems do not speak particularly about the vegetarian way of food. There is always mention of meat and drink. Even the Brahmins of the period were not averse to meat-eating. But yet, even during that period we are able to discover a silver lining—Pāri we have said was a Veļālar. The Sangham poems tell us that his hill of Paṛambu was besieged by the three ruling princes, who were bent upon destroying him. Kapilar, poet and friend of Pāri, witnessed the siege. He told them, indicating the forest wealth of food in the hill to show that it cannot be starved by any siege. We should note here that he speaks only of plant food (vegetarian) and although the forest and hill abound in a rich variety of game for meat, he does not refer to them; this indicates that though Kapilar himself partook of non-vegetarian food, he could mention only vegetarian food, when he had to mention food in relation to Pāri. This adds weight to our claim that the Śaiva meant only the Veļālar and that the Veļālar were all vegetarians from the very remote past.

Education and Culture

The Kārkāttār were a highly cultured and educated group, which commanded respect from every class of society including the Brahmins. He was well versed in Tamil literature and the Śaiva canon. It may be pointed out that by virtue of their trusteeship of almost all the temples in the Coḷanād, they were steeped in religious lore and also in the pūja rituals relating to the temple. Many were good scholars in Sanskrit also. In every house-hold, manuscripts of *Tiruvīlayaḍal purāṇam*, *Tiruvācakam*, *Periya purāṇam*, *Viruddhāchala purāṇam*, *Arunāchala purā-*

Bramōttara kāṅdam, *Agasttyar Dēvārathirattu* and *Naidatam* could be found even up to the second decade of the present century. It may also be pointed out that most of the palm-leaf manuscripts available in the Coḷanād were from Kārkāttār houses. This argues for the high degree of learning and religious living in the families of Kārkāttārs.

The Kārkāttār lived around Śiva temples. If there was no temple for Śiva, they built at least a temple for Vināyaka. Worship of Māriyamman, Ayyanār etc., there was, no doubt; but this was frowned upon by them, although their family tutelary deity (*Kula Deivam*) was usually some form of Śakti, such as Periyāyaki, Ankālamman, Māriyamman etc.

The Kārkāttār did indeed lead an austere and disciplined life. Women also were generally literate. Both men and women after a certain stage, had their Śiva-dīkṣa (religions initiation) and they observed their anuṣṭāna (corresponding to the Brahmin sandyā-vandana) every morning and evening. In the evening, members of both the sexes attended the evening temple services. A good percentage of both, performed their Atmārtha Śiva pūja.

Sivaçāryas

In the remote past, when population was not so vast and when communities were closely knit, the Śiva temples were built by Kōccengat Coḷa.

The Kārkāttār, had set apart some individuals amongst themselves, who were qualified by their erudition, personal discipline, non-attachment and dedication, to be their spiritual heads and gave them the duty of performing the congregational worship (Parārtha pūja), in the temples. In the course of the years these families gradually separated from the main stream of the Kārkāttār, who devoted themselves, not to learning and things of the spirit exclusively, but to agriculture and administration. In time they came to be regarded as a separate caste and were styled as Śivaçāryas, because they were performing Śiva pūja (Parārtha).

But there was a difference. When they rose high in the spiritual practices, unfortunately, they looked up to the regular Smārtha Brahmins in all ritualistic and Sāstraic matters; this was natural because the Brahmins were learned in Sanskrit; the Sanskrit craze caught these people and they even called themselves Brahmins; they had long ago ceased to inter-dine and inter-marry with the parent stock of the Kārkāttār. Their isolation was now complete; they were different from these Vēḷāḷar and different from the Brahmins. So when they wrote down the Āgamas, they called themselves Śivabrāhmanas, said they were superior to the Brahmins, and that they alone were competent to perform Parārtha pūja in the temples.

There is considerable force in this assertion because in all the mantras uttered by these Śivacāryas, as in Sandyāvandanam, the Sun-god figures as Śivasūrya, while in that of the regular Brahmins the sun-god figures as Sūrya-Nārāyaṇa.

A substantial evidence is available for this conclusion from the list of the names of Śivacāryas. A glance at the names will simply show that the first part of each name is exactly the *gōtra* title of the Kārkātta Vēḷāḷa, the next is the proper name or rather the anointed name (Abhiṣēka name) crowned by the term Śiva to indicate that he was a Śiva pūjaka. A few names are given below :

Nāngūruḍaiya Mādēva Tatpuruṣa Śivar; Aymbūruḍaiya Śada-Śivar; Kavaramaṅgalamuḍaiya Chandrasekhara Ānanda Śivar; Ayūruḍaiyār; Tirumaṛaikkāḍuḍaiya Isanaśivar; Veṅkāḍuḍaiya Tatpuruṣha Śivar; Koṟrangūḍinḍaiya Śivakarupālaya Isāna Śivar; Maṛaikkāḍuḍaiya Mādēva Vairāgya Śivar.

All the terms ending with uḍaiya represent place names. We have shown that the Kārkāttār had only two types of *gōtra* names; one, titles conferred by the Emperors and the other place names. All the first names in the list given above are place names. Neither do the Kārkāttār know this evolution of the Śivacāryas from among themselves, nor do the Śivacāryas know it, much less acknowledge it. But yet this is the truth. Later,

to lend greater dignity to the origin of Śivācāryas, a legend was invented in the *Siddhānta Sārāvali* that Rājendra Čoġa brought families of Śivācāryas from the banks of the Godavari and settled them in the Tamiġnādu.¹

6. THE ECONOMIC HISTORY OF THE KĀRKĀTTĀR

Their Status in Society

The Kārkāttār were noted for their generosity. When the Čoġa emperors built the huge granite temples all over Tamiġnādu Kārkāttārs endowed them with lavish grants for their daily maintenance. From the day the construction was started, all sections of society gained from temple benefactions.

Attention of the readers may be drawn here to the position of the Kārkāttār in the social system. They were the one clan which received absolutely no benefaction from the temple. They did all the executive, administrative and supervisory service for the temple, in an honorary capacity. They received no payment anywhere for any temple service.

When the Tamiġ monarchies ceased to exist, these clans took up the temple administration as a matter of hereditary right, which in fact it was, in most places, and saw to it that the temples continued to function. This position they maintained upto the first quarter of the twentieth century. The first World War effected many changes, economic, social and political, which thrust the Kārkāttār young men into the fore of English education and job-hunting and, thereby dislodged them from the lofty pedestal of the giver with which they had been associated from time immemorial.

The Kārkāttār, being the landed gentry in the land were in a position to extend their patronage to art and letters. Kambar lived in an age when there was no powerful monarch to extend him any patronage. Saġayappa Vaġġal extended that patronage to him. A large number of temples today exist in the whole

1. The author of this work, Trilocaṇa was himself a Śivācārya and hence much credence cannot be placed on this.

country. And, with the temples, music and dance flourished. The temple fed the musicians (Nāgasvaram pipers) and dancers. But other types of patronage were extended to them in ordinary life by the Kārkattār. For marriage functions, birth-day celebrations Viḷakkīḍu and similar family gatherings, the pipers and dancers were invited and paid lavishly. There was no function without the piper and the dancer in Tañjavūr district. In a wider sense we may boldly say that these artists would have languished, but for the support of the Kārkattār. The patronage given to music and dance naturally extended to Tamiḷ letters also.

The Kārkattār were also the landed aristocrats in the liberal sense. The farm was known as *Paṇṇai*. The head of the *Paṇṇai* assumed a natural leadership in the village. He was able to arbitrate and settle all kinds of disputes for all the classes in the village.

Economy of the Kārkattār Life

The Kārkattār economy in the past was a kind of self-sufficient and self-contained living. The Kārkattār always lived in clusters in a village. Each family was also a viable unit. Even if the family be poor, it had enough land to raise the necessary food. The agricultural land produced not only rice but all the required pulses. If the family did not have the necessary land, its headman took out some land on lease from those who could afford it and cultivated it. Never did he think of eking out a livelihood by means other than agriculture. Each house had a spacious garden, if not all round the house, at least at the back of it. In one corner stood the cattle shed with at least one cow and one buffalo for supply of milk; and a minimum of two pairs of bulls for ploughing. The annual accumulation of the dung heap from the shed provided the natural manure for the fields. He had at least two bullock drawn carts; All families put together produced their own cows and work cattle.

There was a large hay-stack in another far corner of the garden which was sufficient for feeding the cattle for the whole year.

Besides, the garden had a cluster of bamboos which supplied the necessary bamboo splinters for the tile-roofing of the house and the necessary spikes and spine for the fence. There were in the garden, mango, lemon, tamarind, *iluppai*, coconut trees which all supplied fruits, tamarind, oil, nuts for cooking and for lamps etc. Also there were portia, margosa, and albizzia trees which supplied the timber for the house, and for cart-making and granary-making. There was a well for supply of water.

It could thus be seen that two of the primary needs of the family—food and shelter—were taken care of by the house gardens and agricultural lands. Out of the surplus in these, he purchased his clothing and a few sundries like kerosene oil, salt etc. Sugar was always purchased except in rare cases where he cultivated some cane.

7. THE RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF THE KĀRKĀTTĀR

We shall mention below the Nāyanmār who were Kārkāttārs and the monasteries and orders of spiritual headship founded by them.

The Śaiva Nāyanmār

Sekkiḷar has sung the lives of the 63 Śaiva saints (Nāyanmār) in his *Periya purāṇam*, a large work of epic proportions in 4286 verses. Among the 63, the largest single group is the Vēḷaḷar group, having 13 Nāyanmār. All of them had lived before the days of Sundarar (C. 700 A.D.) We mention elsewhere Jñānasambhanda's glowing tribute to the Vēḷaḷar way of life. Considering all the circumstances, we may conclude that Appar belonged to the Kārkāttār community, although we have no evidence that this name was in vogue in the period.

Saints Kalikkāma and Mānakkattāra

These two saints lived probably a few decades after Appar. Through other evidences it is clear that they belonged to a community which had later come to be called Kārkāttār.

St. Sundara lived round the year 700 A.D. He has referred to the miracles performed for the sake of Kalikkāma in his song

on Tirup-puñgūr. Kalikkāma is considered to belong to the Kārkāṭṭa Vēḷāḷa community, which is even today the major community in Perumaṅgalam. The twice forty i.e. eighty acres of land donated by Kalikkāma constitute a separate hamlet now known as Panniruvēli, which is now under Anbanāthapuram Vagaiyārā charities of Māyūram.

Kuṇḍaiyūr Kiḷār is one of the devotees who figure in the life of St. Sundarar. This Vēḷāḷar, had been supplying the required rice to the household of Paravai, the spouse of Sundara at Tiru-Arur. According to the Tirukkoḷili Uḷa written some ten centuries later, Kuṇḍaiyūr Kiḷār was a Kārkāṭṭar (Kārāḷar).

8. THE ŚAIVA ĀCĀRYAS

Meykaṇḍār: Tradition has it that Meykaṇḍār was himself a Kārkāṭṭar. He was the son of Achutha Kaḷappāḷar of Pennāgaḍam. He was himself born through the grace of Śiva enshrined at Tiru-veṅkāḍu and was named Svētāvanapperumāḷ which is the name of the Lord there. He wrote the Śivajñāna Bodham, which is the basic original scripture of the Śaiva Siddhānta philosophy. The aged Śivācārya, Sakalāgama Paṇḍita was his first disciple and he came later to be known as Aruḷ-Nandi. From Meykaṇḍār, the school of Śaiva Siddhanta evolved itself into a new school of theistic Advaita philosophy.

Today, Pennāgaḍam, the ancestral town of Meykaṇḍār is one of the important centres where the Kārkāṭṭar live in large numbers. Meykaṇḍār came of the Kaḷappāḷa gotra there. The Kaḷappāḷar are quite different from Kaḷabhrās. The town is situated in the South Arcot district; there is a large temple there built by Kōccengat Coḷa of the 5th century A. D. This has been sanctified in the hymns of Appar and Sambandhar in the 7th century.

The Śaiva Mutts

Tiru-Āvaḍutuṟai: The Tiru-Āvaḍutuṟai mutt was established in the 15-16th century by Namaśivayamūrti, a Kārkāṭṭar disciple of

Siddhar Śivaprakāśa of Mūvalūr, coming in the line of Meykaṇḍar. Siddhar Śivaprakāśa was a disciple of Aruḷ Namaśivāya, who was a disciple of Saint Umāpati, the fourth Santāna-āchārya and the author of many literary and philosophical works.

Dharmapuram: The Dharmapuram mutt was founded in the 16th century at Dharmapuram by Guru Jñānasambandha, disciple of Kamalai Jñānaprakāśa of Tiru Ārur. He was a Kārkāttār, hailing from Srivilliputtūr in the far south. Namaśivāyamūrti has not left any writing; but Guru Jñānasambandha has written many works on the various pathways of Śaivism.

These two mutts have been flourishing in all their spiritual glory to this day. Illustrious heads and disciples had adorned these two mutts, and they had written quite a large number of Tamil literary works as well as exegetical treatises and devotional poems on Śaivism.

Sūryanārkoil: It was founded by Śivāgra Yōgi in the 16th century. The Yōgi was a Brahmin and his successors for some generations were Brahmins. In the early 18th century, the head of the mutt was suffering from a dire disease and no one would go near him. At that time, one Subrahmanya Piḷḷai of Tirumānduṟai, a Kārkāttār village next to Sūryanār-koil, was an ardent disciple of the Āchārya. He did all the menial services to him to the last moment, patiently ministering to all the physical needs of the sick Acharya. Moved by his devotion and dedicated service and also by his erudition in the Śaiva Siddhānta philosophic lore, the Āchārya made him the next head.¹ Subrahmanya Śivāgra Yōgi as he was now called gave all his family property (then about one hundred acres of wet land) to the mutt. This was held by the Kārkāttār after him till the middle of the 19th century, when the famous Mēlagaram Subrahmanya Paṇḍara Sannidhi of Tiruva-vaḍuṟai annexed it.

1. This story was narrated to the author by the late Aruḷmigu Meenākṣi-ṣandara Deigar, Head of the Sūryanārkoil Mutt.

This indicates the Kārkāttār had been great philosophers and religious heads and three large mutts on the banks of the Kāvēri were founded and headed by them.

9. PRECEPTORS OF THE KĀRKĀTTĀR.

The Kārkāttār in the Coḷa territory generally owe their allegiance in the matter of spiritual following to the Śaiva mutts at Sūryanārkoil, Tiru Āvaḍuṭuṟai and Dharmapuram.

But later, Kanjanūr^r Ayyars have been supplying this need. They are today a large group of several families domiciled in Tukili and Kanjanūr, on the northern bank of the Kāvēri, a little to the east of Āḍuṭuṟai in Tañjavūr district. They had originally been part of the Dikṣitar community in Čidambaram. They had been accepted as preceptors for several centuries by all Kārkāttār in the Coḷanād. They claim all the Kārkāttār as their disciples and collect an annual *mānya* (or gift) from them. They officiate as priests, at all the auspicious ceremonies; they also officiate at the funeral rites, after the corpse is disposed of. (A Śaiva Dēsi-
kar officiates as priest on the occasions of death, for the removal of the body and, for the second day's rites). They also assume spiritual leadership by imparting Dikṣa (spiritual initiation) and teaching Śiva pūja to the disciple. They are no doubt Tamilians but they are all total strangers to Tamil and perform all the rites only in Sanskrit. Their knowledge of the Sanskrit language today is almost nil; but having learnt the mantras and the kriyas by word of mouth from father to son, they go on repeating them by rote. Beyond this, most of them know neither religion nor philosophy.

They are also to be classed as Śivācāryas. The Śaivas are enjoined to perform Atmārtha Śiva pūja in their houses. Śiva pūja on Āgamic lines is not the duty of Smārtha Brahmins. So the Smārtha Brahmins are not competent to be preceptors to these Śaivas. For a Śaiva who is competent to perform Ātmārtha Śiva pūja, the preceptor should be naturally from a higher Śiva class (not caste). Hence only the Śivācārya has the competence to act as preceptor to a Śaiva.

10. RELIGIOUS PERSUASION

The Kārkāttār community is predominantly Śaiva; yet there are a good number of families which are the followers of Viṣṇu. But there is no distinction among the families on this account in the matter of marriage and similar social relationship. The religious persuasion can be seen only from the religious mark on the forehead. It is common for Śaivas among them to have Vaiṣṇava names and for Vaiṣṇavas to have Śaiva names.

The position is different as far as the south is concerned. All the Paṇḍinād Kārkāttār are the followers of Śiva; there is not a single family there which calls itself Vaiṣṇava. But in Coḷanād these Vaiṣṇavas being so very small, among a larger population, it do not hesitate to inter marry in the Śaiva families.

All the Kārkāttār, up to the first quarter of this century, were performing Ātmārtha Śiva pūja (personal worship of Śiva) in their houses. In large villages of Kārkāttārs, we can yet find ghats on the Kāvāri and the local tank, wherein platforms, sandal grinding stones and water courses had been constructed providing places for a few people to prepare their own sandal paste and perform their pūja at the same time. Close to the tanks are yet found floral gardens (Nanda Vanam), which are distinct from temple flower gardens, wherefrom they can gather flowers for pūja offering. These gardens were religiously maintained by the Kārkāttār on private land for the use of those doing Śiva pūja. This arrangement was necessary because the devotees were strictly prohibited from gathering flowers from temple gardens for private pūja.

Speaking of Coḷanād, which is the centre of the Kārkāttār community, we may add that four groups had been recognized by the Kārkāttār as orthodox Śaiva groups. They are: (a) the Kārkāttār where-ever they may be found; (b) the Toṇḍaimaṅḡala Vēḷāḷar; (c) the Śaiva Chettiyār known as Kāṣukkaḷai Chettiyār and Solapuram Chettiyār in the Māyūram, Kuttalam and Kumbakonam areas; and (d) Solṭya Vēḷāḷar in certain limited localities around Pandanallār, Aṅakkuḷi and Tiruvārur in Tanjāvūr district. These four groups are considered to have been vegetarians

from very ancient times and to preserved their own individual cultures. The elders in these communities had all been performing Ātmārtha Śiva pāja till the first half of this century. They freely inter-mingle and dine but never inter-marry.

All the four communities never dine with any other community for the simple reason, that however ardently the others may follow the Śaiva religion and worship Śiva, one could never be sure that the others were vegetarians from the ancient past. As is well known, many families have taken to vegetarianism in the recent past, out of conviction, but the Vēlājar mentioned above would not dine with them at a common table.

One trait of the Kārkāttār may be noted here. They paid due homage to the devotees of Śiva. Besides, the Kārkāttār showed the greatest reverence to the symbols of Śiva, the sacred ash, the rudrākṣa beads and the Panchākṣara. They smeared the ash on the prescribed occasions, they wore at least one rudrākṣa bead framed in gold round their neck and, on initiation, never failed to utter the Panchākṣara (five letters) manṭra in the prescribed manner.

We have said that the Kārkāttār all lived round temples. Their personal names generally took after the names of Śiva and Śakti enshrined in the local temple. Round Cidambaram, names of male members were like Natarāja, Ambalavāpa, Kanakasabhai, Ponnambalam, and Kunjitapādam, which were all references to the presiding deity of Cidāmbaram. Women were always named as Śivakāmasundari. Around Vaidisvaran Kōvil, it was always Vaidyanātha (Śiva) and Muttaiyan and Muttukkumārasvāmi (Subrahmanya) for men, and Tayyalnāyaki (Śakti) for women. In Tiru Ānaikkā, it was always Jambuliṅgam or Appuliṅgam and Akhilāṅḍesvari. Similarly in all the other places without exception, a child born in the Kārkāttār family was always given the local deity's name or the name of the grand-father or grand-mother without exception.

11. THE LITERARY HISTORY OF THE KĀRKĀTTĀR

A study of the growth of the literature on the Kārkāttār and the literature created by them is an interesting subject. Specific

mention of the Kārkāttār in Tamil literature is available only from the second millennia after Christ. Poems referring to them and books written by them are available in the later centuries but not in the early period.

Again, *Ācārak-kōvai* sets us thinking. It is a book of one hundred verses laying down a code for disciplined and righteous living. The author is one Araiyanār of Muṅṅurai. We have shown earlier that the term *araiya* had come to be a gotra title of the Kārkāttār. *Ācārak-kōvai* may well be the earliest poetic composition of the Kārkāttār.

Jñāna Sambandha on the Vēḷāḷar: Saint Tiru Jñānasambanda (early 7th century A. D.) when visiting Tiru-Ākkūr near Māyāram, sang a decad on the form of Śiva enshrined there, from which extracts are given below :

“This is the temple of Śiva, the Tanṅonṅi māḍam,
the raised temple of the Self-revealed One, where
the hard working Vēḷāḷar abide in large numbers,
they who are renowned for their munificence.” (verse 3)

“Their nature is not to say no to those who go to
them through poverty, but to derive joy through
giving to them.” (verse 9)

Sambandha seems to make here two points; one is that the Vēḷāḷar is a race of hard-working people (working on the land) and two that they are renowned for their giving and that they never say ‘no’ to the indigent. It may be mentioned that almost all Vellalars in the area are Kārkāttārs.

12. EMINENT KĀRKĀTTĀR POETS

From very early times, we know there have been many reputed poets in the country who had written poems large and small. Later we have definite mention of the Kārkāttār writers. We shall mention below some of the great writers who have enriched the Tamil literature through their contribution, in later periods.

Saint Meykaṇḍār: Meykaṇḍār of the Kaḷāppāḷa gotra was not only the first codifier of the Śaiva Siddhānta system of Advaita philosophy and first spiritual preceptor of the Śaiva fold, but was also a poet. He wrote the Tamil *Sivajñāna Bōdham* in Tamil, which is hailed as the very essence and fragrance of the ghee which is extracted out of the milk namely the Vedas. Its sūtras have been translated into Sanskrit and have been given out as extracts from the Raurava Āgama.

Meykaṇḍār is the originator for all Śaiva Siddhānta philosophy in South India and for almost all the Śaiva Mutts here. He lived in the 12-13th centuries.

Kāvai Ambalavāṇa Tambirān: There was one Ambalavāṇa-tambirān at Tiru Ānaikkā by the end of the 14th century. He came of the direct line of St. Umāpati. He himself had written many exegetical treatises; his short treatises on yoga have been printed. His lineage is traceable in both ways—through his natural descendants and through his spiritual descendants. He was a Kārkāttār; Kāvai Vaḍamalaiyappa Piḷḷaiyan of the Tiruchendūr incident seems to have been a natural descendant from him after a period of about two centuries. His spiritual descendants number many well known figures. One lived a little later as the disciple of Veḷḷiambalavāṇa Tambirān who was a disciple of Saint Kumara Gurupara and wrote illustrative verses for the Siddhānta Śāstra, *Tiruvaruṣṭayan* of Sri Umāpati Śivam.

Guru Jñānasambandha: He is one of the Āchāryas coming in a direct line of master and disciple, from Meykaṇḍār. He has written about ten works on the Śaiva school of philosophy, poems on yoga subjects such as the *Prāsādaṣaṣṭam* and *Tiripaḍārtharūpādi agaval*. He was the founder of the Dharmapuram Mutt. His *magnum opus* the *Jñānābhāṣa Viḷakkam*, a metrical elaboration of *Sivajñāna Siddhiyār* in a large number of verses, seems to have been lost; only a fragment of it is available. The most popular among his works is the *Sivabhōgasārana*, essence of God experience, which is poetry of a high order. Guru Jñānasambandha was a Kārkāttār hailing from Srivilliputtar, in the latter half of the 16th century.

Haridāsa: Haridāsa of the first half of the 16th century was a Vaiṣṇava poet. He was held in high esteem in the Vijayanagar court of Krishnadēvarāya. He was one of four brothers, and the son of Tiruvēṅkaḍamuḍaliyār. He belonged to the Kaḷappāla gōtra. He wrote a long poem by name *Iru Samaya Viḷakkam* in 2119 verses, wherein he discusses the doctrines of both Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism and seeks to establish that the latter is superior. He lived in Topḍaimaṅḍalam; his father and brother held high administrative posts under the Vijayanagar rulers.

Saiva Ellappa Nāvalar: He was an illustrious poet of the later half of the 16th century. He was of the Kālīngarāya gōtra, hailing from a village near Tiru-veṅkaḍu. His descendants still live in the same place. He has sung six purāṇas of which *Aruṇāchalam*, *Sevandi* and *Veṅkaḍu* are well known. Besides, he wrote many minor poems such as the *Tiru Aruṇaik-kalambakam* and *Tiru-Ārūr-kōvai*. His commentary on the Tamil *Soundaryalahari* of Kavirājapaṅḍita (translated from Sankarāchārya's Sanskrit poem) is an important contribution to the Śakta literature in Tamil.

Irasai Veḍamalaiyappa Piḷḷaiyan: The story of Veḍamalaiyappa has been given in detail separately. The senior Veḍamalaiyappa was a chief under Tirumalai Nāyak who restored the Subrahmanya image in the Tiruḷḷendūr temple. Tirumalai-koḷundupiḷḷaiyan was his son and successor to the post. He was also celebrated in literature. Two kuṟaḷ veṅba poems have been sung glorifying him. Kuṟaḷ veṅba is a poem in which a Kuṟaḷ is incorporated as the last two lines of each veṅba while the first two lines give a story to illustrate the thought expressed in the Kuṟaḷ. The poems were known as *Tirumalai veṅba* and *Tirumalaik-koḷundu veṅba*; only some fragments of the poems are now available.

Irasai Veḍamalaiyappa Piḷḷaiyan was grandson of the illustrious grand-father. He was not only an administrator and a patron of men of letters but was also an eminent poet. Two purāṇas written by him are now available in print. *Machcha-purāṇa* (a translation of Matsya-purāṇa in Sanskrit) is a long purāṇa of over 5000 verses written in 1706; he had also written the *Niḍūr stala purāṇa* in about 400 verses. The two books are classical poems written

in a good style and testify to the author's poetic skill and to his devotion to Śiva. A translation of the Matsya purāṇa requires a profound knowledge of the Sanskrit language, which the author had.

Apart from his own writings, we find there was no poet of any repute in the period who did not sing on this Vaḍamalayappan. Ratnakavirāyar junior had written the *Pulavarāṅṅuppadaḥ* in praise of him. *Mukkūḍal paḷḷu* extolls him.

Subramaṇia Munivar: Subramaṇia Munivar of Toṭṭikkalai was a renowned poet of the recent past. He lived round 1800 A.D. He was a disciple of Śivajñāna swāmi, disciple of Tiru-Āvaḍuturai Mutt and author of the famous *Śivajñāna bōdhamā bhāṣyam*. The Munivar has written many minor poems like *Kalasaik-kōvai*, *Kalasaī-sēḍai veṇba*, *Tiru-Āvaḍuturai-kōvai* etc. He was born in the Pūnuḍa gōtra in Kaṭṭumannārkoil.

Siṅṅambala Aiyā: He was in the court of Raghunātha Sētupati in Ramnad and wrote *Maruḍūrp-purāṇam*.

Murugaiyyak-kavirāyar: He was a poet of the early 19th century. He hailed from the Mullaikkuḍa gōtra. Along with another poet, Nalla kavirāyar, he was responsible for enlarging the Villibhāratam of about 3000 verses into the *Nallāppiḷḷai Bhāratam* of over 16,000 verses.

Mahāvīdvan Minākṣisundaram Piḷḷai: The name of Mahāvīdvan Minākṣisundaram Piḷḷai in the recent past is very well known. His ancestors though settled in Tiruchi, originally hailed from Madurai. They belonged to the Vayaluḍa gōtra. Dr. Swaminatha Aiyar, the most illustrious disciple of Piḷḷai has written his biography in two volumes of about 700 pages. This biography, the first and easily the best in the language, became instantly famous. Piḷḷai has written about 100 poems, large and small and they comprise a total of 20,000 verses. The life of Piḷḷai (1815-1876) is a literary history of the 19th century. The illustrious Karkāttar of Kalyāṇasōḷapuram—Śivachidambaram Piḷḷai, Aiyaru Piḷḷai and Aruḷachalam Piḷḷai had extended their generous patronage to

Minākṣhisundaram Piḷḷai and had influenced; him to write the short purāṇas of Attār, Vilathoṭṭi, Kuṟukkai, Maṅṅippaḍikkarai and Vāḷoḷiputtūr, besides the large purāṇas as Māyūram and Tirutturutti (Kuttālam).

This list does not exhaust the list of Kārkāttār men of letters of renown. There were many minor poets upto the present day. The; above is only an illustrative selection.

13. LITERATURE ON THE KĀRKĀTTĀR

It has been pointed out that the Kārkāttār had always been givers and never receivers. They pined for the grace of Śiva and in token thereof would receive only the sacred ash from the temple priest. Naturally this characteristic earned for them the praise of all poets in the land through the centuries. We shall give here one verse praising the munificence of their hand.

“This is the hand that guides the plough,
that is looked up to by the mighty princes,
that wears the ring (śudarsāna chakra)
and distributes grace,
that wards off evil, the hand that ṣis eternal.
that gives support for all time -
the hand of the Kārālar.”

Below we refer to some of the poems which speak of the benevolence and greatness of the Kārkāttār.

Er-elupadu: This is one of the earliest poems in praise of the Kārkāttār and their agricultural operations. It contains seventy-nine verses eulogising the community, its various operations, the agricultural implements and their parts. Its refrain is, that there is none equal to the Kārkāttār in the entire universe and that it is only the agriculturist's plough that feeds the whole universe; of course this is always true. Incidentally it also praises the Coḷa as the monarch who possesses this amount of agricultural wealth. The poem is attributed to Kambar; this Kambar in a second poet bearing the illustrious name of the author of the *Ramāyaṇa*; he would have lived in the 12th century.

Tirukkal vaḷakkam: Usually printed as an appendix to the first poem, this is a long kaliveṇba poem in 118 lines. It celebrates the various achievements of the hand of the *Kārāḷar*. The whole poem is full of allusions to the earlier legends beginning from *Periyapurāṇam*. The reference to Kambar, Sakkilār, Oṭṭakkūttar, Nalaḍiyār and Saḍayappa Vaḷḷal are of course valuable. It seems to lend support to the legend that the Jain work *Nālaḍi* was written by the *Vēḷāḷar*.

Kārāḷar Kīḷai Vaḷappamālai: This is a long kaliveṇba poem having 360 lines, celebrating the glory of the ancient Kārkāttār and ending with the achievements and various acts of public benefit of the two Vaḍamalayappas. The author is one Śaṅkara-liṅgam. The poem gives the name of the community as Kāraik-kāttār (which is the same as Kārkāttār, kārai being the noun *kār*, with the second case ending. He says that the number of gōtras (clans) in the community is 96 and that they all end with the suffixes like rāya, uḍai, tirai and kuḍai. The poem gives the ten insignia for royalty for the Kārkāttār: hill—Podigai; river—Vaigai; kingdom—Maṅgala nāḍu; place (*ūr*)—Mēlnāḍu—mathūr; flower—lily (kuvaḷai); horse—that of victory; elephant—that which conquers the dig-gajas; banner—plough; drum—the legendary three, of victory, giving and marriage; command—the One sound.

Vēḷāḷar Ammānai: This seems to have been an ammanai poem probably on the model of the Mūvar Ammānai, glorifying the Kārāḷar. Except for one verse cited in the *Touḍa-maṅḍala Satakam*, the poem does not seem to be extant.

The Maṅḍala Satakam Poems

There are about seven Satakam poems in Tamil which seek to glorify one region in particular, its land, people, heroes, poets and the like. All these could be placed between the 17th and the 19th centuries. They were all written at a time when many purāṇas and similar books were written in verses all over the Tamilnādu seeking to extol one community or the other. Of the seven, five appear to be written solely for glorifying the *Vēḷāḷar*. We shall say a few words about each of them here. Each Satakam, as the name signifies, has one hundred verses, each verse ends

with a phrase mentioning the region as *Toṇḍaimaṇḍalamē*, *Paṇḍi-
maṇḍalamē* and so on. Except the *Colamaṇḍala Satakam* which
is in the six-foot *viruttam* metre, the others are in the difficult
Kaṭṭalaik-kalittuṟai metre. Though the *Satakams* profess to extol
the region in general, we find them extolling principally only the
Vēlājar community, and some, the *Kārkāttār* community. Another
feature of the poems is that very often they claim some renowned
writers as belonging to their own region.

Kārmaṇḍala Satakam: This is a poem in 100 verses, which
seeks to extol the *Kārkāttār* community and the region which that
community inhabited. The poem deals at length with the glories
of the *Kārmaṇḍalam*, the *Dasāṅgam* of the community, its voca-
tions in life, its history, the *Gaṅgai kulam*, its religion, eminent
persons of the community and their contributions to art and letters:
The author is said to be one *Ārai-kīlar* of *Avinaṣi*. His date has
been given as 1025-1070. The appendix to the poem gives a bio-
graphical note on about twenty-five chiefs and poets of the *Saṅgam*
period, who were *Kārkāttār*. In another appendix, it gives a list
of one hundred *gōtra* titles. The book however, cannot be taken
to be authentic. It could have been written only in the nineteenth
century or later, after *Satakam* poems like the *Toṇḍamaṇḍala*
Satakam had gained popularity.

Paṇḍiṁmaṇḍala Satakam: This poem of 100 verses extols
the *Paṇḍiṁmaṇḍalam* and the ancient patrons and poets who had
lived in that territory. It is attributed to one *Aiyamperumaḷ* of
Madurai. The poem says the author wrote it to glorify the southern
Kāraikāttār. Many legends are mentioned herein. But all of them
are not authentic.

Other works may make occasional reference to the *Kārkāttār*.
Some recent tracts have been published on the history and tradi-
tions of the *Kārkāttār*.

14. THE SOCIAL HISTORY OF THE KĀRKĀTTĀR

The *Kārkāttār* have always been agriculturists, both actual
tillers and well-to-do owners of large farms where many also did

the actual tilling work (called in Tamil books *uḷutunpōr* and *uḷuvittunpōr* respectively) and they practised farming as their *kula-dharma* (sacred duty). They never engaged themselves in any other avocation in life. They never engaged themselves in trade nor ever gone abroad on any business or other errands. The two instances mentioned elsewhere in this article, of Kārkāttār being employed by Vaḍamalaiyappa Piḷḷaiyan as village karṇam and some others of Kumbakōṇam engaging themselves in trade, are rare exceptions dating back to the 17th and the 19th centuries respectively.

When the Non-Brahmin movement was started in Tamilnāḍu after the first world war, the Kārkāttār were attracted by the glamour of the petty government jobs and also identified themselves with the non-descript term Non-Brahmin. This ultimately reduced them to the state of an economically Backward Class, even within the space of a quarter of a century.

We shall give below a few important features from the social history of the Kārkāttār.

Status of Women

Women among this community enjoyed most privileges and rights. They inherited property, were guardians for minor children and administrated property in the best interests of the minor. They had expert knowledge in all matters relating to agriculture as also religious matters and matters connected with wedding alliances and arrangements, in which they had full freedom. They were all models of chastity and modesty even by the most conservative standards; they always sought seclusion both in the home and in public. But yet they were in their homes, hospitable to visitors, kind and generous to servants, obedient to elders, thrifty in money matters, and capable in bringing up their children. They were always a source of pride for their husbands and their men folk. They were truly the lustre of the home.

In the Kārkāttār community there was no child marriage. Widows were not required to shave their heads and to cover

them. Older widows always dressed in white, while younger widows dressed in red; generally no other coloured sari was used by them. (Married women and young girls never wore white dress in the past). They never wore any jackets. A widow would smear white ash or put on the *rudrākṣa* beads, but she would not put on the *kumkum* (vermillion mark), and would not use turmeric; nor wear jewels. On the death of her husband, the *tāli* and *pill* were removed from her. But it should be stated that the widow had an honoured place in Kārkāttār society; she was not despised. She would not take a direct part in any auspicious function in the family; that was her only handicap. In a traditionally conservative and cultural family, once a woman became a widow, living conditions and the social set up were such that she turned her thoughts god-w. r. l and led a life of penance thereafter. She was a privileged member of her husband's family, influencing all its activities and selflessly serving the children and the adults in the joint family. Her life was not one of sorrow and denial, but one of joyous sacrifice, dedication, and service. As the years passed, she was always looked up to for advice and guidance in all matters in the family. Divorce in such a society was unheard of.

Female Children

The Kārkāttār exercised the greatest caution in the matter of bringing up their female children. Girls of the adolescent age and, before the period of puberty, are never allowed to stay away from the mother. Attainment of puberty is a great family event. The Kārkāttār like every other cultured society in the Tamilnadu in the past, used to celebrate it with great pomp. In this they are not different from others. All the relatives and friends of the house visit her and bless her. The main purpose of the celebrations seems to be to acquaint community members that the girl is available for a marriage alliance. Naturally parents with eligible boys would be interested in the girl. They could see her at the time of this festivity and decide whether she could be considered a suitable match for their ward. In the context of the custom that she cannot be seen by male members after this celebration, this kind of publicity in the community seems to have full relevance. We shall

note next, a general custom regarding the seclusion of girls who have attained puberty.

Il-Serittal

Among all the cultured classes of society in Tamilnadu generally, all boys and girls play together and move freely, when they are children. When a girl comes of age, her movements are immediately restricted. This is mentioned in classical literature as *il-serittal* (restraining with in the four walls of the house). The girl is not permitted to move with other men except her immediate kith and kin, such as father and brothers. Even in the social functions in her own house, she moves in such a way that she is not seen by the other male members. There was a particular custom in Karkattar society to indicate the presence of such a girl in the house and to restrain, not the girl, but outsiders from entering of the house at will. Usually all members of society respect the custom of restraint placed upon a girl who has attained puberty; (of course this restraint is removed the moment she is married). In that house, two figures of calves are placed at the entrance gate, on pillars on the outer verandah, or on the carpet wall of the roof, etc. This is a sign that there is a unmarried girl in the house who had come of age and a caution that the visitors should not freely go into the house but should stop at the outer verandah and may enter only with permission. The figure of calves was made in burnt clay by the local potter and coloured white. Visitors, be they relations, friends, equals, or servants, stopped at the first verandah and stepped in, only when invited inside.

Tiruvilakkiḍutal ceremony: The one ceremony or family ritual which distinguishes the Karkattar from any other community is the Tiruvilakkiḍutal (or the Tiruvilakerrutal) ceremony. Vilakkiḍutal means lighting a lamp. This ceremony takes place for a girl, at the age of seven or nine, at any rate before she comes of age. This is a very grand function, second perhaps only to the marriage function. This is itself called the *vilakkiḍu-kalyaṇām*. It consists simply of the maternal uncle of the girl tying a small golden chain (necklace) or a cotton thread with coral and golden balls on

it, round the neck of the child. On the appointed auspicious day all the friends and relations of the family assemble. *Poṅgal* is cooked and served on five or seven leaves in front of the family deity, invoked in a handful of sand in the ritual yard. The child is seated on a special seat or dais and the uncle sits by her side. The necklace or string has an *amman kāsu* (round piece of gold like a coin on which an image of Śakti is stamped) in the centre flanked by corals and gold balls on either side. After the child performs a *kriya* for the deity, he ties it round the neck of the child. This is called a *Kudaichamani*; also called *navatāli*. The child holds a small lighted lamp in her hands and, with this she walks round the invoked deity and the food offerings. If she is five years of age, she goes round five times; if she is seven, she goes round seven times and so on. As usual there is a feast afterwards. She is supposed to wear this constantly till the day of her real marriage, when this is removed and the *Tirumāṅgalya* is tied by the bridegroom. But actually children do not wear it; they take it away as soon the function is over.

During the *Poṅgal* festival, special lamps for each of girls, for whom this ritual has been performed, are placed along with the family lamps placed for worship. Besides, during *Poṅgal*, when presents and, lamp wicks soaked in ghee are received by a mother from the house of her parents, special wicks are also received on behalf of each such girl for lighting and worship.

The *Viṭṭakkidu kalyāṇam* has been a very important family ritual for the Karkattar till very recently. There seems to be a legend behind this custom. Long ago, there was a ruler in the area who made it a habit of snatching away all unmarried young girls who had come of age. He never molested married girls. Some communities in the land were willing to sacrifice some girl so that the rest of the community may be free from any harm. The Karkattar however were not willing to sacrifice any girl in this manner. So they invented this practice of performing this pseudo-marriage function by which all girls were made to look like married girls, because of the *Kudatchamani* round their neck.

This gave them immunity from molestation. The *Pāṇḍi-maṇḍala Satakam* (perhaps of the 18-19th century) refers to this custom among the Kārkāttār and says that because the *Panḍiya* prince claimed a girl for a bride, the unwilling Kārkāttār invented this practice of tying the *maṇi*, before a large gathering of relatives.

The ceremony is common to the Kārkāttār of the north and the south but the days of its observance are different. In Paṇḍinād they perform it on the Poṅgal day. Friends and relatives witness the function and return to their own homes for celebrating the Poṅgal in their homes. A feast is held in the girl's house on the next day, the Māṭṭuppoṅgal day. But the practice in Coḷanād is different. Māṭṭuppoṅgal also is equally important for them, and, their kith and kin from afar cannot come and return on the Poṅgal day nor can they attend on the Māṭṭuppoṅgal day. Hence the ceremony is fixed on some other auspicious day convenient for all concerned.

The Kārkāttār gōtras: Each Kārkāttār family has a distinct *gōtra*. In all social functions this gotra is invariably mentioned—particularly in marriages the gotra has prominence. *Sa-gōtra* (same gotra) inter-marriage is prohibited. Mention of the *gōtra* in marriage invitations is usually an indispensable feature even to this day.

The *gōtra* is simply a family name indicating the particular branch from which the present families were descended. Other communities seek to trace their origin to a Rishi. But the Kārkāttār do not trace their origin to a Rishi but to one of two classes—a place or an illustrious ancestor. All the *gōtras* of the Kārkāttār of the present day trace their origin only to one of the two. Examples of place names are - Agamuḍa, Māyaluḍa, Oratuḍa, Vilanduḍa, Pūvanuḍa, Sāttukkuḍa, Sāttanuḍa, Aiyaluḍa are just a few of such gotras; *ḍa* suffix is a corruption for *uḍaiya*; Māyaluḍa is for Māyālār-uḍaiya; Sāttanuḍa is for Sāttanūr-uḍaiya; Sāttukkuḍa is for Sāttukkuḍal-uḍaya and so on.

The second type in *gōtra* names is associated with names of illustrious ancestors.

Kārkattar reached the pinnacle of their glory under the Coḷa emperors. Evidence of this is seen in the many *gōtra* names which have been handed down through the ages. They were all commanders and military chiefs and administrators. Such names as Sembiya araya indicates their position as chiefs; *araya* means literally, king or chief; sembiya is a title of the Coḷa. Other titles such as Pandiyarāya, Pancava taraya, Tennava taraya, Mīnava taraya, Vaḷudirāya indicate the victories they had over the Paṇḍiyas. All these are Paṇḍiya names. Maḷavarāya signifies their victory over the Mālava chiefs; Villavarāya and Vanavarāya over the Čēras (Villava and Vānava mean Čēra); Koṅgarāya over the battles in the Koṅgu country; Vāṇādirāya against the Bāpas; Kāliṅgaraya indicates their participation in the two campaigns against the Kāliṅgas taken out under Kulottuṅga Coḷa I, by his son Vikrama and by his illustrious commander Karuṇākara Toṇḍaimān, round 1100 A.D. Pallavarāya, Viḷupataraya, Munaiya taraya and similar titles have all associations with the history of the royal houses and of the Coḷa territory. Some titles such as Vijayarāya, Achutarāya, Sēnādhirāya, Seviyataraya and Kanakarāya do not seem to have any particular significance, but appear to be titles of a general importance. Seenat̄araya might have been one conferred on a warrior who had then been to China as an emissary or ambassador of the Coḷa.

It may be noted that all the *gōtra* names are only Tamil names and do not have any Sanskrit rishi name among them.

There is an early mention of 64 *gōtras*. The editor of *Kāramāṇḍala Satakam* has taken pains to collect a list of 100 *gōtra* titles under the heads 'lords, earls, dukes and Viceroy's'. These are repeated in another book, with an alphabetical arrangement. However it is found that in reality there are many more *gōtras*. The classification as Lords, Dukes, etc. is all mere fiction.

Family Life

The Kārkattar lived as a joint family. The elders always had the unquestioning obedience of others. All marriages were arranged by the elders, mostly within near relations, having always an

eye on social status. Though economic status did have a consideration, social status was respected. Members of one *gōtra*, however distant they may be, considered themselves as one family in such matters as weddings, bereavement, worship of *kula-dēvatas* and performance of temple festivals.

Description of family relation are peculiar to the Kārkāttār. *Maithuni* (corrupted as *machini*) is a common term applied to wife's sister, maternal uncle's daughter or paternal aunt's daughter. Two other terms are very meaningful. They are *Arumaiyār* for an elder brother's wife and *Varisaiyār* for the husband's sister are in common use. *Arumaiyār* is one, deserving all felicitation; a brother's wife is a new comer into the family and so deserves all consideration and felicitation and hence she is called *Arumaiyār*. The husband's sister is a lady who is going away to some one else's house, and so she is entitled to all presents from here; she is called *Varisaiyār* (Varisai—present), by her brother's wife. These two terms are in common use in the Kārkāttār family. A brother's wife is never called *aṇṇi*, as in some other communities.

The servants in a household have a special term by which they address the lady of the house. A Kārkāttār lady is always addressed as *Āchi*; a Soliya Vāṣṣa lady is always called *Āyi*; and a Mudaliyār lady is called *aṇṇi*. The words mean only one thing and it cannot be confused with another. From the mode of address by a servant, we can easily understand to which community the lady belongs.

Every cultured community in the past had its own individual way of dress. The Kārkāttār also had their own mode of dress. Men after a certain age always dressed themselves with a 'Mūlaik-kacham'. This was not in the Brahmin mode, but in a mode altogether different. Their upper cloth on normal occasions consisted of a small towel only. Women dressed in a characteristic way, but not in the orthodox Brahmin way; it was just a dignified way, with a thick *kosavam* on one side; their *sari* was eight yards, in length.

Food

The Kärkättär, as the real producers of food, were highly naturally cultured in the matter of food. Their food was always served on tender plantain leaf, spread with its tip end to the left. There is an artistic manner of serving the dishes on the leaf, which could be appreciated and understood only by sitting at the table. This culture of serving and eating is still preserved in the villages and could be seen only in small private functions. The false hybrid culture of the city has invaded the hearth of the Kärkättär also and their individual table culture and manners are gradually being given up.

There are many dishes which are peculiar to this community. To give one example. There is one dish called *Poritha-kułambu* a kind of vegetable sauce prepared with all kinds of vegetables without the use of tamarind, some thing like Kooțtu of the modern city cuisine, but far different from it, and more deliciously flavoured having a speciality of its own. The city cuisine employs a large quantity of anise for all its preparations; the use of this anise and the like, compensates for all the bad odours, and, the lack of odour also, in the modern hotel. The Kärkättär equate this with non-vegetarian preparations and never so much as touch it. They do not generally use any flavouring ingredients other than green coriander leaves; the very manner of preparing the dishes itself gives the correct flavour and fresh hue.

The Kärkättär had evolved their own system of the thermos flask for keeping milk hot. The top half of an old mudpot was inverted, the bottom half placed on it and filled with paddy husk. This is ignited and the milk pot kept on it. The ignited husk will go on smouldering for twelve hours; it will not burn, nor will it die out. Thus the milk will be kept at the optimum temperature by a natural process and be ready at the required temperature at any part of the night. The modern thermos flask was then unknown and was unnecessary. Similarly in the summer months, a fresh mudpot kept water fresh and ice-cold.

The Kärkättär food was simple but rich in nutrition. Vegetables and greens direct from the garden, milk direct from the cow

or the buffalo, and rice, hand-pounded without removal of the valuable coating of vitmain-bearing pericarp to be consumed. The average food consisted of three courses, first dhal and rice with ghee, second *kuḷambu* (sauce) and rice, and third curds and rice. Where the family could afford it, there was another middle course of *rasam* and rice. There were generally two side dishes of vegetables and pickles. This was quite a rich fare. Most people irrespective of whether they were rich or poor, had only cold rice in the mornings and again in the night; it was never thought beneath one's dignity to take cold rice. Ceremonial and festive dinners included more side dishes, two more varieties of sauces and *pāyasam* and *vaḍai* with fruits; there was no feast without *vaḍai* and *pāyasam*.

Elderly people observed a partial fast on days like the New-moon, Full moon and monthly Kārtikai; in the night they took only some frugal tiffin, perhaps a few plantain fruits and milk. All people had a course of milk in the night.

15. KĀRKĀTTĀR WEDDINGS

There is no sub-caste among Kārkāttārs in the entire community. So there is no difficulty in the matter of weddings between members of the different families, except that *sa-gōtra* marriages are not permitted. It is not uncommon for a young man to marry his sister's daughter; he is even considered to be the rightful bridegroom for her. The ages of the groom and bride had generally been 22-25 and 16-19 respectively; a difference of five years in age was always sought to be maintained. Marriages were all post-puberty ones. The newly wedded bride was always expected to step immediately into the rightful role of a responsible adult member of the large joint family of which her husband was a part. Monogamy was the general rule; occasionally other considerations, such as the barrenness of the first wife, caused the man to marry again even while the first wife was alive.

The Kārkāttār marriages were always arranged by the elders. It was celebrated in the house of bride-groom; to have it done in the house of the girl was considered not honourable. Times

were when the marriage was a four-days function; it was not just an alliance between two houses; it was virtually a great social event, calculated to bring together members of the community around the place. Horoscopes were usually compared; this was arranged by the maternal uncles of the bride and the bride-groom. The dowry system is a blot on Indian society today. In the grip of this octopus, we find today bride-grooms are daily sold at a price of so many thousands of rupees. Previously, the dowry system did not show its head in the Kārkāttār alliance. Marriages were arranged not as a matter of barter, but as a form of honourable agreement between cultured equals.

A marriage function is even today the greatest social event in a rural community. It consists of a series of rituals. We shall consider them here under the three heads: Pre-marriage rituals, the actual wedding ceremony and the ceremonies attendant on pregnancy and child birth. Mere marriage itself was no ideal. The ideal was to procreate and continue the species. Like the Upaniṣadic seers and the most modern Vicar of Wake-field, our fore-fathers believed that the begetting of children was the greatest national service.

Pre-Marriage Ceremonies

Marriages were arranged for and performed, at leisure. The Kuṭumba Deiva puja (worship of family deity) is done several weeks ahead. The first important ritual after an alliance is decided upon (and dates fixed, orally) is, the *Pandalkāl-muhūrtam*. At an auspicious hour (fixed usually by the purohit), the first post for the marriage pandal is erected after due ceremonies, by three *sumāṅgals* (married ladies). It should be remembered that every small ritual is preceded by a puja for *Ganēsa*, called *anujñā*, which is in essence calculated to propitiate him and secure his blessing on the ritual following.

For every ritual beginning from the *pandalkāl* right up to the sending off of the bride and bride-groom to the bride's residence and receiving them back etc., the local orchestra always plays music. This party consists of the *nāgasvaram* (pipe player), *Ottu* (the tune player), *ṭāṭam* (cymbals) and *periyā mēṭam* (drummer). There

is no auspicious ceremony without the piper's music. This will bear out the statement made elsewhere that the Karkattār were all patrons of music.

Muhūrta Ōlai

This is the next ritual; it is the writing of the agreement for marrying the particular girl to the boy concerned. This is written generally in the house of the bride; but according to the convenience of the parties, it may be done in the house of the bride-groom also. Close relatives and friends of both the parties are present. The purohit writes up two different documents in red ink (formerly this was written on palm leaf, Ōlai, with a steel stylus), stating that each parent is willing to accept the girl or the boy as the bride or the bridegroom respectively of their son or daughter. The document is placed on a plate with sugar candy, flowers, fruits and sandal and, exchanged between the two parties. Usually, the date and hour of the wedding and the place are also specified therein. Music accompanies the ceremony. There is a sumptuous dinner. This ceremony sanctions the sending out of marriage invitations.

Nischayatāmbūlam (Betrothal)

This was formerly a separate ceremony. But to suit the convenience of all parties however, this is now done on the evening previous to the day of marriage, in the place of the marriage itself, mostly in a different house. The ceremony is also known as Nischayārtham, meaning that the proposal of marriage is now confirmed; this is sealed by the exchange of tāmbūlam (betels and arecanut) with large plates of flowers, candy, sugar and fruits. This is done in the house of the bride only. The fathers of the couple are seated on a mat in front of the purohit who does a puja for anujñai. Members of both the parties are assembled in strength. The bride-to-be is brought by her maids and seated between the two. She is given a fresh silk sari and a jewel (as previously agreed upon) by the father of the bride-groom. The jewel is usually a substantial present—a pair of golden bangles, a gold chain and the like. This commits both the parties, so that

thereafter they cannot evade the alliance. The girl goes to her room and comes back decked in the new dress and jewels. The purohit makes a public announcement of the proposed marriage. The girl then bows to the elders of the assembly who bless her with *akshata* and *vibhūti* (sacred ash). The inescapable dinner follows.

The *parisam pōdotal* of many other communities corresponds to this *nischayatāmbūlam*.

Nāl-Virundu

On the day previous to the day of marriage, there is a special felicitation to the bride and the bride-groom in their houses in their respective places. A formal lunch is served at an auspicious hour; that is the occasion for him or her to receive presents and blessings from relatives. Nāl-virundu means feast for the (wedding) day. All relatives now assemble for the wedding and the party starts for the place of marriage. In the past, the places of the bride-groom and the bride were very rarely twenty miles apart; the parties travelled by bullock carts.

As soon as the bride's party arrives in the bride-groom's place, they are welcomed and lodged in a separate house. A procession is arranged from the local temple. Dinner in the night is very elaborate.

The Marriage Ceremony

In the past, marriages were often done in the early morning, between 3 a.m. and 6 a.m. This was because many inauspicious occurrences like *rāhukālam* or *yamakandam*, inauspicious *yōgam* etc. would not occur during the night period. But today most marriages are performed after breakfast, to suit the convenience of the new generation, which does not like to discipline itself to wake up before day break, to have a bath and to sit up for an hour or two without food, in order to witness the function.

The Place of Marriage

The marriage was celebrated usually, in the open yard at the centre of the house which is temporarily covered with cocount plai-

ting. A decorated dais is placed at its west, to face east. Paddy is spread on the dais, covered with a silken mat or carpet, on which the bride-groom and the bride will sit. The *purōhit* sits on a plank to the right facing east. On the verandah on the four sides of the court yard, relatives of both, men and women sit to witness the function.

There are many minor features in the marriage ceremony, which have some importance. A series of new pots piled one on top of the other is placed by the potter in the centre of the yard to reach the roof of the *pandal*; so it is called *pandal-muṭṭi*. The pots are symbolically painted in white, yellow and red by the potter. At the bottom is a large pot open at the bottom and at the top which has the figures of the heads of the elephant, bull, horse, and lion carved on its sides to signify the presence of the patron deities of the four main quarters, Indra, Yama, Varuna and Kubhera, whose mounts they are. They symbolize the presence of the 33 classes of the celestials as witness for the marriage. Over this, are seven pots, which stand for the seven clouds for which the Kārkāttār stood surety before the Pāṇḍya at Madurai. A small pot filled with oil is kept burning from the beginning of the ceremonies to the very end, some times even for four days his all ceremonies are over. It is called the *kuḍavilakku*; it has a very thick wick which is supposed to be of 1000 strands; Indira is considered to be present there in token of his gratitude to the Kārkāttār for their part in the release of the clouds by the Pāṇḍya. Two large pots filled with water are placed on either side of the *pandal muṭṭi*.

The Ceremony Proper

In all ceremonies the male has precedence. The bride-groom is led in by the best man. As soon as the bride-groom sits on the dais, he is garlanded by the elders, men and women. Then he does the *anujñai pūja*. *Kankaṇam* is the next ceremony. A piece of turmeric tied in a yellow-dyed cotton string is tied with due mantras on his right hand by his father (in some places, this is done by the *purōhit*). He then does a *pūja* for a *muhūrtakkāl*, called *arasāṇikkāl* placed at the north eastern corner of the yard; this is usually a

branch of the odina tree, branching into two at the top. Tying a piece of red cloth around the middle of the sapling is part of *pūja*. Then three *sumaṅgalis* and the bride-groom bring it to the centre tie it to the *pandal-muṣṣi*. Nine kinds of cereals and pulses made to sprout in a pot the previous day, are now brought and distributed into the seven (or nine) small earthen cups kept round the *araṣaṅikkāl*. A *poṅgal* already cooked by the bride-groom's party, called as the *maṇaṅpoṅgal*, is now served out on seven plantain leaves and offered to the *kāl* and the *dēvatas*. (The *poṅgal* is cooked in seven ovens in seven pots at the eastern end of the yard itself.) The offering is done by the bride-groom assisted by the *sumaṅgalis*. The offering consists of rice, ghee, jaggery, fruit and coconut and betel. New clothes which have received the blessings of the assembly are now given to the bride-groom who retires to his room for changing his dress. The bride is now brought in by the bride's maid.

Nīrai Nāḷi

The *Nīrai-nāḷi* is symbolic of the introduction of prosperity the Dhanalakshmi, Goddess of Wealth into the house by the young bride.

Nīrai-nāḷi is a very important ceremony. Just as the bride enters the house for the marriage ceremony, a *marakkāl* (brass or silver measuring vessel) filled with paddy, with a lighted silver lamp placed at the top-middle of the paddy is given in her hand, and she is escorted gently into the house by the mother-in-law. Great care is taken to ensure that the light does not flicker. This again is a symbol of the transfer of power from the mother-in-law to the daughter-in-law. She places the *nīrai-nāḷi* in the *pūja* room of the house, in front of the pictures or images, facing east, bows to them and then goes to the dais. The *nīrai nāḷi* is the most important symbol of the Kārkāttār to denote that they are the custodians of the industry of paddy cultivation. The bride then sits on the dais. (Every time the bride-groom or the bride go to the dais, they go round the *pandal-muṣṣi* in a clock-wise direction). She is then garlanded by the elders, men and women. She then offers a similar *maṇaṅpoṅgal* already cooked and served as

before, to the *dēvatās*. She now receives the special wedding dress and retires to her room for change. The bride-groom now comes and occupies the dais. Then the bride comes into the yard with the wedding garland and garlands the bride-groom. He garlands her with another garland. She sits on his right. A plate of rice, coconut, betels and fruits are held out to her. She takes some rice and the other things on both of her hands; the bride-groom ties the *kaṅkaṇam* on the left hand of the bride.

The Tirumāngalya Dhāraṇa

The *purōhit* now lights the homa *agni*. The bride-groom performs a *pūja* for the *agni*. The important function of tying the Tirumāngalya now takes place.

The insignia of a married woman are *tāli* and *pili*, the use of flowers, turmeric for bath and face-wash, and *kunkum* for the centre of the forehead. *Tāli* is the *Tirumāngalya*, a piece of small trinket tied round the neck of the bride by the bride-groom at the time of marriage. This becomes inseparable from her and is removed only at the time of her husband's death. It is supposed to bear the forms of the five weapons of Lord Viṣṇu the Protector—conch, discus, mace, bow and sword. The Kārkātār's *tāli* is different in make from the Brahmin *tāli*; the latter is a flat piece, while the former is a round one.

Early in life the baby was decked with a little trinket bearing these insignia along with the real tiger's claws (or teeth); this was supposed to infuse courage and heroism in the child, both male and female. When the female child grew up and began to wear trinkets, this was got fixed up as the Tirumāngalya at the time of the marriage ceremony. The Kārkātār wedding was always one of *pāṇi-grahaṇa*, i.e. clasping the hand of the girl by the bride-groom; *kannikā-dāna* was an integral part where the girl was freely gifted by her parents to the bride-groom, decked in jewels and flowers and with all the requirements for setting up a new household. The girl, holding flowers and akshata and cocount in her hands was gifted away to the bride-groom by her parents and the gift was received over the hand of the bride-groom by his

parents; in token thereof water was poured over the gift; this was known as *iṣṣu-nīr-vārttal* (*tārai vārttal*).

The *nāgasvaram* music plays continuously from early morning to the very end of the marriage. During important ceremonies, such as *kannikā dāna* and *Tirumāṅgalya dhāraṇa*, *geṣṣi-mēlam* (rapid sounding of all the instruments) is played to focus the attention of the whole assembly on the act and also to drown any inauspicious sounds such as sneezing.

Now the *purōhit* takes the *Tirumāṅgalyam* chain, after obtaining the blessings of the elders and hands it over to the bride-groom. A bit of candy is given to the bride and the bride groom to be kept in the mouth, in order that they may have "sweet" memories of this most important moment. To the uttering of the mantras by the *purohit*, the bride-groom ties the *Tirumāṅgalya* thread at the back of the girl's neck, by holding it with both hands and bringing it round her neck and places three knots on it and applies a little *kumkum* on the knots and on her fore-head. All the time the sister of the groom stands behind the couple, holding a lighted lamp on a plate, with flowers and betels. Senior members of the assembly throw *akshata* and flowers on the couple in token of their blessings. The sister's lighted lamp is the symbol for all future brightness in the life of the girl newly coming into the family and her bride-groom. In modern days a gold chain is generally used for the *Tirumāṅgalya*, but the thread is also there as a symbol, for tying the three knots, round the chain. Sandal, flowers, sugar and betels are distributed to all present in token of joy at the *Tirumāṅgalya dhāraṇa*.

Going Round the Fire

The marriage among all the higher classes is considered to be fully solemnized, not by the *Tirumāṅgalya* alone, but by three more rituals. The first is exchange of garlands. Immediately after tying of *mangalya*, the bride-groom and the girl exchange their garlands three times. The second is the *homa* fire which is fed by the *purōhit*. The girl's brother leads and the bride-groom and the bride follow clasping each other's hands, and they walk round the fire and the *pandal-muṣṣi* three times. Thirdly, the *purōhit* utters

the *sapta-pati* (Seven step) mantras. At the end of each round, all the three hold together some puffed rice in their hands jointly and feed the fire with it. This is done three times. On the last round, the ritual of *ammi* and *Arundathi* takes place. Towards the north-west of the central place a grinding stone is kept. The bridegroom coming here, lifts the right foot of the girl and places it on the stone; and asks her at the same time to look at the star *Arundati* in the sky, which is close to the star *Vasishtha* in the Great Bear. This means that she should not be like *Ahalya* who was unable to retain her chastity for which aberration she was turned into a stone, but should be like *Arundati*, who was glorified in the firmament as a star on account of her chastity. At this time the bridegroom places a pair of silver rings called *mesfi* or *pela*, on the second toe of each foot of the girl.

After the three rounds, the bride returns and sits on the left of the bridegroom; hereafter his left is her place.

Short pieces of gold leaf are tied on the forehead of the bride by the maternal uncle, the bridegroom's mother and his sister. These are known as *paṭṭam*. The mother-in-law's *paṭṭam* is a sign of the transfer of power in the house to the new girl, who will hereafter assume headship in the house. The couple then prostrate before the elders and receive their blessings.

Nālam-Nir

Pāli, or grains made to sprout the previous day, is consigned to the tank or a water course; this is called *pāli-viḍutal* or *nālam-nir*; the couple receive on this occasion new clothes and all the presents from the bride's father are given at this time. This ceremony is now performed even close on the heels of marriage to suit the convenience of all persons including the bridegroom, who likes to go away to his work spot early. The wristlet of protection tied at the commencement of the marriage function on the hands of the couple is now detached and consigned to the water along with the *paligai*.

Nālam-nir used to be an occasion for much mirth-making among the women folk assembled, poking fun at the bride and

bridegroom. *Pādapūja*, i.e. the bride and bridegroom washing the feet of their respective parents in token of worship just before the actual wedding ritual, seems to be novel feature unknown in the past.

Marriages are not done in the months of *Āḍi*, *Purattāsi* and *Mārkaḷi*. Most marriages are done in *Vaikāsi* and *Āni*; a few in *Āvaṇi* and *Thai*. As the Kārkāttār were all agriculturists, months are chosen when all can be free from field work.

The *Arasanikkāl* is now taken by the couple to the garden and planted on good soil; the water kept in to the pots near it are poured for the sapling so that it grows and becomes a live tree. The parents of either see to it that it grows into a full tree.

Graha Pravēsam

Where the wedding takes place in the bridegroom's house, the couple are invited at the next auspicious day for a feast in the bride's house and *vice versa*. This is known as *graha pravēsam* (entering the house, as a married couple for the first time). Where people could afford it, this was as elaborate a function as the wedding itself. Of course there are many presents given to the couple.

Consummation of the wedding or nuptials is a matter of convenience. In the past, it was an equally elaborate and separate function, done many days or even a month later. However in modern days, this is arranged for, even on the same day, always in the bridegroom's place. Presents of furniture including nuptial cots and beds, of utensils for cooking and running a new household, accompany the bride to the other place.

An earlier ceremony conducted for the bride in the bridegroom's house is called *Pālūrṇal* (giving her milk). This is in essence one of inducting her in to the work of the husband's household for the first time at an auspicious hour. She is first asked to bring water from the river or tank, for cooking. Secondly she is asked to clean up a vegetable cutting knife (*arivāḷ maṇai*), decorate it and cut some plantain on it. Thirdly, she is asked to warm milk in a bronze pot on the oven; the pot is always a

bronze one. Then she gives her husband and the other immediate relatives of his, a cup of milk each. This completes her induction into the work in the husband's house and from then onwards, she is taken as a full member of the house qualified to take part in all its work. Then follows a limited feast in which she serves food to her husband and the members of his family.

Three other functions in the first year of marriage for the married couple are important. The first is *Āḍi-tēvai*, the inviting of the newly married couple to the bride's place. The general belief is that the girl should not conceive in the month of *Āḍi* (July-August). Hence, the bride is brought to her mother's house even before the first of *Āḍi*. The bridegroom is invited, given feasts and presents. 18th *Āḍi* coincides with his visit. On this day, the yellow cotton thread on which the *Tirumāṅgalya* and its accessory golden balls and gems are strung on a golden chain; the thread is then confined to the *Gaṅga* (Kāvēri) after due *pūja*. When the month is over the bride and bridegroom are sent back together to his place. *Dipāvai* is the next important ceremony. Both are invited to the bride's place and new clothes are given to both. After oil bath and feasts, they return to his place, *Poṅgal* is always celebrated in the bridegroom's place. Elaborate presents are sent for the bride to his place. Sugar cane, jaggery and fruits form the major items of presents.

16. PREGNANCY AND CHILD BIRTH

After marriage there are certain rituals connected with pregnancy and child birth. The arrival of the first child is a great event in any family. On the seventh month of pregnancy an elaborate ritual is celebrated in the birth place of the girl. It is generally known as *Vaḷai kāppu* providing the protective bands or bangles. This is principally a ladies' function, although men are also invited to the function. This function as well as the next, are to be done in an odd month, the seventh universally; very rarely the ninth; never on a month of even number. Seven kinds of rice dishes (such as *veṇ pongal*, *eḷ*, (sesamum) coconut, *pūḷi*, lime, sugar and curd) are prepared; seven kinds of sweets, seven savoury dishes, seven *vadakam* etc. are got ready; seven comes into the

picture because it is the seventh month of pregnancy. If this is done on the ninth month, every item will have to be of nine varieties. At an auspicious hour, the pregnant girl is bathed and dressed in new clothes presented by the parents for the purpose. New protective bangles known as *Sūl kāppu* (pregnancy bands) are placed on her forearms. They are made in twisted silver and gold. Then a good number of green glass bangles are placed on her forearms. This and the feeding are the chief functions. Her hair is decked in a profusion of fragrant jasmine and other flowers. Then she is treated to the luxurious variety of dishes. Along with her a few young girls are also fed. Then there is a bigger feast for men and women. Presents of sari and other clothes also arrive from the girl's husband's place. The ceremony is known in different names according to the various acts of felicitation, as *pū-chūṭṭal*, *vaṭaiyal-kāppu* and *sādam pisaindu-pōṭṭal*. The idea behind this is that all the pregnant woman's desires are to be satisfied in flower, jewellery, food and in dress.

The next function is the *Seemantam* conducted in the same month, but in the husband's place. Here the bridegroom and the bride are seated together, the purōhit lights a fire and performs a homa. This is an orthodox ceremony, propitiating the various deities and praying for a safe delivery and long life to the child to be born. Music accompanies the function. This is a much grander function than the previous one, and most male members of both the parties take part. When this ceremony is over, the girl is brought back to her parent's place, where her first child birth is to take place. Her coming here also should be in an odd month, seven or nine.

Child Birth

As soon as the child is born, a bunch of *margosa* leaves are tied over the threshold of the house and over the place of confinement of the girl, to indicate that there is a child birth in this house and that unclean persons or those carrying any infection should not enter. The new-born child and its mother are kept in isolation in the house for fifteen days at the end of which a purification ceremony is performed by a purōhit. On the evening

of the day, a short pūja is made for Ganēsa to whom rice and coconut chips soaked in treacle is offered. Protective bands are placed on the child's arms. A string made of *caleotropis* fibre is tied round the child's waist, a band of margosa leaf ridges is placed on its hands; bangles of twisted copper and silver are placed on the child's feet. The child is named on this day. It is placed for the first time in a cradle, then it is taken out and handed over to an elderly sumāngali who had led a happy life with many children and grand children and the mother of the child bows to the lady and receives her blessings.

17. FESTIVALS

Tamiḷnādu abounds in festivals. There is a major festival every month in all the twelve months of the year. It is needless to dwell on them at length. These are celebrated by all classes of the people including the vēlālar. As examples, we may mention the New Year Day festival, the *Chitrā Pourṇami*, *Vināyaka chaturthi* and *Dipāvali*. There are yet more others which are celebrated equally by the others but they have some unique features pertaining to the Kārkāttār. Some of them are indicated below.

Āḍip-Perukku

The Āḍi 18th (early August, about the 3rd) has a special significance for the Kārkāttār. On this day all the village families go to the Kāvēri and there perform a short pūja to the river, as a token of thanks-offering for the water she carries and supplies to their fields. This is perhaps a rare instance of a festival when the entire community of men, women and children take part. All of them ofcourse bathe in the river. The river is conceived as a celestial nymph; along with food and flowers, she is offered *kādōlai* (a symbolic earring made of palamyra leaf, dyed red), and *karukamaṇi*, (black bangles). These are dropped into the Kāvēri waters with heart-felt prayers. Kapparisi (rice mixed with treacle and coconut chips) are offered to Kāvēri and distributed to all those present. This is a gāḷa day for the children who prepare a toy cart on four wheels, place all the offerings

to the river on the cart and draw it to the river bank. This is also an occasion to display their sense of art and creative ingenuity in decorating the cart.

This festival is a very important one for the Kārkāttār, for whom the Kaveri is a sort of tutelary deity. On this day, the 18th, the belief is that Kaveri is in full floods, water rising up to its 18 steps fully. For the past, more than a thousand years or perhaps even twenty centuries, it has been like this and naturally the gratitude of the Kārkāttār who are typical of the agriculturists is shown to the river. We should remember this was before the Mettur dam was built and before the threat of the Mysore dams arose.

Sarasvati Pūja

One of the very important domestic festivals is the Sarasvati pūja. The Kārkāttār conduct it in their homes in their own way, and not on the Brahmin model. The *kolu* (durbar or sitting in State of the deity) is generally not laid out for the first nine days. On the day of the Sarasvati pūja printed books and more particularly palm leaf manuscripts are taken out, cleaned and arranged for pūja. Special care is taken to oil the palm leaves. All agricultural implements and other domestic tools such as weights and measurs and kitchen tools are cleaned and laid out for worship. The Sarasvathi puja is also the Ayudha Pūja, worship of work, of the instruments and tools used for any kind of work. This makes it clear that the agriculturist, the Kārkāttār, is the one class which really follows the maxim "work is worship". A piece of thread soaked in turmeric water is thrown over the books and manuscripts arranged for worship and pūja is offered twice that day. On the second day, the Vijayadasami day, another pūja is done and the books and manuscripts are removed; children take out their books and sit down for a short period in symbolic study. This day is considered particularly auspicious for children's first admission to school and starting of the first lessons in alphabet.

On this day in particular, there is a festival in the local Śiva temple. Parvatī, consort of Śiva, is taken out in procession and

she slays the Mahiṣāsura, the symbol of ignorance. This particular act is known as the shooting of the arrow (*ambu-pōḍutal*).

Tiruvādirai Darsanam

The *Ārudra* festival in the month of *Mārgaḷi* (December-January) is a very important one for the Kārkāttār. This relates to the dance of Naṭarāja. On this day, the form of Naṭarāja is taken out in a procession and a dance of Naṭarāja is conducted in the temple corridor. This is the day when the Naṭarāja's car is drawn through the streets of Chidambaram and His symbolic cosmic dance is conducted in the temple. All the Kārkāttār do a pūja for Naṭarāja in their homes and offer *kaḷi* (a sweet cumbu or rice porridge) to Him in memory of the same porridge which was offered a thousands years ago by the low caste Sēnda to Naṭarāja and accepted by Him. The puja with *kaḷi* on the ārdra day is the unique festival of the Kārkāttār.

Poṅgal Festival

Pongal or *Sankarānti*, as is well known is a national festival for the whole of Tamiḷnādu for four days. The first day is the Bhōgi-pandigai on the last day of *Mārgaḷi*. The next day, the first of Thai is the Poṅgal day; the day next to it is the Maṭṭuppongal set apart for the cattle; and the day following commonly called Karināḷ, is universally set apart for games and play.

It is usual for all parents to send poṅgal presents to their daughters for poṅgal festival. This is sent a day earlier. All communities of people in Tamiḷnādu observe this custom fully. The presents usually consisting of sugarcane, sugar and jaggery plenty of plantain fruits, a few pieces of the turmeric plant (rhizomes with the plants) are sent by a special messenger. Some money is also presented. Where the father is not alive, a brother sends the present. Among the Kārkāttār, a more important and a more precious item is added; and that is a plaited wick dipped in ghee with some ghee in a container. This is intended to be lighted during *poṅgal*. This is a matter of rare right and privilege for a married girl or woman, irrespective of age (so long as she is a *sumaṅgali*) to receive it from the house of her birth.

The idea is that she is taking all prosperity from her birth place into her wedded house. This is a very unique custom still preserved among the Kārkāttār. Where the other presents could not be sent, as it is very often happens in modern days because the lady's husband is employed in a far off city, the ghee-soaked wick at least is sent by post, many days in advance, with an amount by money order to substitute for the other presents.

What have been mentioned so far, are festivals which are celebrated by all the Kārkāttār at the same time through out the land. There are yet some others which are celebrated by individual families on occasions suitable to them. The more important among them are described below. Of these the first two originated with the Kārkāttār but are now observed by many other communities also. They are called *nōnbu*, penance accompanied with fasting and worship. The others are merely known as worship (*paḍaittal*) and continue to be peculiar to the Kārkāttār.

Sevvāy-Piḷḷaiyar Nōnbu

A special worship of Ganēsa on the night of a Tuesday (*Sevvāy*) twice a year in the months of *Āḍi* (August-September) and *Thai* (December-January) is known by this name. All the women of the community assemble together in a suitable house in the village in the night. This is an exclusive function for women and no male, not even a baby in arms, is allowed into the house. The actual worship is done after midnight. Necessary material for pūja and for cooking are brought into the house. The function begins after the entire village has gone to sleep. Rice is pounded into powder along with leaves of pongamia and margosa, one or three images of Ganēsa are made on the spot for worship, and the pūja performed. The offerings made to Ganēsa are eaten up then and there by the women folk present; no part is kept out or taken home or given to a male. No male member is allowed to witness the pūja or partake of any of the offerings. This exclusive worship is said to confer long life to the husbands of the participants and prosperity for the family. Legends say that any male who attempted to witness the pūja through a key hole or in any similar manner was struck blind on the spot.

This is also known as *Avvaiyār nōnbu*, since the Tamil legendary old poetess Avvai performed it and secured the grace of Ganēsa. As the years rolled on, many other communities copied this pūja from the Kārkāttār and this is now found widely prevalent among all classes of the Vēlāṅgār.

Veḷḷi-p-pillaiyar nonbu: This is done on a Friday in the small hours of the morning, just before the day-break. Women only do this of course, but this is not so secretive as the other one; the offerings cooked and presented to Ganēsa are even distributed to the males after some time. Cakes and *Koḷukkaṭṭai* are made without the addition of salt and offered.

Worship of the Family-deity called '*Veeḷḷu deivattukku paḍaittal*' in Tamil: This is a peculiar worship done perhaps once in five years when all men and women of the same gōtra are invited to assemble in the house of the parent stock for the pūja. The family deity is generally invoked in a special sari, to which worship is offered and the saris are stored after pūja in a rattan box or in a new burnt mud pot and kept in a place where it will be free from pollution by touch.

On the day of the pūja all the members of the gōtra assemble in the elder's house with their wives and children. Daughters and sons-in-law of the house are also invited. The place of worship is a large hall in the house. The place is cleaned and decorated with kolam and red and white paint and festoons. The saris placed in the pot at a previous worship are taken out and twisted round and placed erect on a clean seat. The belief is that any women young or old who died a *sumāṅgali*, i.e., while her husband is alive, exists in the *sari* as the guardian angel of the house. Along with the old *saris* worshipped previously and stored in the pot, new substitute saris are placed on the seat for worship. Besides, new saris to represent any women who might have died in the *sumāṅgali* state between the date of the last pūja and the present one, are also placed; where necessary, additional saris are also added. After pūja, the old saris are taken out and distributed to the *sumāṅgali* women in this household and the new ones stored up in the pot for the next pūja.

The sari used is also of a special make. It is called *veḷḷai kaṣṣuppuḍavai*; it was of a dark red colour with a lighter shade border. It was always made to order and was not available in the market. Often, white dhoties and other saris are also placed in the seat of worship and these are presented to the menfolk and the daughters of the house. No black line or border is permitted in the dhoti or sari; they are pure white or red. Such *pūja* saris are not meant for daily wear but only for special auspicious occasions. Along with saris, *Tirumāngalyam* and the *Muhūrttak-kūṟai* of the ladies of the house are also placed on the *pūja* pedestal. When a partition of family property is made, these deity-saris are also partitioned. If there are not sufficient number of saris a special *pūja* is conducted where new saris are purchased and worshipped and then the partition is effected. The local deities and the kuladeivam are propitiated by a *pūja*, the previous evening.

The saris thus taken out after *pūja* are considered to have divine curative powers. Children who fall ill in the house are wrapped with these saris in the belief that their illness will be cured.

Pūja cannot be done in the year in which a death occurs in a house of any member of the gotra. Hence it so happens that for many years this *pūja* cannot not be done.

Kula Deiva Worship

What was narrated about is the worship of the tutelary deity of the house (*viṭṭu deivam*). There is another called the *kula deiva pūja* (worship of the common deity for the group or class). Here the *kula* stands for the *gōtra*; member families of the *gōtra* have the same *Kula Deiva*. *Kula deivam* here is always a minor deity like *Ankālamman*, *Periyanāyakiamman*, *Māriamman* etc. This deity is usually installed, not in the big Śiva temple of the village nor in the centre of the village, but only on the out-skirts there-of. Compared to the Śiva temple, this was an insignificant one. But yet families were required to go there and offer their own particular worship at least once a year. This *Amman* may not be in the same village where the families cluster. Generally it is in

another village which is a few miles away from theirs. Since all villages were virtually self-contained economic units, it was just possible that there might not be adequate inter-village communication. To ensure that the villages had plenty of mutual social contact, this system of Kula Deiva worship, in places other than one's own was probably laid down.

Whole families, men, women and children, go to the other village in bullock carts for the whole day. (This practice obtains even now). Arrangements are made well in advance. Articles for *pūja* and for preparation of food are taken. On arrival at the other village local friends and relatives are also invited. The actual *pūja* is done by the *Gurukkaḷ* (in rare cases by the *pūjari* of a lower class). The women of the families make a few big balls of rice dough mixed with treacle, make a depression on their top to contain some oil (in this case ghee), place a wick on it and light several such lamps in the immediate presence of the deity. This is called *mā-viḷakku* (flour-lamps). The lamps burn for some time and when the *pūja* is over they are broken up and distributed, as offerings of the deity to be eaten by friends and relatives.

This *pūja* is made to coincide with the first birth anniversary of a child (both male and female) in the families. Usually, the shaving of the hair on the head of the child is done on this day at this temple and that is the occasion for a *pūja*. This is usually celebrated with a certain degree of pomp. It is customary in the families, even today to perform this shaving ceremony in the kula deiva temple.

The ear-boring ceremony for the child is also done this day, the day of the first anniversary of its birth. The gold-smith does this, with a golden pin having a pendant. The child is the recipient of many presents from its maternal uncle and similar relatives.

19. THE KARKATTĀR FUNERAL RITES

Like most of the communities in Tamiḷnadu the Karkattār cremate the dead bodies, except in the case of children, sanyasins (ascetics) and persons who had died of smallpox and measles.

A cluster of Kārkāttār families has a common cremation ground where the dead body is carried on the shoulders of four men of the same gotra, or close relatives, and then cremated. It was customary to wait for the arrival of the close relatives of the deceased before removing the body; when it is ascertained that most of them have arrived and the others may not come in time, arrangements are made for the removal of the body; The last minutes of the dying man or woman are helped to pass off peacefully by a recital of Tiruvāçakam, the sacred utterances sung by St. Manikkavāçakar (made if possible by the children or grand children of the dying person). A bier is made with newly cut bamboos; the body is washed in a ceremonial manner with many articles such as oil, milk, lemon juice, coconut water, sandal and Ganges water (which is usually kept handy in a small sealed brass pot in many families), and then placed on the bier. The two toes of the body are tied together with a shred of new cloth another shred is used to fasten the crown and the lower jaw, in order that no de-formations occur when the *rigor mortis* sets in.

A pillow is provided with darbha grass and the body except the face is covered with a new white cloth. If the deceased was a person who had received *Śiva dikṣa* (spiritual initiation) or had been performing *Śiva pūja*, then special rites are performed to discharge these spiritual acquisitions from him. The son of the deceased or his representative accompanies the corpse, carrying fire in a new mudpot hung on a tripod; this fire is intended to light the funeral pyre at the cremation ground. Funeral drums mark the death and the removal of the body; a conch-blower accompanies the drummers along with the corpse to the cremation ground. Puffed rice, coconut and plantain leaves are strewn at intervals along the path to the ground. Split logs of wood are spread at the cremation ground on which the corpse is laid. Some further rituals are done there before actual cremation. *Vāykkarisi* is one ritual; a handful of rice with a coin is offered to the body and thrown away on a piece of cloth, which is collected by the village washerman. Each member of the family and near relatives offer this; the washerman bags a substantial collection of money and of rice. The presentation of this rice i

symbolic of the primitive belief that this rice helps to relieve the hunger of the departed soul on its path towards the region of the manes. The rituals attendant on the funeral, are all in a reverse direction to those done at auspicious occasions. The body is carried to the cremation ground, feet foremost; the feet are kept towards the south of the pyre. *Vāykarisi* is again offered, the strings tying together the toes and the head and the lower jaw are snapped. The son or the heir who lights the funeral pyre goes round the pyre on which the body is now placed, thrice in an anti-clockwise direction, carrying water on an unburnt mudpot on which two holes are made on each round; the out flowing water is sprinkled on the corpse with the back of the hand; the pot is then thrown down so that it breaks. Generally all trinkets are removed from the body of the deceased man or woman, as soon as the body is laid in the funeral pyre before lighting the fire; no strings or other fastenings are permitted on the body. The whole body is then covered with a new white cloth; dried cow dung cakes which will easily burn are spread on the body before the pyre is lit. The son then lights the funeral pyre with a piece of lighted sandal splinter, with his back to the pyre and inserting the fire by thrusting it backwards, without looking at the pyre. He then goes away to a tank or river, bathes, and then returns home with the other relatives; he is required to wash his feet before setting foot into the house. Meanwhile, his close relatives or friends distribute the fees to the various services such as the drummer, conch-blower, barber, washerman, the cremation attendant and so on.

In the village, if the death occurs in a house in a main street, all *pūja* in the central temple is stopped until the corpse is removed from the house; then a purification ceremony is performed in the temple and *pūja* resumed.

All preparation of food is stopped in the house of death until the removal of the corpse. The main mourners go without food for the period. Neighbours, who are of course relatives of the deceased, take the visitors to their house and feed them when necessary.

The second day's ceremony is called *pāl teḷi* (sprinkling of milk) or *sañjivanam*. Early in the morning, relatives and friends go to the cremation ground taking the son with them, remove the bones from the burnt body and throw them into a sacred river or tank with appropriate rites. The remaining ashes are laid out, as though they were his body itself, milk is sprinkled on it and also several varieties of grains, to symbolize that whatever ash is left of the mortal remains of the deceased, is used for sustaining the agricultural crops. All the people have a bath in the river or tank, go home and have a meal in the deceased's house.

Mourning is observed for fifteen days. The post-funeral rites are of four classes: one, the *nitya srāddha* for the period of fifteen days; two, the *uttara kriya* or *karumādi* on the fifteenth day and the *graha yajña* on the next day; three, the *māsya* or monthly *srāddha* for eleven months following; and four, the *srāddha* on the twelfth month or anniversary day. *Nitya srāddha* consists of a ritual of propitiation for the welfare of the soul of the departed on whose account a *dāna* (gift) is made to a Brahmin; the *dāna* consists of rice and groceries (un-cooked) and vegetables served on a plantain leaf with a water vessel (a brass tumbler) or the like. This is done for each of the fifteen days at the end of which comes the fifteenth day ceremony.

Even before day break of the day, a small piece of stone is placed in the house; on this the spirit of the deceased is invoked and the women of the house join together and pour their sorrow over it in lines of lamentation. Then the men folk take the stone in a basket along with the other requisites to the appointed place on the bank of a tank, where a small shelter is erected for the performance of the obsequies. A *Dēsika* or *purōhiti* is present for the due performance of the rituals. This is a long process extending over several hours. The soul of the deceased is re-embodied by mantras on a *darbha* form and all the rituals, due from birth to death are performed, with *agni* (fire) as the witness. Elaborate gifts are made to Brahmins in 1, 6, 6-8, or 1, 10 and 18 varieties; articles gifted are invariably rice and groceries, vegetables and fruits,

chappals, new clothes, vessels, seats, umbrella, fan, book, and cow with calf. Each is accompanied by a cash present. After all presents are over, and the *purōhit* and Brahmins are sent away, the party have a bath, return home and have a good meal.

The next day's rituals give a culmination to this day's work. It is called the *graha yajña*, or the sacrifice for (the welfare of) the home. A sacrificial fire is lit, all the deities are propitiated, elaborate *dānas* are again made, mantra water is sprinkled on all the related persons and in the entire house itself in token of purification from the death pollution, Death is an inauspicious event and with this purification ceremony all inauspiciousness is deemed to have ended and a new feeling of auspiciousness to have settled down upon the family. This is also the occasion for the receipt of many presents by the children of the deceased from the other close relatives.

The *māsya* is a monthly *srāddha* ceremony performed on the monthly *tithi* (lunar day of death) of the departed person. This is a form of propitiation for the departed soul, conducted by the *purōhit*.

The first anniversary of the day of death is performed on the twelfth month with great pomp. It is a great event in the family when many friends and relatives are invited. The propitiation ceremony is done elaborately, presents are made to Brahmins and a sumptuous lunch is also served. More important is the poor feeding on the day. This ceremony is known as the *sraddha* ceremony and is repeated every year.

20. INTEGRATION OF THE DIFFERENT AREAS

The Kārkāttār had been living in the Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam area (Kañchipuram and Tiru-Ālangāḍu), the Coḷanād and the Paṇḍinād. But now, it is doubtful if they could be found in numbers anywhere in the Toṇḍai-maṇḍalam area. In each of the other areas they are found in large numbers.

Difficulty in transport and communication kept the Kārkāttār in the north (Tanjāvūr, Tiruchi and South Arcot) and the Kārkāttār

in the south (Madurai, Ramanathapuram and Tirunelvēli) separate. They had throughout kept themselves as strangers to each other, as if in water-tight compartments. They would know that they belong to the same community; they would dine together but would not inter-marry.

A span of three centuries separates the Kārkāttār of Coḷanād and the Kārkāttār of Paṇḍinād. Those of Paṇḍinād still retain all the cultural peculiarities which marked the Kārkāttār in general as a separate community before their migration farther south. They retain all the gotra titles, all the special characteristics in the matter of food, and the very special ceremony of *Tiru-viḷakkīdu* even more rigidly than those in the Coḷanād. Their marriage and other customs continue to be identical. Now with quicker means of transport and communication and with more of governmental and private jobs which throw them up into all sorts unknown and unexpected corners of Tamiḷnādu, the two sections have to know each other more closely and they have to realize that they are one community. Inter-marriages have started with the hope of effecting a real integration of the members in the two areas into one unit, as they had been before the historic migration.

A word may be said about the Koṅgumaṇḍalam area. Some enlightened persons in the Koṅgunāḍu say they are also Kārkāttār. The Kavunḍar of Koṅgunāḍu come under two broad classifications one is the Vēḷāḷak-kavunḍar and the other, Vanniyak-kavunḍar; the latter have been non-vegetarians for ages past. The former call themselves Vēḷāḷar. In support of the theory that they are also Kārkāttār, they have their own version of the Kārkāttā incident in Paṇḍinād—the Vēḷāḷar standing surety for the proper behaviour of the clouds. It is called the Kārkāttā nāṭakam, done as a musical drama at the close of the 18th century. Other books of the same category are *Mēḷi viḷakkam* (a poem on the plough and the plougher) and the large *Vēḷāḷar purāṇam*. In spite of all this evidence, the Kārkāttār of Coḷanādu will be very unlikely to consider them as of the same fold as themselves.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF KABĪRDĀS AND RĀMALIṄGASWĀMI

S. N. GANESAN, M.A., Ph.D.

Among the saintly philosopher-poets of Hindi and Tamil who, moved by the strife-torn condition of the society of their times, tried to find a universally acceptable religious ideology placing stress on self-refinement and mutual love, Kabīrdās (1398-1474) and Rāmaliṅgaswāmi¹ (1823-1874) have an important place. Though they belonged to different ages and different areas, their religious and philosophical ideas show many striking similarities. These two were saints who had secluded themselves from the attractions of the worldly life, but they evinced a keen interest in the well-being of their respective societies. Aware of the demands of the contemporary societies, each evolved his philosophical concepts based on the principle of universal love and brotherhood.

The idea of an impersonal God, the relation between the Self and the Divine Power and the path of realisation conceived of by these saints show remarkable similarity, which goes to prove that the different religious schools in the North and the South had accepted many similar fundamental ideas as a result of mutual exchange and cultural assimilation. A study of the religious and philosophical concepts of the two saints will reveal that they had discerningly accepted the basic and universally acceptable religious and philosophical ideas in the Indian tradition, eschewing all that were prone to arouse disapprobation and create tension. Kabir belonged to a school of poets in Hindi known as Jñānamārga (The Path of Knowledge), which was famous for its rationalistic outlook and outspoken criticism of meaningless religious rituals. The poets of this school considered self-purification through mental control and physical mortification as the way of attaining union

1. Otherwise known as 'Tiruvārūpirakāśavaḷḷalār' or in short 'Vaḷḷalār'.

with God. The basic tenets of their philosophy were inherited from the Yogis of the Nāth Panth, but they were influenced by several other philosophies as well. Among the poets of the Path of Knowledge, Kabir is considered as the most important. Rāma-liṅga Swāmi came in the tradition of Śaiva saints, but by his personal spiritual attainments he established his individuality and founded a philosophy of his own, which though not opposed to the basic ideologies of Śaivism, show some basic principles which are meant for making spiritual attainment possible for all. Before going into the philosophical ideas of the two saint-poets, it will be useful to scan the background of their times.

Background of Kabir's Life

It was in a period of social strife and religious degeneration that Kabīrdās lived. For centuries since the period of the conquests of Mahmud of Ghazni (1001-1024), the political and social life in North India was constantly under strain. The various dynasties that established their power subsequent to the attack of Ala-ud-din Ghori could not give stable government or good administration. Some Muslim rulers tried to bring at the point of the sword the Hindus into the realm of the Islam, and they succeeded to some extent. Many of the Hindu kings were defeated and vanquished, and many others became the vassals of the Muslim rulers. There was a dissatisfaction among the defeated rulers and the general public.

The political instability had its impact on the religious and social life as well. Frequent attacks by the Muslim conquerors and the defeat of the local rulers resulted in a sort of disappointment, self-disparagement and large-scale social degeneration. In a caste-ridden society, it was quite natural that the prurient upper classes felt practically no responsibility, and the lower classes suppressed for centuries could feel none. The ritualistic aspects of religion had gained prominence over the philosophical, devotional and ethical aspects. This aroused a defiant attitude in many, and several religious groups came into existence which did not accept the orthodox canons of religion, criticized its vain-gloriousness and even went to the extent of challenging the authority of the scrip-

tures which sanctioned the differentiation between man and man on the basis of castes.

The condition of the Muslim masses was none the better. Though the rulers came as victors, the supremacy of none of the dynasties could be fully established. Rivalries among dynasties and even among family-members were common. Many of the rulers thought of amassing wealth and living a luxurious life, leaving the common man to his fate.

During this period of indefiniteness and conflict, Jainism and Buddhism got some opportunity to expand their influence. Under the Rāṣṭrakūṭas (800-1000 A.D.) Jainism had flourished in many parts of the country, though it could not get wide-scale acceptance throughout. As Jainism had already accepted the concept of Incarnation and several other traits from Hinduism, it did not find much violent opposition. In the 12th and the 13th centuries it was very popular in Gujarat. After this, its power declined, but did not completely vanish.

Similarly Buddhism also, especially its Mahāyāna branch gained popularity in many places. In course of time even Mahāyāna split into two - *Pāramita Naya* and *Mantra Naya*, of which Mantra Naya adopted Mantras and Tantras which were already popular among several Hindu cults. *Vajrayāna* branch of Buddhism gave importance to Mantras, Tantras, Haṭhayoga and copulation in their ritualistic performances.

Siddhas and Nāthas :—When there was such a conglomeration of religious cults with their diverse ideologies, philosophies and ritualistic practices, there arose a rather militant religious group as a result of the upsurge among the lower classes against the orthodoxism and the socio-religious discriminations widely prevalent in most places. This was the cult of the Siddhas, who gave much importance to spiritual elevation through mental control and physical mortification. They also practised Haṭhayoga. The Siddhas of the North show remarkable similarities with the Siddhas in the South in their philosophical ideas and religious practices.

Another branch of the Tantric Mahāyāna was the Nātha cult, otherwise known as the Avadhūt cult. The Nāthas claim that Ādinātha or Śiva was the founder of the cult. However it is accepted that Gorakhnāth was the first propagator of the Nātha cult.² Hazari Prasad Dwivedi opines that the Nātha cult originated from the Śākta branch of Śaivism. (Dwivedi, H. P., 1950, P. 179 pl. see Bibliography at the end). Nāthas gave importance to the knowledge of the Self as a part of the Cosmic force and prescribed mental and physical control for its attainment. Haḥayoga also found a place in their rituals.

Advaita Philosophy:—The establishment of Advaita (Non-dualism) by Ācārya Śaṅkara as a philosophical system was an important event in the history of Hinduism. This saved Hinduism from slow annihilation due to the extensive expanse of Jainism and Buddhism. With a strong personality and a well-defined philosophy, Śaṅkara could successfully counter the spreading of these religions and give a new life to Hinduism. His influence spread all over India so much so that a succession of religious preceptors accepted his philosophy and became its interpreters. Due to the influence of Rāmānuja, Rāmānanda, Nimbārka, Vallabha and Mādhva, the whole of North India saw a widespread devotional movement with different ideas about the ways and means of attaining realisation.

The two major devotional ideologies which developed may be considered to have their origin in the 'Swarūpa lakṣaṇa' and 'Taḥastha lakṣaṇa' of Śaṅkara. In *Swarūpa lakṣaṇa*, the real form of God is considered as impersonal and beyond perceptual knowledge. He is *Sat-çit-ānanda*. In *Taḥastha lakṣaṇa*, physical qualities in relation to time and space have been attributed to the Supreme power. Śaṅkara has conceived of *Māyā* to differentiate between the formless impersonal power from the universe

2. It is difficult to trace the origin of the ideas of Gorakhnāth. Hazari Prasad .Dwivedi (1950) P. 32 *Nāth Sāmpradāy* has traced the influence of Śākta cult of Śaivism on him. Govind Trigunayat (1957, *Kabir ki Viçārdhārā* P. 90) says that he was a Buddhist but was later influenced by Śaivism and Yogic cults. Anyhow it may be said that many of his ideas were earlier prevalent among the Śaivites and the Jains. (See Ganesan, S. N., 1975 see Bibliography).

with different formal manifestations. This concept also spread widely and found a place in the philosophies of several schools including the Nāthas, and through them among the Saint Poets of Hindi.

The Dualistic (*Dvaita*) philosophy of Mādhva and the Dualistic-non-Dualistic (*Dvaitādvaita*) philosophy of Nimbārka also had wide influence, and from their inspiration developed the cult of *Saguṇa* devotion, visualising God in various definite forms. The two main incarnations of Viṣṇu, Rāma, the embodiment of virtue and Kṛṣṇa, the embodiment of resplendant charm became great inspiring forces of religious movements, which influenced the poetry of almost all languages of North India.

It is at such a time, when various religious and devotional cults were preaching their ideologies, often vying with each other to establish their supremacy, that Kabīr lived. While the religious movements were working with vigour, the socio-political life was in a morbid state.

Background of Rāmaliṅga Aḍigaḷ

The social environment of Rāmaliṅga Swāmi was quite different. The difference of time and the local conditions cannot be overlooked. However it has to be said that in South India also prevailed a state of tension, though not so much as in North India, and wide-scale disparagement had spread in the political, social and religious fields.

The East India Company came to rule the Madras Presidency in 1802, and ever since till the attainment of Independence, it was in the hands of the English. It was ruled by them through the collectors. But here and there, there were local chieftains called Pājayakkārs. When the governance went to the hands of the Empress in 1858, the Madras government became stronger. As such, the province never had to face a situation of conflict and tension as North India at the time of Kabīr.

But the British rule had slow and sustained impact on the social life. Caste system had flourished earlier. In the early period

of the British rule, the higher castes availed of the opportunities of education and gained some high positions. It was only towards the end of the 19th century that the lower castes began to get some education through the missionary efforts of the Western priests and scholars. However, even then, their condition was not substantially improved. Thus during the lifetime of Rāmaliṅga Swāmi, the social stratification was strong, but it did not result in serious tensions.

In the religious field, the antagonism which existed between the Śaivites and the Vaiṣṇavites during the earlier periods had somewhat subsided. Though they could not reconcile with each other in the ideological field, there were no overt conflicts which could spoil the social atmosphere. The society at large had accepted certain norms from both.

The Muslim contact also did not create much tension as in North India. The Muslims came to South India not as conquerors but as traders and had more peaceful cultural contacts with the Hindus. Many Muslims have enriched Tamil Literature in the 18th and the 19th centuries.

Later, when the Europeans came to South India, then also there was not much religious strife. The religious work of the missionaries were peaceful. As many of them identified themselves with the Indians, even learning the local language and writing in it, there was no serious cause for conflicts. However, their success in propagating Christianity, and the success of the English in establishing power had some deep influence on the overall psychic features of the people. Though there were no serious conflicts, there was also no strong uniting force to keep the society tightly knit together and to drive it in the way of progress with a common purpose and direction. Thus there was the necessity of finding a religious and philosophical ideology which would not impair the existing values, but would be acceptable to all alike. It was precisely this need that the philosophy of Rāmaliṅga Aḍigaḷ fulfilled.

It was in such social backgrounds that Rāmaliṅga Aḍigaḷ and Kabīrdās lived and made their pursuit of divine knowledge. Their

verses give vent to their philosophical and ethical ideas on the one hand and reveal their mystic experiences on the other. In spite of the difference in the social background and personal environment, their ideas show much similarity and are in line with the Indian philosophical tradition. An attempt is made here to give a comparative outline of their spiritual ideas, philosophical concepts and mystic visions.

SPIRITUAL IDEAS

The greatness of Rāmaliṅga Swāmi and Kabīrdās is more as saints than as poets. They had no urge to become poets, nor were their compositions intended to give aesthetic pleasure. Fully aware of the transient nature of life, they had an intense desire to attain something more than the worldly pleasure, to attain a stage of transcendence and supreme bliss. All their endeavours were centred round this dominant desire, a desire to free the Self from the bondages of worldly life and get united with the Supreme Cosmic Power.

Concept of God

Kabīrdās belonged to the school of Jñānamārga, the adherers to which conceived of God as a formless, Omnipresent power un-understandable by normal senses. Rāmaliṅga Aḍigaḷ, though belonging to the Śaivite school, has spoken about these abstract qualities of God, and finally visualised it in the form of Luminance (*jōti*). According to Kabīr, 'He is unattainable (by normal senses), unseen, and luminant.'³ Brahman is limitless and exists everywhere as knowledge.⁴ Rāmaliṅga Swāmi says that the Supreme being which is omnipresent, unfailingly exists in the macrocosmic and the microcosmic world and is itself the living and non-living things.⁵ This Supreme Power is itself the existence of the universe. It is life, life in life and the luminiscence in life.⁶ Both the saints have

3. agam agocar gami nahin tahan jagmagi joti—*Kabīr Granthāvali*, P. 199.

4. avigat aparampār brahma gyān rūp sab thām—*Ibid*, P. 241.

5. aḍḍamelām piṇḍamelāmuyirkaḷelām poruḷkaḷ
aṇavelāmiḍaṅkaḷelām nikkamaṇa niṇainta—*Tiru Aruḷpā*, II, P. 57.

6. ulaka nilai muḷutakiyāṅkaṅkuḷḷa
uyirakiyuyirkkuyiramoḷi taṅagi—*Tiru Aruḷpā*, I, 101.

contended that this Supreme one is beyond normal comprehension. Vaḷḷalār says that God is a pure and Yogic power which is beyond measures, beyond mind and beyond knowledge.⁷ Kabīr says that the nature of Rām (God)⁸ is not known to any.⁹ He is unattainable, unseen, living inside; the whole world is ignorant of Him.¹⁰ Both have stressed that God is existent in every individual. Kabīr says that Hari lives in the heart and advises falling in love with him.¹¹ The One he is searching throughout the world is at last found to be existing in the body itself.¹² As the omnipresent Master is in every body, Kabīr advises not to speak bitter words to any.¹³

Likewise Rāmaliṅga Swāmi considers God as One who has made his heart His temple.¹⁴ He remains concealed in every living being and is a witness of all acts.¹⁵

In the Form of Knowledge

Both Rāmaliṅga Aḍigaḷ and Kabīrdās have accepted God in the form of *Jñāna* (Supreme Knowledge). While they have contended that He is attainable by Knowledge, they have also asserted that He Himself is in the form of Knowledge. According to Vaḷḷalār, He is knowledge that dispels ignorance, knowledge to knowledge (*ie.* greatest of knowledge), knowledge in knowledge

7. aḷavaiyelāṅkaḍantu manaṅkaḍantu maḥḥai
aḥvaiyelāṅkaḍantu kaḍantamala yōgar—*Tiru Aruḥpā*, I, 110.
8. It must be remembered that Kabīr uses the words like Rām, Hari, Govind etc. not in a personal sense. The impersonal God has been addressed by these names.
9. rām gati pār na pāvai koī—*Kabīr Granthāvali*, P. 195.
10. agam agocar abhi antarā, to ko pār nā pāvai dharni dhara—*Ibid.*, P. 179.
11. hīrdā bhītari hari basai tū tahi lyau lai—*Ibid.*, P. 44.
12. jā kāran jag dhūṅḍhiya so to ghaḥ hi mahi.
13. ghaḥ ghaḥ me^d vah sāi ramtā kaḥuk vacan mat bol re
—*Kabīr Granthāvali*, P. 162.
14. enneñcār kōyilena-k-koṅḍōy—*Tiru Aruḥpā*, I, P. 92.
15. toṅḍulakiliḷḷavuyirtoṅumoḷittāḥḥalelān-
kaḍulavukiṅḥatoru kaḷvanevan—*Tiru Aruḥpā*, I, P. 46.

(essence of knowledge) and the knowledge within.¹⁶ Kabir also has said that the unknown and unlimited God exists everywhere in the form of Knowledge.¹⁷

In the Form of Light

The culmination of the spiritual concept of Rāmaliṅga Swāmi is in his concept of the Supreme Power as Light, an ever luminant cosmic force, which he has named as 'Aruṣperum Jōti' (The Great Light of Grace). His main object of worship in the later days has been this Light of Grace, which he considered to be the driving force of all universal phenomena. He has sung in many verses about this Jōti. 'Aruṣperum Jōti Aṣṣakam',¹⁸ and 'Aruṣperum Jōti Akaval'¹⁹ are poems about the great cosmic force in the form of Light of Grace. In *Ānanda-k-kaṣippu*,²⁰ the poet expresses the unique blissful state he attains by the grace of God.

The concept of Light is not a superficial comparison. The intention of the poet is to go deeper and discover the formless and impersonal supreme power. The light that the saint visualises is the symbol of an abstract and absolute power pervading the whole universe and is the essential driving force in everything. That is why it is described as 'jōtiyuḷ jōtiyuḷ jōti' (The Light in the Light in the Light). Kabir has also described his God as Light in many verses. According to him 'He is in the form of Light, which has no death, which has no word or body,²¹ and 'Inside, as Light remains God luminant'.²² Kabir proclaims that he would unite the light of soul with the Cosmic Light, and would thus become free from the bondages of worldly life.²³

16. ayaṛvaṛu pēraṣivākiyavvaṣivukkaṣivāy
aṣivullaṣivāyānakattuḷḷōraṣivāy—*Tiru Aruṣpā*, II, P. 57.

17. avigat aparampār brahma gyan rūp sab ḡhām

—*Kabir Granthāvali*, P. 241.

18. *Tiru Aruṣpā*, II, Pp. 59-61.

19. *Ibid.*, Pp. 511-515.

20. *Ibid.*, II, Pp. 511-515.

21. jyoti sarūp kāl nahi uhvā, vacan na āhi saritrā—Qtd. Ram Chandra Shukla—*Hindi Sāhitya kā Itihas*, P. 72.

22. antar jyoti rām pargāsā—*Kabir Granthāvali*, P. 296.

23. tis jotihī joti milāvūⁿgā, tau māⁿ bahuri na bhaujali āvūⁿgā

—*Ibid.*, P. 123.

Beyond Personal and Impersonal

One important difference between the concepts of Rāmaliṅga Aḍigaḷ and Kabirdās is that Rāmaliṅga Aḍigaḷ has accepted the Supreme power in the specific form of Śiva also. As a Śaivite, he has accepted the physical form of Śiva, as described by many earlier poets. He was also not against idol worship or religious rituals. He has sung about the deities in several places.²⁴ The charming physical beauty of Śiva has been vividly described in many stanzas. Rāmaliṅga Aḍigaḷ with utmost confidence says that by seeing the beauteous form of the Lord, the inner hunger will subside.²⁵ Several stories connected with Śiva have also been narrated by him.

Kabirdās, on the other hand belonged to a group of saints who considered that the Supreme power is beyond formal description. Though Kabīr has used the names Rām, Hari and Govind in many of his stanzas, these have not been used in the usual senses, but only as synonyms of the Impersonal Power. This concept originally found in Ṛg Veda, has come down through the Upaniṣads and has been accepted by many religious schools.²⁶ The poets of the Path of Knowledge, including Kabīr have also accepted the idea.

However, this difference in stress should not make us overlook the basic concept of the two poets. In spite of this difference both the poets subscribed to the basic idea that the Supreme Power is both concrete and abstract, with form and without form, but beyond all descriptions. According to H. P. Dwivedi, Kabīr got this idea inherited from the Yoga cult of Gorakhnāth,²⁷ who proclaimed that this form of God is superior to other forms for meditation and realisation. Kabīr himself has said that the different forms may be useful in various stages of spiritual pursuit.

24. *Tiru Aruṭpa*, I, P. 53 ff., St. 208-232.

25. *cirtti nikaz cempavaḷaccemmēṇiyinaḷakum, pārttiruntai nammuṭpaci pōṅkāṅ—Tiru Aruṭpā*, P. 55.

26. For a detailed study of the subject, see Bibliography, Ganesan, S. N. (1975):

27. Hazariprasad Dwivedi (1960, Ed. 6), *Kabīr*, P. 68.

He advises acceptance of the personal God as an object of attachment and the impersonal one as the object of service, but clearly asserts that he himself as a Yogi would concentrate on the One that is beyond form and formlessness.²⁸ He has clearly defined the stages of spiritual pursuit suitable for different people. The ordinary man worships the God with limited form, the Sadhu (Sage) worships the one who is boundless and impersonal and he who has attained supreme knowledge discards both.²⁹ Thus according to Kabir, though the Supreme power can be accepted in different forms, the power which is beyond all perceptual knowledge is the one to be meditated upon at the highest stage of spiritual attainment.

In the case of Rāmaliṅga Swāmi also, the ultimate aim is the realisation of the Supreme, which is beyond the personal and the impersonal. Though he has accepted tradition and sung about the Lord in his concrete forms, his constant effort has been to acquire the knowledge of that Supreme Being, which is formless and beyond description. He has explicitly described such a form in some of his verses. In one verse he says 'He is form, image in the form, form in the image, the One in the form, the formless, the formlessness in the formless, the One in the formless.³⁰ He urges the ignorant to understand that it is the one that exists in the form and the formless - in the concrete and the abstract.³¹

It is clear that in spite of the difference in stress they lay on the different forms of God, both the saints have the ultimate aim of attaining union with the one Supreme Power which is beyond sensual perception.

PHILOSOPHIC CONCEPTS

God and Self

Both in Śaivism and in Advaita philosophy, it is contended that the Cosmic power pervading the universe and the Soul in the

28. nirguṇ ki sevā karo sarguṇ ki kari ās
sarguṇ nirguṇ ke pare tahā hamārā vās—*Kabir*.

29. had meⁿ rahe so mānvi, behad rahai so sādhu,
had behad donon tajai, tin kā matā agadh—*Kabir*, P. 215.

30. *Tiru Aruṣpā*, I, P. 104.

31. *Tiru Aruṣpā*, II, P. 436.

individual being are one and the same. The realisation of this truth and dissolving the soul with the boundless cosmic soul has been the ultimate aim of the spiritual pursuit. But, for the soul in the normal state, it is impossible because it is shrouded by Illusion, named Maya in Advaita and Pāśa in Śaivism. As a consequence of this illusion, man fails to realise his own self, the real nature of the soul and its relation with the cosmic force. It is due to this illusion that man becomes strongly conscious about his own self. It is only by abandoning this egoistic feeling that the soul can attain the union with the Lord and resume its real nature. Rāmaliṅga Aḍigaḷ and Kabirdās have repeatedly spoken about this dissolution of the Self. Aḍigaḷ says that the egoistic man does not know himself, and caring for himself (which is just an illusion) gets destroyed.³² Kabir categorically says that as long as one cares for the self, nothing can be achieved, but when 'I' and 'My' are annihilated, then comes the realisation of Hari.³³ Both the saints had attained this knowledge and felt that they themselves were nothing, but the Supreme being was everything. With the utmost humility Kabir says, 'There is nothing mine in me, whatever is there is only Thine; by surrendering to Thee what is Thine, what do I lose?'³⁴ Rāmaliṅga Swāmi considers that even his words are not his own but those of his Lord.³⁵ He asks, 'Who am I, and what knowledge would I have if the 'Siva' himself is not dancing in my blood?'.³⁶

The sense of Ego is essentially due to the illusion of Māyā, about which both the saints have elaborately described. It is extremely difficult to get out of the shackles of Māyā. According to Kabir, Māyā does not leave us even if we leave it, it ens-

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32.āḥavattil niyāreṇavaḥiyāy.....nanēṇṇu ḥolli nalintānāiyē
—*Tiru Aruṭpā*, I, P. 76.
33. jab lagi māⁿ māⁿ karai, tab lagi kaj ek na sarai, jab yah māⁿ merā miṭi jāi, tab hari kaj sanvāre āy—*Kabir Granthāvali*, P. 205.
34. mēṣ mujh mēⁿ kuch nahin, jo kuch hē so tor, terā tujh ko saumpte, kē lāgai hē mor.
35. nāḡuraikkum vārttaiyēlēm nāyakaḡ tag vārttai
nāḡuraikkum vārttaiyāṇṇu
—*Tiru Aruṭpā*, II, P. 413.
36. nāḡāreṇakkeḡavōṛ ḥāṇavuparvōtu śivam
ūḡāḍi nillāvūṭi—*Ibid.*, P. 413.

nares us again and again.³⁷ It is because of the egoistic feeling due to *Māyā* that we have feelings like honour and respect. Thus honour and respect are themselves *Māyā*, and when this *Māyā* leaves, then there is Divine Knowledge.³⁸ Kabīr considers that *Māyā* exists everywhere³⁹ and it entangles even the Gods.⁴⁰ Rāmaliṅga Swāmi, in his '*Māyāvīlakkaṁ*', has dealt with the nature of *Māyā* and the miseries of the soul which is caught in its noose. The goal of spiritual pursuit is to get free from the illusive sense and understand the real nature of the soul and the relation it has with the Cosmic Power.

The acceptance of the basic unity of the Supreme Power and the Soul and a strong longing for re-attaining the union is a fundamental idea in the philosophy of both the saints.

MYSTIC VISIONS

The Ways of Realisation and Mystic Experience

All spiritual pursuits have the aim of realising something beyond the normal worldly truths. The understanding of the Cosmic Truth leads to the liberation of the Soul. In such a state of liberation the Soul feels itself free from all bondages and remains in a condition of sublime peace and tranquility. Various ways have been preferred by various schools of spiritualists to attain this end. Knowledge (*Jñāna*), physical mortification (*Yoga*) and devotion (*Bhakti*) are the important means adopting which several saints have tried to attain this state of utmost joyousness. The influence of all these are found on Rāmaliṅga Swāmi and Kabīr.

The Path of Knowledge

Both the saints have elaborately described the knowledge that dispels ignorance and gives union with the cosmic power. This knowledge is different from worldly knowledge. So the saints consider the reading of books as futile. If Rāmaliṅga Aḍigal says that all the scriptures make us stagger, and do not give eyes

37. *Kabīr Granthāvali*, P. 114.

38. *māyā ādar māyā mān, māyā taji brahma giyān—Ibid.*, E. 114.

39. *Ibid.*, P. 115.

40. Kabirdās, *Bijak*, St. 59.

A pot in water and water in the pot,
 Water within and without ;
 The pot gets broken, water mingling with water,
 The wise one knows the Truth.⁴⁷

The limitless expanse attained thus is not only spatial, but also temporal. The soul crosses the temporal barriers and gets eternal life, as well as sublime enjoyment. Rāmaliṅga Swāmi says, that the Lord has given him such an immortal state. By the fortune of the previous life, he has become immortal and has seen God in his own self,⁴⁸ and due to this divine presence he feels that the mortal body will attain immortality and will get supreme joy.⁴⁹ Kabīrdās has again and again spoken about this state of immortality. With a sense of pride he says,

‘The physician died, the patient died.
 Died the whole of the world ;
 But one Kabīr did not die,
 Whose sustain is the Lord.’⁵⁰

Because of his faith, he is able to say with unswerving confidence :

‘I will not die, the world will die,
 For I have got the One that gives life.’⁵¹

The unique pleasure obtained on reaching this state has been described by Vaḷḷalār in poems like *Ānanda-k-kaḷippu* and *Ānanda mēliṭu*. In several songs written in the style of folk songs⁵²

47. jal meⁿ kumbh kumbh meⁿ jal hæ, bāhar bhitar pāni,
 phūṭ kumbh jal jalahi samānā, yah tatth samajhau gyāni
 —*Kabīr Granthāvali*, P. 103.

48. ‘Māyai nikkam’, St. 1, 4.—*Tiru Aruḷpā*, II, P. 431.
 Also cākāta kalviyilē talai kāṭṭikkoṭuttir—*Ibid.*, II, P. 271.
 cākāta varameṇakkē tanta taṇṭitteyvam—*Ibid.*, II, P. 236.

49. *Ibid.*, II, P. 447.

50. vaid muā roḡi muā, muā sakal sansār,
 ek kabīrā nā muā, jāhi ke rām adhār.

51. mæⁿ na maraun maribo sansārā
 ab mohi milio hæ jiyāvanhārā.—*Sant Kabir*, P. 14.

52. pānkiyarkkaṭṭivuruṭṭal, *Tiru Aruḷpā*, II, P. 525 ; Veṇṇiḷ, *Ibid.*, P. 527,
 naṭṭēcar koṭṭmi, *Ibid.*, P. 529 ; aṭṭam, *Ibid.*, P. 544 ; kāṭṭikkāṇṇi, *Ibid.* ;
 P. 546 ; akkacci, *Ibid.*, P. 549 etc.

Vaḷḷalar seems to be in a revelling mood, his heart full to the brim with the pleasure of divine experience. The moment of feeling united with the Lord is a moment of unique pleasure—the great pleasure of Śivānanda.⁵³ This pleasure is so great that the Lord alone can know it. ‘The joy I got in the divine presence, my Lord alone knows, my mother, my Lord alone knows,’⁵⁴ says the saint as a bride.

Kabirdās is so much thrilled with this experience that he asks his mind to dance in joy, and asks the whole universe to join the dance.

Dance, O my mind, dance in rut,
 Play the tune of love day and night, let all hear,
 Let Rāhu and Kētu and all the planets dance with joy
 throughout life,
 Let the mountains and oceans and the earth dance,
 Let the world, laughing, weeping, dance.⁵⁵

Realisation through Yoga

Yogic practices have had wide prevalence throughout India, during some earlier periods. The Yogic system essentially consists of controlling of the body and mind and regulating their activities in specific channels, such that the Yogi gets averted from the external world, and turns his senses to his inner self and discovers a world of supreme enjoyment. Some such methods have been mentioned in the Ṛg Veda, Upaniṣads and in the Mahābhārata.⁵⁶ However they got systematised by Patañjali in his

53. kaṇṭa śivānantameṇuṁ perum pōkattiṇṭile
 kaḷittiṭa vaittiṭukinṭa kālaiyumituvā.—*Tiru Aruḷpā*, II, P. 464.
54. sannitiyicēṇṭu nān peṇṭa pēṇṭu
 sāmiyaṇivāraḍi — amma
 sāmiyaṇivāraḍi—*Tiru Aruḷpā*, II, P. 549.
55. nācu re mere man matta hoi
 prem ko rāg bajṣy rain din sabda sunai sab koi,
 rāhu ketu navagrah nācai janma janma anand hoi,
 giri samundar dharti nācai hans roy.—*Kabir Granthāvali*, P. 256.
56. For a detailed study, see in *Bibliography Ganesan, S. N., (1975)*.

Yogasūtra. Thereafter many religious cults have accepted the same as a way of or aid in realisation. The verses of Nāth Panthis in the north and of Tirumūlar in the south show the strong influence of the yoga system.

Kabīr, like the other poets of the Jñānamārga, has inherited the ideas of Yoga from the saints of the Nāth Panth. He has elaborately described the process of awakening the cosmic power within the body, known as *Kuṇḍalini* so that it rises up in stages and passes through different *Wheels (Çakras)* in the body until at last it reaches the *the Thousand-petalled Lotus* in the brain, which is the centre of cosmic perception. At this stage the soul derives supreme enjoyment to a boundless measure, which Kabīr has elaborately described.⁵⁷

Rāmaliṅga Swāmi has not written any verse about the Yogic method, though the words 'Yōga' and Yōgānta' occur in some pieces. But that he had a knowledge of the system is evident from his prose piece '*Piṅṅānupava laṅṅam*'. The long description with reference to *Kuṇḍalini*, *lotus*, *Kṣīrābdhi* (the Ocean of Milk), different *Agnis* (Fires), *Mānasarōvar* (The Holy Lake of the Mind) etc.,⁵⁸ run parallel to the descriptions of Kabīr. So, it is clear that although Vaḷḷalar did not give much importance to the Yogic system, it seems that he was aware of the potentialities of it.

Realisation through Love

The most charming verses of the saint-poets are those in which they approach the Lord through the medium of Love. Knowledge and Yoga are features which raise man above the normal level of thought and perception, and keep him away from the world of emotions. These are generally unapprehensible for the normal man. When the different phases of these are described in verses, they do not enrich the emotional content, which is an essential feature of poetry. Though the quest for God by the saints is inspired by the emotional urge for realisation, the description of

57. *Kabīr Granthavali*, Pp. 88, 94.

58. *Tiruvārūpirakāsa Vaḷḷalar Upatēsam*, P. 148-154.

the experience obtained by super-knowledge and Yogic process tend to be devoid of emotional charm.

On the other hand, there are many verses of the two saints, in which they have given expression to their emotional attachment towards the Cosmic Power in a somewhat concrete form and have described their mental experiences in various phases of the relation with it. A large number of the verses of these saints are concerned with this emotional attachment or love. In the most intensive state of this attachment, the poets have expressed their ardent feeling for the Master in the form of bridal love.

Libido, which usually manifests itself in the form of love between man and woman, is the most powerful driving force of life. This when directed towards the Supreme Power pervading the Universe, makes the aspirations of man serene and sublime. This is what the poets have done in the verses depicting bridal mysticism. Both Rāmaliṅga Swāmi and Kabir have described different situations of bridal life.

Here again, as in realisation through Knowledge, the devotee gets near to the Lord through a process of dissolution of the Ego. As long as one is conscious of one's self, and one's desires are directed towards worldly things, there cannot be any union with the Lord. Both the poets have imagined themselves as the bride and the Supreme Power as the bridegroom, with whom they wish to unite. But as long as the Ego exists, this seems impossible. To Rāmaliṅga Swāmi it seems that the Lord appears and urges him to annihilate his self before getting the bridal union.

“Seeing thyself, look not for Me in thee,
O, girl that wanders after worldly glee!
See Me,” says the Lord O, mother,
And takes my hand O, my mother.”⁵⁹

59. unṅai-p-paṛttuṅṅuḷḷe yennai-p-paṛats
ūraippaṛttōṭṭiyōḷalkiṅṅa peṇṇē
ennaipparenkiṅṅareṅṅaṭiyamma,

en kai piṭṭikkiṅṅareṅṅaṭiyamma.—*Tiru Aruḷpā*, II. P: 290.

In the same tune Kabir also describes how he loses himself and unites with the divine Lover.

Such is my beloved Lover's charm,
That his charm pervades everywhere,
And when 'I' went to see that charm,
Myself became the charming lover.⁶⁰

The ardent love of the devotees make them feel that they are united with the Lord by a spiritual marriage. Kabir has given a grand picture of his marriage in which the Lord comes as the bridegroom, the five senses come as wedding guests, and the Soul as the bride in full bloom of youth gets married on the altar of physical existence and submits itself completely.⁶¹ In a state of intense love Kabir feels that he cannot live without the divine Lord.⁶² Rāmaliṅga Aḍigaḷ also has similar experiences. At the most intense state of his passionate love, he feels every moment that the Lord comes to take the hands of his beloved bride, who is himself, while playing, while adorning herself, while singing in praise of the lover and while talking with her playmates.⁶³ The love is so strong that the devotee as a bride feels fully confident that the Lord is coming. The bridegroom appears to tell her that her wedding with Him is imminent, and asks her to be conscious about the supreme status she is to be elevated to.⁶⁴ 'Cilatā-camvātam'⁶⁵ is a highly emotional poem, in which the bride tells her maid-companion how she has shared the pleasures of the nuptial bed with the Lord.

Both the poets have made passionate exposition of the different stages of their marital love, both in union and in separation, which deserves a more intensive study.

60. lāli mere lāl kī jit dekhūn tit lāl
lāli dekhan mēn gayī mā bhī hogayī lāl., K. G., P. 94.

61. *Kabir Granthāvalī*, P. 87.

62. *Ibid.*, P. 125.

63. *Tiru Aruṣpā*, II, P. 290 ff.

64. *Ibid.*, II. P. 291.

65. *Tiru Aruṣpā*, Part II.

Thus we find, that these saint-poets belonging to two different schools of philosophy, show many conceptual parallels in their philosophical and devotional ideas. Though coming in separate traditions, there are some significant similarities in their concept of God, the ways and means of attaining realisation and the experiences they have obtained on attaining the supreme state of divine bliss. A wider and deeper study will reveal that several philosophical ideas and spiritual concepts had been accepted by various religious cults in different parts of India either through traditional inheritance or through mutual contacts, and these great saints have assimilated many such basic concepts, but have at the same time amply shown their strong individuality.

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SOME ASPECTS OF THE MUSIC OF THE ANCIENT TAMILS

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The music that was practised in the Dravidian country in the early Christian era represents a magnificent system with a well laid foundation in the theoretical and artistic aspects. The soundness of any evolved system is easily borne out by the existence of a number of scientific literature on the theory and practice of the subject. It is indeed a heartening feature that references are found to a series of regular treatises on music, dance and drama as nurtured and developed by the ancient Tamils even before the Christian era. The irretrievable loss of most of these works is unfortunate as these contain the earliest material regarding the *Ancient Tamil Music, which represents some of the oldest music of India*. Since theoretical writing pre-supposes a large amount of practice prior to it, the existence of a flourishing system of music and dance with a variety of musical instruments in the Dravidian country at a surprisingly early period is an established phenomenon. The valuable reference in the *Nāṭya Śāstra*¹ to the intense musical and dance activity of the Southern Region, beyond the Vindhya mountains is to be recalled here. The vast ancient literature on music and dance in Tamil includes the following viz. *Perunārai, Peruṅgurugu, Pañchabhāratīyam, Bharatam, Agattiyam, Muruval Śayandam, Guṇanūl, Sevītriyam, Iṣainuṣukkam, Indrakāṣīyam, Pañchamarabu, Bharata sēnāpatiyam Kūṣṭanūl, Nāḍagatamīl* and others. Commentaries for some of the works were written later and these throw valuable light on the music of their times. Besides, the regular works on music, treatises on dance and drama have chapters on music

1. *Nāṭya Śāstra* - Kāśī Edn. Chap. XIV. '37.

treated as an adjunct to them. Further, references to music, in its scientific and practical aspects are scattered throughout the literature dating from the period of Tolkāppianār (3rd cent. B.C.), which includes the famous lexicons like *Sēndan's Divākaram*² and *Piṅgaḷa nighaṇtu*.³ These references throw useful light on the nature of music and its place in the life of the Tamils in general. In the absence of many of the priceless literature mentioned earlier, the only available source that we have to look for authentic scientific material on *Tamiḷ isai* is *Silappadikāram*⁴ of *Iṅgō aḍigaḷ*, which is one of the classical works of the Saṅgam period.

The uniqueness of the genius of the Tamils is seen in the conception of the language as *Muttamiḷ* (முத்தமிழ்), comprising *Ilakkiya Tamiḷ*, *Isai Tamiḷ* and *Nāḍaga Tamiḷ*, each having distinguishable characteristics regarding the musical quality and grammatical rules. It is true that a language undergoes certain modifications in style and expression with reference to the context and its significance. In the *Isai Tamiḷ*, the language has been adapted wholly for the purpose of music and, this fact derives support from the important reference in *Sēndan's Divākaram* (Section on sound), to the use of seven long vowels for singing the music of the seven svaras.

“ஆ ஈ ஊ ஏ ஐ ஒ ஓன வெனும்
இவ்வெழெழுத்தும் ஏழிசைக்குரிய”

In the previous verse, the author enumerates the *Tamiḷ* names of the seven svaras and their equivalent solfa letters as found in the Sanskrit texts.

“குரலே துத்தம் கைக்கிளை யுழையே
இனியே விளரி, தாரமென்றிவை; ஏழுவகை
யிசைக்குட் பெயரே”

“சவ்வும் ரிவ்வும் கவ்வும் மவ்வும் பவ்வும் தவ்வும்
நிவ்வும் என்றிவை ஏழுமவற்றின் எழுத்தே யாகும்”

2. Edited by K. Loganatha Mudaliār—1904.

3. Śaiva Siddhanta Publications—1968, p. 203.

4. Edited by N. M. Venkatasāmi Nāttar—1968.

As the full names of the svaras cannot be used as such in practical music, the mnemonic solfa letters, which are actually the initial syllables of the svara names, were thought of. The *Nārada Parivrājaka upanishad* which belongs to the pre-Christian era mentions for the first time the use of solfa syllables, sa, ri, ga, ma, pa, dha and ni for the seven svaras. But the *device of singing the seven svaras using the long vowels instead of the consonants by the Tamils, is most unique from the melodic point of view.* And this fact is not referred to as such in the Saṅskrit literature on music.

Further, Tolkāppiam⁶ makes a significant statement that the seven long vowels viz. ā, ī, ū, ṛ, ai, ṛ, and āw, occur as one syllable, independent words having two matras each, while the five short vowels a, i, u, e, o can never figure as words by themselves.

அளப்பிறந்திசைத்தலும் ஒற்றிசைநீடலும்
உளவெனமொழிய இசையொடு சிவணிய
நரம்பின் மறைய என்மனார் புலவர்

(தொல் - எழு. 33)

It is further stated, that lengthening of vowels and consonants is explained in books on vocal and instrumental music. It can be deduced from this, that music was slowly trying to free itself from the shackles of poetry and drama as early as the period of Tolkāppiam. *The choice of these seven long vowels again to signify the ēzhiśai or seven svaras, proves the recognition of the superior importance of the vowels over the consonants in the sphere of pure music and reflects the musical genius of the Tamils.*

The Svara is also referred to as *śai*, *narambu* and *kēḷvi*. Silappadikāram mentions the ancient Tamil names for the seven svaras and, in the *āchiyar kuravai*, these svaras are given the names of gods and goddesses for special reasons.

⁶ இடைமுது மகளிவர்க்குப் படைத்துக் கோட்பெயரிடுவாள்
குடமுதல் இடமுறையாக்குரல் துத்தம்

கைக்கிளை உழை இனி வினரி தாரமென
விருதரு பூங்குழல் வேண்டிய பெயரே”

It is probable that the svaras were originally sung with *akāra*, *ikāra* and only later, the syllables came to be used. According to *Kūttanūl*⁶, the svaras s, r, g, m, p, represent Lord Siva, and d, n, s, goddess Pārvati. And the order of seven svaras in the ascent and descent denotes the scale.

“இனம் சரிக ம பதநி நிதபம கரிச என
ஏழுவரியா வழிமுறை இயலும்

(கூ. நூல் செய்யுள் 59)

‘சரி கம பதநி நிதபம கரிசா, ததி தொம் நம்
ஜெம் ஜெம் நம் தொம் தித எனும் முதல் வரியும்
புரியும் அச்சரமே.

(கூ. நூல். 88 - 69)

Vari and *Puri* here denote ārohana and avarohana respectively. *Kōval* refers to the sequence of the svaras. *Kūttanūl* which is earlier than Aḍiyārkunallār (14th Cent.) contains valuable references to ancient Tamil music in the light of the existing musical practice.

Paṇ: In ancient Tamil music, the connotation of a term depends mostly on the context of its usage. For instance, *isai* means svāra music and *Paṇ* or rāga. The term *Paṇ* denotes the rāga, and also a rāga taking the seven svaras. It is sometimes used in the sense of *yāzh* or harp. *Tiṇam* is a derivative rāga having a lesser number of svaras, and it is of three kinds Panniyatiṇam, Tiṇam and Tirattiṇam, which correspond to the *Shādava* (six note) *Oudava* (five note) and *svārāntara* (four note) scales. All these four varieties of rāgas are referred to sometimes by the general term *Paṇ*. The number of paṇs recognised in ancient Tamil music was 103. Of these, about twenty three have been used by the Tēvārakāras in their hymns. A feature which is quite peculiar to the culture of the Tamils was the classification of music, Paṇs and the musical instruments according to the five pastoral regions and this proves the basic importance of the geographical factor in the life and civilisation of the people.

6. *Kūttanūl Sattanār*. Edited by Prof. S. D. S. Yōgiar, (1968).

The five divisions of the land into pastoral regions, viz. (Mullai), hilly region (Kuriñji), arable lands (Marudam), coastal belts (Neydal), and dreary waste (Pālai) have respectively the following paṅs namely *Sevvazhi yāzh*, *Yama yāzh*, *Maruda yāzh*, *Neydal yāzh* or *Tiranil yāzh* and *Pālai yāzh*. The Pālai yāzh gives rise to the seven generic scales by the process of modal shift of tonic (*Kural-īli krama*) namely the *Sempālai*, *Padumalai palai sevvazhi*, *arumpālai*, *kōḍippālai*, *vilarippālai* and *merchempālai*. The four big paṅs each admitting of four varieties of *ahanilai*, *puṇanilai*, *arugiyal* and *perugiyal* are expanded to sixteen. A total of 21 tirams is got from the four paṅs pālai yāzh (5), Sevvazhi (4), Kuriñji (8) and Marudam (4) and each again admitting of four, yield 84 paṅs, which in addition to the 16, give a total of hundred paṅs.

Three more paṅs are added to these, to make the number into 103 paṅs.

In the treatment of Kural-ilikrama we come across some important technical terms in vogue in ancient musicology. The *ninṇanarambu* is the basis or starting note or string of the *yāzh* *Kīlai* is the fifth note from the starting note and is consonant in effect when played with the first note. *Natpu* is the fourth from the basic string. *Pagai* is the third and the sixth notes and is inimical producing a repulsive effect. *Inai* is the second and the seventh notes. *Kīlai* and *Natpu* refer to the consonances of the fifth and fourth respectively, known as *Samvāditya* of sa-pā and sa-ma. *Pagai* refers to the *vivādi* svāra and *inaī*, the *anuvādi*. The interval of fourth is spoken of as agreeable and producing a blending effect and it is quite significant as all early music including the Vedic music and the music of the Gregorian chants gave importance to the fourth interval i.e. the descending fifths and the note ma, was even considered 'avināsi' or indestructible in scales.

The *Srutī* is known as *alagu* in Tamil music and twenty two *srutis* are recognised. The following table shows the distribution of 22 *alagus* among the seven strings of the *yāzh* and the resultant scales.

DISTRIBUTION OF 22 ALAGUS IN THE SEVEN PAÑS

| Name of the Pālai | S | R | G | M | P | D | N | Equivalent murchanas | Equivalent Karnātic rāgas |
|--------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Sempālai | 4 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 2 | Matsarikruṭa | Harikāmbhoji |
| 2. Padumalai pālai | 4 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 4 | Śuddha Shadjā | Nāṭabhairavi |
| 3. Sēvazhi | 3 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 4 | Uttarāvata | Todi with untruce fifth |
| 4. Arumpālai | 2 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 3 | Rajani | Dhira Śankarā- bharāṇa |
| 5. Koṭippālai | 4 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 2 | Uttaramandra | Kharaharapriya |
| 6. Vilarippālai | 3 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 4 | Abhirudgata | Harumatōḍi |
| 7. Merchempālai | 2 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 3 | Aśvkranta | Mechakalyāṇi |

A comparative study of the paṇs and the rāgas as dealt with in the early Sanskrit texts in particular, reveals remarkable mutual influences between the two systems. Some of the Tēvāra paṇs were also known as rāgas and for example may be mentioned the paṇs, the *nāṣṭa rāga*, *pazham takka rāga*, *nāga rāga*, *takka rāga* and *takkēśi raga*. It is interesting again to note that paṇs and rāgas were distinguished by naming them after the region and language as well. For instance, the following names are self explanatory viz. *Ariya varāti*, *Drāviḍa*, *Dakṣiṇa Gurjari*, *Drāviḍa Gurjari*, *Panchama Kāmbhōji*, *Sāyaveḷarkolli*, *Drāvati*, *Drāviḍa bhāsha*, *Gandhārapanchamam*, *Dēvāra vardhani*, *Mēgharāga Kuriṅji* and so on. Rāgas that were probably well known in the Dravidian country or perhaps indigenous to it, were signified in the Sanskrit works with the prefix *drāviḍa* added to their names and *vice versa*. The names of some of the Tēvāra paṇs bear the Sanskrit influence, for instance *kouśika*, *Indala*, *Gāndhāra*, *takka*, *takkēśi* (same as *takka kaisika*), *Nāṣṭa* (Naṣṭa), *Naṣṭapāḍai* which is a bhāsha of *Nāṣṭa*, *Panchama*, *Gandhārapanchama* and *kolli* (Same as *golli*). Of the various names, *puranirmai*, *kuriṅji*, *sevvazhi*, *Senturutti*, *Kollikkavānam*, *piyaṇḍai* and *piyaṇḍai gāndāram* are indigenous.

| <i>Paṇ</i> | <i>Equivalent Karnātic Rāga</i> |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Kolli | Navaraj |
| 2. Śīkāmaram | Nādanāmakriya |
| 3. Śevvazhi | Yadukula kāmbhōji |
| 4. Kouśikam | Bhairavi |
| 5. Panchamam | Āhiri |
| 6. Śendurutti | Madhyamāvati |
| 7. Vyāzhakuriṅji | Sourāshtra |
| 8. Takkēśi | Kāmbhōdi |
| 9. Gāndhārapanchamam | Kēdāragoula |
| 10. Pazhampaṅjuram | Sankarābharana |
| 11. Sadāri | Pantuvarāḷi |
| 12. Puranirmai | Bhūpaḷa with aṅṭara gāndhāra |
| 13. Megharāga kuriṅji | Nilāmbari |
| 14. Āndālikkuriṅji | Sāma |

| <i>Paṟ</i> | <i>Equivalent Karnatic Rāga</i> |
|----------------------|---------------------------------|
| 15. Pazhamtakka rāga | Ārabhi |
| 16. Indalam | Mālavagoula or Nādanāmakriya |
| 17. Naṭṭa pādai | Gambhira nāta |
| 18. Mullai | Mohanam |

A palm leaf manuscript⁷ dated Kollam 917, 1742 A. D. preserved in the Tiruvādutuṟai Mutt, has identified the following paṟs with some of the Karnātic rāgas popular at that time and this list is at slight variance with the practice available today.

THE PAGAL PAṆS (10) பகல் பண்கள்

| <i>Names of the Paṟs.</i> | <i>Equivalent rāgas</i> |
|--|----------------------------|
| 1. Puṟanīrmai | Śri Kanti |
| 2. Gāndhāram and Piyandai Gāndhāram | Ichichi (same as Hejjujji) |
| 3. Kauśika | Bairavi |
| 4. Indalam (Tirukkuruntogai) | Neḷitapanchami |
| 5. Takkaśi | Kāmbodi |
| 6. Naṭṭa rāga, Sadāri | Pantuvarāḷi |
| 7. Naṭṭa pādai | Nāṭṭaikuruṟūji |
| 8. Pazham paṅjuram | Sankarābharāṇam |
| 9. Gāndhārapanchamam | Kēdāragoula |
| 10. Panchamam | Āhiri |

THE IRAVUPPAṆS (8) இரவுப் பண்கள்

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|
| 11. Takka Rāga | Kannaḍa Kāmbodi |
| 12. Pazham takka rāga | Suddha sāveri |
| 13. Śikāmara (same as Śri Kāmara) | Nādanāmakriya |
| 14. Puṟanīrmai | Nērtiram |
| 15. Kollikauvānam | Padumalai |
| 16. Tiruviruttam | Pālaiyāzh |
| 17. Kuriṅji | Aratru |
| 18. Seṇdurutti | Śentiram |
| 19. Tirunerisai | Naṭṭam. |

7. கொல்லம் 917 இரவுப் பண்கள் மாலிக் 4௩ எழுதி முடிந்தது.



Certain types of verses are sung in specific paṅs. *Tiruvāṣṭāgam* is sung in Mohana rāga, *Tiruttāṇḍagam* in Harikāmbhoji, *Tirunērisai* in Kolli (Navaraj), *Tiruviruttam* in Kousikam (Bhairavi) and pazham pañjuram. *Tiruvīśaiippa* is mostly rendered in ānanda bhairavi rāga, though the following paṅs viz. natta rāga, puranīrmai, sālarapāni, gāndhāra pañchamam, and Indalam, have been prescribed in the texts. *Nērisai*, *Tirukkuruntogai*; and *viruttam* are not paṅs but are only verse forms. Paṅs are also named after certain type of metrical verses and special circumstances. For instance, *Yāzhmūrippaṅ* is the name given to the rain producing paṅ, *mēgharāga kuriṅji* (Nīlāmbari) following the incident of Tirunīlakaṅṭa yāzhpāpar's failure to play faithfully the 'மாதூர் மடவநிடியம்' padigam of Gnānasambandar that led to the consequent breaking of the yāzh. *Tiruttālachadippadigam* is a metrical verse rendered in viyāzhakkuriṅji. Indalam, Sādāri, and Naṭṭapādai are referred to as Tiruvi rāgam. Rules regarding the hour and part of the day in which paṅs are to be sung have been prescribed. These are classified as *Irappaṅ*, *Pagalpaṅ* and *Poduppaṅ*.⁸ *Marudam* is to be sung in the morning, *Sevvazhi* in the evening, *Kuriṅji* at midnight, while *Puranīrmai* is the early morning rāga sung at dawn. (புள்ளியெழுச்சி). Of the 24 paṅs, 12 were pagal paṅs, 9 iravuppaṅs and poduppans are 3. The *pagalpaṅs* are intended to be sung during day time and these are:— *Puranīrmai*, *gāndhāram Pīyandai gandhāram*, *naṭṭa rāga*, *naṭṭapādai Pazhampañjuram*, *Pañjamam*, *Indalam Kausikam*, *takkēsi*, *Sādāri*, and *Gāndhārapañchamam*. Paṅs to be sung at night time or *iravuppaṅs* are namely: *takka rāga*, *pazhamtakka rāga*, *Sikāmaram*, *Kolli*, *Kollikakavanam*, *Viyāzhakkuriṅji*, *Kuriṅji*, *Mēgharāga kuriṅji* and *Āndālikkuriṅji*. *Sevvazhi*, *Sendurutti* and *Tiruttāṇḍagam* (Harikāmbhoji) are poduppaṅs which can be sung at all times.

Āḷatti:— Ālāpana is known as *āḷatti* in Tamil music. The musical sound which emanates from the Mālādhāra is referred to as *āḷatti* and is also called *īśai* and *paṅ*. As the *āḷatti* is produced in the eight sthānas or positions like tongue, nose, lips and

8. Equivalent to the chandrāmśa, suryamśa and sarvakālīka rāgas explained in the Sanskrit texts.

teeth by the eight kriyas of *eḍuttal*, *paḍuttal*, *nalidal*, *kampitam*, *kutilam*, *oli*, *uruttu* and *tākkū*, it is known as *paṇ*. The eleven characteristic features of a *paṇ* correspond to the *daśavida rāga lakshana* explained in Sanskrit books and these are முதல், முறைமை, முடிவு, நிறைவு, குறைவு, கிழமை, வலிவு, மெலிவு, சமன், வரையறையும் நிரமை *Āḷatti* is done with the aid of five short vowels and five long vowels.⁹ Of the 18 consonants, only the 3 letters, ம, ந, and த are used for performing *āḷatti* and the rest are not considered fit. Starting with the consonant ம, the music of the *āḷatti* is developed using long and short vowels. According to *Kūttanūl*, *āḷam* (ஆளம்) and *Nāḷam* (நாளம்) constitute *āḷatti* in music “ஆளமும் நாளமும் ஆளத்தி என்ப” (குத்திரம் 28). The ascending sequence of seven svaras viz. s r g m p d n is called நேர் ஆளம் and the descending sequence is the நிரைசேர் தாளம். The various movements of svaras in the ascent or descent and also the combinations of svaras into several patterns according to the rules of melody, constitute the *āḷatti* or elaboration of a *paṇ*. *Kūttanūl* speaks of *āḷatti* in the following verses,

“குரலே துத்தம் கைக்கிளை உழையே, இளியே விளரி
தாரம் என்ன, ஏழிசைநேர்நேர் ‘இயல் ஆளத்தி’”

(குத்திரம் 30-31)

“ஏழிசை மற்றிரை ஏல் ஆளத்தி

ச ரி க ம ப த நி தான் நேர் ஆளம்

நி த ப ம ரி சா நிரை சேர் நாளம்

(குத்திரம் 42-45)

Adiyārkunallār refers only to *āḷatti* and not to *nāḷatti*. Two kinds of *āḷatti* recognised are: *āccū* (அச்சு) *Pāraṇai* (பாரணை). The *Accu* is done with *tāla* and may be said to correspond to the *tānam* which has an underlying rhythm. *Pāraṇai* is done to the accompaniment of dance or *abhinaya*. It probably refers to

9. “குன்றக்குறில் ஐந்தும் கோடா நெடில் ஐந்தும்
குற்றெழுத்தாலும் நெட்டெழுத்தாலும் ஆளத்தி செய்யப்படும்

என்றவாறு’.

“குன்றக்குறில் ஐந்தும் கோடா நெடில் ஐந்தும் நின்று

ஆர்ந்த மந்தகரம் தவ்வொடு - நன்றக நீளத்தால் ஏழு

நிதானத்தால் நின்று இயங்க ஆளத்தியும் என்று அறி”

the variety of dance which is known as *rāga abhinaya*¹⁰ in which abhinaya is performed as accompaniment to raga singing. Āṭatti is again spoken of as of three kind:—*Kāṭṭāṭatti*, *Niravāṭatti* and *Paṇṇāṭatti* relating respectively to *accu*, *pāraṇai* and *pan*. Further, the syllables *tenna* and *tena* are utilised in the singing of āṭatti and it is to be noted that Sanskrit texts are silent regarding this musical practice. The present method of rendering āṭāpana in Karnātic music with the syllables *tarana* and *tanana* may be traced to the tradition of āṭatti exposition practised in ancient Tamil music.

The ancient period in the history of Indian Music has made two priceless contributions namely, the *Vēdic hymns* and the *Tēvāram*. The *Tēvāram* set in paṇs, constitutes the earliest examples of the music of the ancient period as a whole, that has come down to the present date in a recognisable form. The *Nāyanmārs*, the authors of those highly devotional hymns, had played a very remarkable role in the evolution of Śaivism in South India. The *Nāyanmārs* were devotees of Lord Śiva and belonged to all strata of society. In addition to being sterling devotees of the Lord, humble in body and mind alike, they were also poets of a superior order. A volume of devotional hymns, in attractive paṇs and melody and rhythm flowed from their hearts spontaneously, at the divine call, providing fundamental sustenance for all Saivite devotees of all times. The four inspired saints viz. Saint *Tirugūāna Sambandar*, *Appar*, *Sundaramūrthy* and *Mānickkavāsagar* have sanctified the whole of South India by their songs of devotion and spread the light of spiritual aspiration throughout. The music of the ancient Tamils as was in vogue thousand two hundred years ago is available to us in a somewhat original form in these hymns.

The *Tēvāra* hymns are rightly termed 'Deyva Pāḍalgaḷ' and the Tamil language as handled in these songs is *Gūāna Tamil* or *Spiritual Tamil*. Being spontaneous effusions of the God-intoxicated souls, they are so full of emotional exuberance and

10. *Sangitā darpana-Chatura Damodhara-Thaṇjāvur Serfoji Saraswati Mahāl Library series, No. 34.*

are couched in highly metrical style. In the history of Indian music, the Tēvāram set in a regular rāga (Paṇ) is the earliest example of a musical composition as such. The Vedic hymns were only chanted to certain specific notes and, rāgas as such were not used.

The beautiful combination of poetry and music is of immense aid in the easy memorising of these hymns which run to a voluminous number. The Tēvāram is divided into many padigams, which represent a collection or group of ten to twelve verses. *Pāsuram* is a verse. The following last verse of a Padigam is given below for instance :—

நல்லார்கள் சேர்புகலி ஞானசம்பந்தன்
யெல்லார்களும் பரவுமிசனே யேத்துபாடல்
பல்லார்களும் மதிக்கப் பாகரஞ் சொன்னபத்தும்

No divisions are found in a Padigam and once it is begun, the stanzas of the Padigam are sung in succession till the end. There is no pallavi or refrain to which the *ōdūvār* (hymn singer) returns at the conclusion of each stanza. The burden of the song which usually contains the main theme, sometimes figures at the end of a verse. For example in *Śilappadikāram*, the verse in *Āychiyar Kuṟavai* may be cited :—

பெரியவனை மாயவனைப் பேருலக மெல்லாம்
விரிகமல புந்தியுடைய விண்ணவனைக் கண்ணாந்
திருவடியுங் கையுந் திருவாயுஞ் செய்ய
கரியவனைக் காணாத கண்ணென்ன கண்ணே
கண்ணிமைத்து காண்பார்தங் கண்ணென்ன கண்ணே

We find a similar structure of the composition in the *Ashtapadi* hymns of *Jayadēva*. It is the 'burden' of the song which developed into the pallavi section of the later musical compositions. Further, the music of the stanzas in a padigam is same and in this respect, it is a forerunner of all later musical forms such as the *Ashtapadi* hymns, *Prabhandhas* and the *Ēkadhātu kirtanas*. The *sthala* or *kshētra* *mudra*, *vāggeyakāra* *mudra*, and *devata* *mudra* are introduced in the hymns. Again the tradition of incorporating the signature of the composer in the song, is thus as old as the Tēvāram. The *mudra charaṇa* of the later

kṛiti type of composition containing the signature of the composer corresponds to the Tirukkadaikāppu stanza of Gñanasambandar's and Sundarar's Tēvārapadigam. The *Thirukkadaikāppu* is the last stanza that bears the signature of the composer and is intended to provide for the safety and preservation of the the whole padigam.

Music in these hymns is only a vehicle for expressing the sublime experiences of the Nāyanmars. Hence the thought content and the language clothing these ideas are deservedly of supreme significance in these songs. The music, words, and the content, all converge into a harmonious combination, conceived first in the mind of the composers before emerging as a song.

Many rhetorical beauties that adorn the later musical compositions in different languages are seen in the Tēvāram hymns in quite a large number. Also, there are in these hymns certain special characteristic embellishments pertaining to the Tamil language, and Tamil poetry. Tiruḡñānasambandar's hymn in Paṇ *Kousikam* (Bhairavi) given under, is a fine instance of the beautiful technique known as *Mālai mātru* or the *savyā-apasavya* pattern or *vikāṭakavi* design.

யாமாமா நீயாமாமா யாழிகாமா காணுகா
காணுகாமா கரழியா மாமாயா நீமாமாயா

(pp. 121-1)

Ramaswamy Dikshitar's song in *Gaṅgātaranīti rāga* in *Tisra ekāṭāla* with the words: "*Sārasanayana sarasā*" is composed in *மாலைமாற்று*. Muthuswamy Dikshitar has also composed songs with this beauty. *Ekapādam* is another kind of literary beauty met with in Sambandar's hymn in Paṇ *Vyāzhakkuriñji*. Here the words constituting a line, occur in the three remaining lines of the stanza also.

பிரமபுரத்துறை பெம்மாணெம்மான்
பிரமபுரத்துறை பெம்மாணெம்மான்
பிரமபுரத்துறை பெம்மாணெம்மான்
பிரமபுரத்துறை பெம்மாணெம்மான்¹¹

11. *Ibid.* p. 147.

The interesting feature known as *koṇḍukūṟṟi* (கொண்டுகூட்டி) is come across in the Tēvāram, *Aduttānai* in paṇ sevvazhi, (*yadukulakāmbhōji rāga—tripuṭa tāla*) is cited below.

கொடுத்தாளை
பதம் கொடுத்தாளை
பாசு பதம் கொடுத்தாளை
அர்ச்சுனர்க்கு பாசு பதம் கொடுத்தாளை
யுரித்தாளை அர்ச்சுனர்க்கு பாசு பதம் கொடுத்தாளை
அடுத்தாளை யுரித்தாளை அர்ச்சுனர்க்கு பாசு பதம் கொடுத்தாளை

Similar instances are found in [the kriti of Muthuswāmy Dikshitar. For instance, the following may be cited from 'Tyāgarāja yōga vaibhavam' in *Ānanda bhairavi rāga*.

Śām
prakāśam
svarūpa prakāśam
tatva svarūpa prakāśam
sakala tatva svarūpa prakāśam
Śiva śaktyādi sakala tatva svarūpa prakāśam

The length of the line is gradually increased without affecting the meaning and this is referred to as *śrotovaha yati* in Sanskrit. Another kind of rhyme recognised in rhetorics is *yamakam*. Identical words or syllables, but different in meaning figure in a section or sections of a composition. This is called மடக்கு in Tamil. The Tēvāram of Sambandar in Pazham Pañjuram is an example:

உற்றுமை சேர்வது மெய்யினையே
உணர்வது நின்னருள் மெய்யினையே
கற்றவர் காய்வது காமனையே
கனல்விழி காய்வது காமனையே
அற்றம் மறைப்பதும் உன்பணியே
பெற்றும் உகந்தது கந்தனையே
பிரமபுரத்தை உகந்தனையே¹²

A parallel example is found in the kriti "*mānasa mana sāmāthyā mana sāmāthyamēmi*" in *vardhani rāga*, in which the word

12. *Ibid.* pp. 162-1.

Manasā occurs in different meanings, as the words, மெய்யிணையே, காமணையே, உன்பணியே, கந்தணையே in the above hymn. Alliteration known as Anuprāsa in Sanskrit, is come across in many hymns. The following example of Sambandar in paṇ *Sadāri* may be cited and later Sanskrit poetry particularly the ashtapadi hymns of Jayadēva contain beautiful alliterations.

நிராமய பராபர புராதன பராவு சிவராக வருளென்
நிராவும் திராயது பராதனை புராணன மரதி பதியாம்
அராமிசை யிராதொழில் தராயர பராயண் வராக வருவா
தராயனை விராயெரி பராய்மிகு தராய்மொழி விராயபதியே¹³

This padigam is called *vazhimozhithiruvirāḡam* (வழிமொழித் திருவிராகம்). The second letter rhyme known as *Yadugai* or *prāsa* is the special feature of these hymns and is not found in the ashtapadi hymns which contain only antya and anuprāsa. Ambashtakam and portions of Lingāshtakam of Adi Sankara have the beauty of *prāsa*. The first hymn of Sambandar in Naṭṭa-pāḡai which he composed at the age of three immediately after receiving the Divine blessings is replete with this beauty.

தோடுடைய செவியென் விடையேறி ஓர் தூவெண்மதிதடி
காடுடைய சுடலைப்பொடு பூசியென் னுள்ளங் கவர்கள்வன்
ஏடுடைய மலரான் முனை நாட்பணிந்தேத்த அருள் செய்த
பீடுடைய பிரமாபுர மேவிய பெம்மான் இவனன்றே.

The Tēvaram hymns can be rendered individually and by a group of devotees also. The poetic form of these hymns with their rhetorical embellishments afford scope for easy and collective delivery.

திருத்தமாந்திகழ் காழிருநான சம்பந்தன் செப்பியசெந்தமிழ்
ஒருத்தராகிலும் பலர்களாகிலும் உணரசெய்வார் உயர்ந்தார்களே¹⁴

Another interesting feature is that, a number of padigams have been composed in one and the same paṇ and the music of each padigam is set in a different tune in the paṇ. This is referred to as *Kaṭṭalai*. The various facets of a paṇ or rāga are revealed by the many *kaṭṭalai* or *varpameṭṭu* in

13. *Ibid.* pp. 159-6.

14. *Ibid.* pp. 274-7.

varied rhythmic settings or musical tunes existing in it. Since the hymns are mainly products of divine inspiration, it is natural that the several padigams in the same rāga are not found in the same varṇameṭṭu and rhythmic structure or tune in the rāga. The treatment of the same paṇ in the different padigams is hence varied. It will be seen that in the kritis of Tyāgarāja and other great composers, in the same rāga, the musical as well as rhythmic structure is not repeated, but exhibits modifications in the handling of the rāga within each composition. The musical potentiality of a paṇ is thus revealed by the existence of the various melodic and rhythmic treatments of it in the compositions. It is highly surprising that this fundamental truth is manifested in the Tēvāram hymns. In all spontaneous creations, the musical handling of the theme, the rhythmic form and the spiritual and artistic experience of the composer are always in perfect consonance with the emotional state of the mind of composer at the time of the composition.

Of the four Nāyanmārs, Sambandar has handled as many as twenty-four paṇs, Appar, ten paṇs, and Sundaramūrti seventeen paṇs. In the paṇ Indalam, there are 39 padigams, in Sādāri, 33 padigams and so on. It may be pointed out that saint Tyāgarāja composed more than 30 kritis in Tōdi rāga each in a distinct varṇameṭṭu.

The *phala sruti* so characteristic of charitra kīrtanas, yakshagānam, dramas and kālakshēpams enumerating the beneficial effects of reciting, listening and witnessing the enactment, is introduced in the padigams of Sambandar: for instance, the following in praise of the deity of Śirkāḷi in paṇ viyazhakuṟiṇi may be mentioned.

ஞானசம்பந்தன் ஞானத்தமிழ் நன்குணரச்
சொல்லிடல் கேட்டல் வல்லோர் தொல்லை வானவர் தங்கனோடும்
செல்குவர் சீருளாற் பெறலாஞ் சிவலோகமதே¹⁵

Adiyarkkunallār's commentary on Silappadikāram refers to works on tāḷa and unfortunately these are not available to posterity. References to *Tāḷavottu* (தாளவொத்து), and *Karavavottu* (கரணவொத்து) are found and important details relating to the

15. *Ibid.* pp. 146-11.

subject of tāla from these works are however alluded to in the commentary.

Rhythm is the other inherent element of music. In Tamil music, rhythm is called *Pāṇi* and it is of four kinds viz. *Koṭṭu*, *aśai*, *tūkku* and *aḷavu* (கொட்டு, அசை, தூக்கு, அளவு). *Koṭṭu* is equal to half of mātra (two aksharas) and is indicated with the symbol க. *Aśai* has one mātra (four aksharas) and bears the sign எ. *Tūkku* is denoted by the symbol உ and has two mātras (8 aksharas). *Aḷavu* has three mātras (12 aksharas) and the sign ∴. Unit time is known as akshara in music. A mātra is equal to four units.

| | Equivalent Sanskrit Name | Duration | Symbol | |
|----------|-----------------------------|-------------|--------------|---|
| 1. Koṭṭu | drutam | 2 aksharas | half a mātra | க |
| 2. Aśai | laghu | 4 aksharas | one mātra | எ |
| 3. Tūkku | guru | 8 aksharas | two mātras | உ |
| 4. Aḷavu | plutam | 12 aksharas | three mātras | ∴ |

The symbols and signs prescribed for these angās of the tāla in the work called *Talasamuttiram*¹⁶ are slightly different.

விராம வருப்புள்ளி மெய்த்துரிதம் வட்டம்

இராம சரமிலகு ஏந்தும்-இராமன்கை

வில்லுக் குருப்புலிதம் மின்காகு வென்றுரைக்கில்

அல்லுக்கியல் புல்லடி

(தா. ச. 10. 22)

But in actual practice, the following symbols are used.

| | Duration | Symbol |
|------------|------------|--------|
| 1. ½ mātra | 1 akshara | ○ |
| 2. ½ mātra | 2 akshara | ○ |
| 3. 1 mātra | 4 akshara | 1 |
| 4. 2 mātra | 8 akshara | 4 |
| 5. 3 mātra | 12 akshara | 2, 3 |
| 6. 4 mātra | 16 akshara | 1 + |

Tāla regulates the flow of music and is the basic formative element of dance.

16. Tāla samuttiram—Tanjore Maharaja Serfoji Saraswati Mahal Library Series No. 50. 1955 p. 95.

- “ ஆட்டமும் பாட்டமும் அளவிடும் தாலே (சு., தா. நூ. 2)
 “ தாளம் கரையே ” (சு., தா. நூ. 3)
 “ தாளம் பிறந்தது தண்ணுமை (சு. தா. நூ. 3)

It remains as a boundary for both music and dance. The twelve modes of measuring time have been mentioned in keeping with the exigencies of the tālas of dance and these are—

- “ ஒற்றல் உறுத்தல் வலித்தல் மெலித்தல் தட்டல்
 அடித்தல், தாவல், தாடல், விரல்மடி, விரவல்
 வீச்சிறை நிரவல் எனப் பன்னிரண்டே வினைச்செயல் என்ப.
 (சு., தா. நூ. 7)

Adiyarkunallār mentions in his commentary on Arangētrukkāḍai about forty one tālas inclusive of Ēka tāla, parvatilochana and others as belonging to purakkūttu while tālas such as ஆறன்மட்டம், எட்டன்மட்டம், தாளருவாரியல், தனிநிலையொரியல், ஒன்றன்பாணி and others are used in akakuttu. Kūttanul¹⁷ refers to the famous seven tālas and also the thirty-five tālas, which have become very popular in the music of later period. The tālas with their equivalent present names are given below :

| <i>Names as given in Kūttanūl</i> | <i>As found in Tāla Samuttiram (anubandam)</i> | <i>Equivalent names in Karnātic music</i> |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| 1. Ēkam ஏகம் | Ēkam | Ēka |
| 2. Aḍai அடை | Aḍantai | Aṭa |
| 3. Mūvaḍai மூவடை | Thiruvīḍai | Tiripuṭa |
| 4. Thiṇṇam திண்ணம் | Sampai | Jhampa |
| 5. Uruvam உருவம் | Rupagam | Rupakam |
| 6. Maṭṭiyam மட்டியம் | Maṭṭayam | Maṭṭyam |
| 7. Thuḷai துளை | Thugam | Dhruvam |

The popularity of the seven tālas or sapta tālas prior to the period of Adiyarkunallār is evident from the treatment of them in Kūttanūl. It must be conceded that long before the period of Purandaradās, the famous sapta tālas must have been in prevalence in the South under different names.

17. Kūtta Nūl—Tāla Nūl—Sūtra 68-78.

Sūtra 82-173.

The aḍavukkūttu is to be rendered in these seven tālas in the five varieties of *chaturam* (i. e. *chaturasram*), *tirasam* (*tisram*), *miduram* (*misram*), *kandam* (*Khandam*) and *sankaram* (*sankirṇam*).

“ ஏழ்தாளத்து இணைஇருவகை இயலும்
தாள் அடிகற்பார் தம்முதல் அடவே ” (தா. நூ. சூ. 178)

Other tālas used in aḍavukkūttu are *araṅga tālam*, *vanna sigaram*, *Kōdari*, *muzhanari* and so on. *Āttam* (ஆட்டம்) refers to pure *nṛitta* or *śuddha nṛitta* or *śokkam* (சொக்கம்), which is mainly based on rhythm or tāla and footwork. *Paṭṭam* (பட்டம்) is the *nṛitya* which is based on *rāga* and is capable evoking *rasa*. *Āditāla* was known as (அச்சரம்) *accharam*.

சரிகமபதரி நிதபமகரிசா, ததிதொம்நம்
ஜெம்ஜெம்நம் தொத்தித, எனும்முதல்வரியும்
புரியும் அச்சரமே. (சூ. நூ. 68).

Similarly other tālas like *iccaram* (இச்சரம்) *uccaram* (உச்சரம்), *eccaram* (எச்சரம்), *occharam* (ஓச்சரம்), *darpaṇam* (தர்பணம்), *Ḍaccari* (Ḍச்சரி), *simhalla* (ஸிம்ஹல்லா), and *Kandarpam* (கந்தர்பம்) are also referred to. The *prastāra* of the tāla known as *Viruṅgiyam* (விருங்கியம்) is explained with the letters constituting the *pañchākshara* which result in the total of one hundred and twenty varieties. It runs as follows :

நமசிவய, வயநசிவயநம, வயநமசி, யநமசிவ
நமவசிய, மசியவந, சிவநயம
வயமவசி, யநசிமவ, நமயவசி, மசிநயவ
சிவமநய, வயசிநம, யநவசிவ, நமவயசி
மசியநவ, சிவநமய, வயமசிக, யநசிவம
நமயசிவ, மசிவநய, சிவயநம, வயநசிம &c.

In the place of the syllables ‘*Namasivāya*’ the seven *svaras* are used for illustrating the *prastāra* which is given next. Appropriate *jathis* are sung to these *svaras*. Thus the use of the *pañchākshara*, *mantra svaras* and *jāṭhi* for illustrating the *prastāra krama* of the tāla, *Viruṅgiyam* is remarkable. The dance known as aḍavukkūttu (அடவுக்கூத்து) has its very basis in the rhythmic structure. *Pēraṇi* is a type of rhythmic dance which is performed on sand specially spread on the stage, and covered with a piece

of white muslin cloth. At the end of the dance, on account of the peculiar *aḍavus* and rhythmic movements of the dancer, the figures of lion, lotus, serpent, chariot, elephant and other pictures are seen to be drawn beautifully on the sand. Special *tālas* are mentioned for the dances, which result in the drawing of the various figures. The five *tālas* known as *Kuharam* (குஹரம்), *Āriya Kuharam* (ஆரியகுஹரம்), *Kuharapūliyam* (குஹரபுலியம்), *Kuhara śigaram* (குஹரசிகரம்) are prescribed for dancing the drawing of the figures of tiger and lion. These *tālas* are referred to in Sanskrit as *Simha vikraman*, *Simha vikriḍitam*, *Vyāghravikriḍitam* and *Simha nandana*. These *tālas* belong to the list of 108 *tālas*.

| Name of the <i>tāla</i> | Equivalent name in the Sanskrit text | Total number of Aksharas |
|--------------------------|--|------------------------------|
| 1. <i>Kuharam</i> | <i>Simba vikramam</i> | 64 aksharas or 16 mātras |
| 2. <i>Āriya Kuharam</i> | ... | 76 aksharas of 19 mātras |
| 3. <i>Kuhara Pūliyam</i> | <i>Vyāghra vikriḍitam</i> | 68 aksharas or 17 mātras |
| 4. <i>Kuhara Pidaram</i> | <i>Simhanadam</i> or <i>Simhavikriḍitam</i> | 32 aksharas or 8 mātras |
| 5. <i>Kuhara śikaram</i> | <i>Simhanandana</i> | 128 aksharas or 32 mātras |
| 6. <i>Annam</i> | <i>Hamsa leela</i> | 9 aksharas or 2½ mātras |
| 7. <i>Idai annam</i> | <i>Hamsanadam</i> | 32 aksharas or 8 mātras |

The *tālas*¹³ that are utilised for the type of feminine dance known as *Varikkūttu*, are generally referred to as belonging to *ratiyam* (ரதியம்) a class of time measures. These *tālas* and *śolkattu* passages in them are soft and composed of mild musical patterns. The following are the six *tālas* :—

13. Kottanūl—Togainūl pp. 342-344.

| <i>Name of the tālas</i> | <i>Total duration</i> |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Rati | 12 Akku or 3 alagu |
| 2. Rati u ā am | 24 Akku or 6 alagu |
| 3. Ratiyattu a angam | 44 (11 alagu) |
| 4. Ratiyakkarāṇam | 8 (2 alagu) |
| 5. Rati madanam | 12 (3 alagu) |
| 6. Ratiya kriyam | 144 (36 alagu) |

Akshara or unit time is denoted as akku and akkaram. Alagu is equal to one māttirai which consists of four aksharas.

Certain tālas have been prescribed for use in the śāḷaya dances (சாலைநாடம்) which are intended for warfare and these are termed *Kotram* (கொற்றம்) type of tālas. Seven such tālas are mentioned.

| <i>Name of the tāḷa</i> | <i>Equivalent names in Sanskrit texts</i> | <i>Total duration Akshara — Alagu</i> | |
|-------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|----|
| 1. Kottrattiru | Jaya Śrī | 32 | 8 |
| 2. Kottrattinbam | Vijayanandam | 32 | 8 |
| 3. Kotram | Jayam | 40 | 10 |
| 4. Kotrappugaram | Kīrti | 48 | 12 |
| 5. Vinnakkotram | Vijayam | 40 | 10 |
| 6. Kotrappugazh | Śrī kīrti | 24 | 6 |
| 7. Kotrakkotram | Jayadharam | 36 | 9 |

These seven tālas are noted for the majesty, vigour and are capable of evoking vīra or heroic feeling.

The twelve dances of Lord Śiva are enumerated and from these are said to have developed the later¹⁹ twelve kūttus.

| <i>12 tāndavas</i> | <i>Kūttus</i> |
|---------------------|---------------|
| Alliyam (அல்லியம்) | Adavu |
| Elliyam (எல்லியம்) | Iśai vazhi |
| Palliyam (பல்லியம்) | Avinayam |
| U am (உள்ளம்) | Chārikai |

19. The eleven kūttus enumerated in the commentary as on Silappadikāram are *Kodukōtti*, *Pāndaraṅgam*, *Alliyam*, *Tuḍi*, *Kuḷai*, *Markūttu*, *Kudakkūttu*, *Pedikkūttu*, *Marakkāi kūttu*, *Pāvaikkūttu* and *Kadaiyam*.

| 12 tāndavas | Kūttus |
|---------------------------|---------|
| Nudal vizhi (நுதல்விழி) | Perani |
| Nōkkam (நோக்கம்) | Ōvīyam |
| Nuṣukkam (நுணுக்கம்) | Paravai |
| Kālvāri (கால்வாரி) | Śalayam |
| Kaḷitruvari (களிற்றுவாரி) | Arasam |
| Pēy vari (பேய்வாரி) | Pattam |
| Naṣṣam (நச்சம்) | Pittam |
| (Bhujāṅga tāndavam) | |

It is remarkable that only certain type of tālas are used for certain dances and just as rāgas are classified according to their utility for various types of compositions and for evoking various rasas or emotional feelings, the tālas have also been prescribed to suit the exigencies of the several kinds of dances, tāndava and lāsya, in Tamil musical and dance treatises.²⁰

The *araśakkūttu* involves both *lāsya* and *tāndava*. The tālas that are employed for these dances belong to *Iraiyam* (இறையம்) group. These are—

| Tālas | Aksharas | Mātras |
|----------------------|----------|--------|
| 1. Iriyam | 48 | 12 |
| 2. Magudattu iraiyam | 32 | 8 |
| 3. Kotrathi iraiyam | 32 | 8 |
| 4. Iriyattu amaram | 16 | 4 |
| 5. Iriyattu iyavul | 12 | 3 |
| 6. Iriyakkomudi | 5 | 1½ |
| 7. Navamuḍi iraiyam | 7 | 1½ |

The dance known as *Pattasakkuttu* is a kind of pot dance (குடக்கூத்து) described in *Śilappadikāram* as one of the eleven dances—

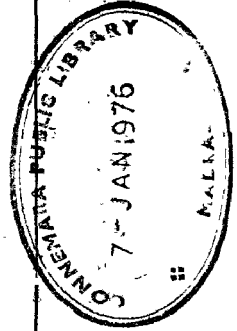
“குருத்துக் கதலிக் குடத்தின் மீமிசைகாலும்
விசையறும் கையும் தட்டி தாலல் பட்டசக்
குடத்தின் தழைவே.

(த. 378)

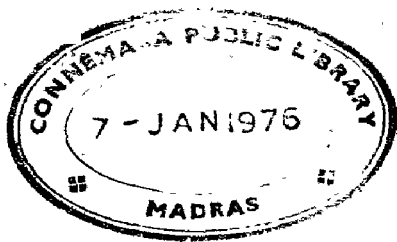
The tāla that is used for this kuttu is termed *aḍagam* (அடகம்) or *araṅga* (அரங்க) tāla. The aṅgas and the total duration of the tāla are not mentioned in the work.

In later works on Music and Dance, a set of dances styled *Navasandhi* dances, with special characteristics is enumerated. These are performed during the annual festivals in certain temples, accompanied by compositions and jathis set in ragas and tālas specially known as *navasandhi tālas*. Since these dances are offered as worship to the nine sandhis on the occasion, tālas used in these *navasandhi* dances, also came to be referred as *navasandhi tālas*. The remarkable feature about these dances is the mention of paṅs as well as rāgas for each of the respective nine dances. The following table illustrates the *navasandhi* dances, with the tālas, rāgas, paṅs and tāla vādyas:—

| No. | Name of the śandhi | Dance | Rāga | Pap | Tala | Angas of tala | Mātras |
|-----|-----------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|------------------|--------|
| 1. | Brahma | Kamala nr̥tta | Madhyama | Megham | Chachatputa | SSIS | (8) |
| 2. | Indra | Bhujānga | Velāvali | Gandhāram | Chachatputa | SIIS | (6) |
| 3. | Agni | Maṅgala nr̥tta | Varali | Kolli | Utgaṭṭitam | SSS | (6) |
| 4. | Yama | Dandapādāṁ | Gūjjari | Kouśikam | Maṭṭayam | IOI | (2½) |
| 5. | Nairuti | Bhujānga trāsam | Gowri | Naṭṭapādai | Malla | IIIO δ | (4½) |
| 6. | Varuṇa | Kuñjita or śanka nr̥tta | Deśi | Sikamaram | Rasavardhanam | OOOIO | (2½) |
| 7. | Vāyu | Bhujānga lalitam | Makutaśmakri | Takkēsi | Sampai | OOOI | (2½) |
| 8. | Kubēra | Sandhya | Srirāga | Takka | Rupaka | OI | (1½) |
| 9. | Iśāna | Bhramarikam | Panchama rāga Desakahi rāga | Panchama oṅ Salāvāni | Ekātālam | I | (1) |



To sum up, the study of the important works like Śilappadikāram, with its valuable commentary and other literature related to music and dance, establishes the fact that the principles of the theory of music as embodied in the ancient Tamil works are fundamentally identical with those expounded in the Sanskrit treatises. The basic governing and living concepts have always remained unchanged in the process of evolution and these are given a new interpretation in the light of new experiments and widening of musical and scientific knowledge. The basic concepts of śruti, svara, rāga, laya, musical composition and musical instruments have remained intact since recognisable beginnings of art music. Ancient Tamil music represents the earliest developed form of Indian Music, that was in vogue in the Southern region of our country. Again the scientific principles of the ancient Tamil musical system, Hindustāni and Carnātic Systems are same; the difference is one of dialectical in nature. The theories of seven svaras, twenty two śrutis, four fold relation of svaras, concepts of rāga, rāga ālāpana, rāga lakshana, tāla and musical forms and other fundamental elements of Indian musical system are found to be similar in these three branches revealing at the same time a common matrix for all the three. The nomenclatures adopted, the forms and styles of expression may however differ in these systems, but the fundamental facts governing the art have continued as ever, which again proves the dynamic unity of the art since its inception. The influence of ancient Tamil music on the development of the later music of India especially on Carnatic music, is remarkably profound and this is reflected in the closest co-operation and exchange of mutual ideas, between the two systems. The past is never really dead, it lives in the evolved, adapted or innovated later forms. The past has a purpose in enlightening and remain relevant to the present and to achieve this, requires an active re-interpretation and re-examination of the facts that are of eternal significance.



THE DATE OF THE TĒVĀRAM TRIO: AN ANALYSIS AND RE-APPRAISAL

BY

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It was the pioneering study of Sundaram Pillay nearly 80 years ago (1895) which first determined the period during which Tirujñānasambandar lived. After an analysis of certain essentially literary sources he concluded that this composer of *Tēvaram* should have lived in the 7th century A. D., a result that has been accepted through all these years as a stabilized fact. On the basis of certain episodes narrated by Sekkiḷār in his Tiruttoṇḍarpurāṇam (Periapurāṇam), Tirunāvukkarasar (Appar) is deemed to be the senior contemporary of Tirujñānasambandar. More specifically, Tirunāvukkarasar is understood to have lived during the regnal years of the Pallava king Mahēndravarman I (A. D. 610-630); it is believed that this composer, who was himself a convert from Jainism to Saivism, caused an identical transformation in Mahēndravarman also. The source for such an inference is in part Sekkiḷār's Periapurāṇam itself and in part, a stone inscription in Samskr̥t—which has lent itself to more than one interpretation—incised in the rock-cut cave temple in Tiruchi (SIL. I. Nos. 33, 34). Even granting that Mahēndravarman was the donor of this inscription, what it conveys is yet a matter of vagueness and uncertainty. However, that Tirujñānasambandar and Tirunāvukkarasar were contemporaries in the time of Mahēndravarman has been accepted as an accomplished fact. This contention constitutes one of the important foundation stones of the literary, religious, cultural and even political history of Tamil Nāḍu.

The determination of the date of the third of the *tēvaram* singers, Sundarar (Nambi Ārūrār), however, is still a matter of uncertainty. Some authors (Srinivasa Pillai, 1949; Rajamanikkam, 1960; etc.) advocate his placement in the 9th century A.D. while

others (Dorai Rangaswamy, 1958) Vellaivaranan, 1962; Mahalingam, 1969; etc.) make him a contemporary of the Pallava king Narasimhavarman II Rajasimha (A. D. 690/1-728/9) identifying this king with Kādavarkon Kaḷarççinṅan who figures in Sundarar's *tēvaram*. Thus, the contemporary majority opinion holds that all the three *tēvaram* hymnists lived strictly within the limits of the 7th century A.D. as contemporaries of the Pallava kings from Mahēndrarman I to Narasimhavarman II.

Validity of "Internal" Evidence

The sources that have been employed in determining the age of the *tēvaram* trio have largely been taken from medieval Tamil literature. The acts of these hymnists as elaborated in the Tiru-ṭoṇḍarpurāṇam of Sēkkiḷār, a 12th century writer, have been looked upon as the main fountainhead of basic data. It may be remarked that the materials from this work have also been used for a variety of purposes such as reconstructing the social and cultural history of the medieval period of the Tamil Nāḍu, (Rajamānikkam 1958) for the understanding of the nature of Śaivism that was current during that period (Nārāyana Aiyer, 1936), and also to determine the identity and age of certain kings and persons who appear in the old ruling dynasties of the Tamil Nāḍu (Mahalingam, 1969). The general belief that the Periapurāṇam is a dependable historical account is best expressed in the words of Pillai (1969);

"Some facts of political history are also recorded incidentally".

It should be noted that according to another noted historian, this text is "not so valuable" as a source material (Nilakanta Sastri, 1956); elsewhere (1955) the same author has observed: "It seems only proper, therefore, that we accept the beautiful pictures which abound in Sēkkiḷār's great work as idealised accounts of life and society as he saw them in his own day, rather than as studies and portraits of a bygone age." It is well to remember that Sēkkiḷār's sole purpose in composing this work was to inculcate *bhakti* (devotion) in the minds of listeners and readers as exemplified in the *acta sanctorum* of the 63 saints of

the Śaivite hagiology. With such a pre-occupation, it is natural to expect that the "historical" incidents handled therein lose much of their character and value due to interpolations, superimpositions and anachronisms. So much so the eventual task of sifting the genuine historical strings from the compounded matrix is rendered hopeless. Even should a string be isolated, it must be emphasized that it is not completely free from shadows of doubts and vagaries.

It is pertinent to mention in this connection that there are many literary works in the Kannaḍa language dealing with the lives of the 63 Śaivite saints.* The earliest of these is Śivagaṇada ragalē, (*Ragalē* composition on the Śivagaṇa) written by Harihara who lived about the 12th century AD, thus more or less a contemporary of Sēkkiḷār. There is also another book, recently come to light, of the same author in prose—Aravattumūvaru puratānara kathā garbhada gadya (Summary in prose of the story of the sixty three Śaiva devotees). Thus the compositions of Sēkkiḷār and of Harihara stand favourably comparable both in reference to the contemporaneity of the authors and to the content of their texts. Although both the authors have dealt with the lives of the Śaivite devotees in the same sequence (Harihara or his follows in Kannaḍa

*Some of these are:

| | | |
|---------|---|--|
| AD 1200 | Harihara | Śivagaṇada ragalē, also known as Purātānara ragalē. Aravattu mūvaru purātānara kathāgarbhada gadya. |
| AD 1400 | Bhṛtma kavi | Basava purāna. |
| AD 1425 | Lakkaṇa dandēśa | Śivatattva cintāmaṇi. |
| AD 1470 | Tōṇṭada Śiddaliṅga Śivayōgi Panditārādhyā Pāḷkurike Somanātha | Pāḷkurike sōmanātha purāna. Gaṇasahasra nāmāvali. Ganasahasra nāmāvali. |
| AD 1500 | Nijagaṇa Śivayōgi | Aravattumūvara tripadi. |
| AD 1500 | Suraṅga | Trisāṣṭhi purātana caritra. |

Koççengatçolan :

The Kannaḍa versions locate the place of this devotee (in his previous birth) on the banks of the river Gādāvāri, while according to the Tamil narratives it was a place called Candratirtha in the Cola country. The trend of the story in the Kannaḍa versions is wholly different from that in the Periapurāṇam. The former say that the elephant which was killed by Koççengatçolan was born as a demon dwelling in a cave; that there was an encounter between this being and the king, whereupon the latter realized that he had neglected the worship of Śivaliṅga. The moment he began worshipping Śiva, he was redeemed.

Narasiṅgamunaiyariar :

According to the Periapurāṇam, the locus of this devotee was Tirumunaiyāḍi while the Kannaḍa versions place him at Tirunāvalpura; Harihara makes him a resident of Śivapura (Agravāḍi?). Some narratives like the Triśaṣṭhipurātana caritam make this devotee the father of Sundarar.

Variations such as these around a central theme are illustrative of the imaginative wings that it acquires in the hands of individual poets, Sekkiḷar not excluded. What degree of reliance is to be placed on such narratives as source materials for scientific historical research is to be critically evaluated. The so-called internal evidence becomes genuine only after the legendary and the hyperbolic are eliminated from the events; and it is here that utmost caution and restraint are needed. In works of the type of Periapurāṇam and the similar Kannaḍa narratives with a significant degree of quantitative and qualitative variables, the question arises as to which of these events or episodes are free from imaginative halo and therefore worthy of choice as valid source materials.

In discussions on the age of the *tēvāram* trio, another set of sources is taken from the *tēvāram* itself. In the course of their devotional outpourings, the trio casually refer to some royal persons and important individuals who were connected with them or with incidents connected with them. Such individuals are asserted to

have been the contemporaries of the *tēvāram* writers. In other words, no allowance is made to the possibility of placing such incidentally mentioned persons, at an earlier period than the trio. The use of the present tense in connection with these persons has been argued in favour of their having been coeval with the *tēvāram* writers themselves. It should not be forgotten however, that the tense in poetry is a factor that enjoys poetic licence, and therefore, is not unambiguously reliable for chronological purposes.

Occasionally data from the epigraphic records have been taken as another source in discussions bearing on the age of the *tēvāram* trio. It should be borne in mind that while the value of dated epigraphs as unquestionable testimony is universally recognized, those whose dates are inferred solely from the nature of the script greatly reduces their value for historical purposes.

It is now necessary to critically examine the sources and inferences drawn therefrom to arrive at the accepted dates of the *tēvāram* trio.

1. Tirunavukkarasār and Mahēndravarman I

(a) Literature :

The Periapurāṇam narrates that Tirunāvukkarasar was once tied to a block of stone and thrown into the sea by the Jainas whereupon he muttered the Five Sacred letters (*Pañcāksara*); the stone was transformed into a float that brought the saint safely to the shore nearby. A Pallava king, who heard this miracle, adored Tirunāvukkarasar and got himself converted to Śaivism. It is also said that this king caused the demolition of a Jaina monastery at Pātālputra and with the materials built a temple called Guṇabhara-Īśvaram elsewhere.

It should be specially noted here that Sekkiḷar neither mentions the name of the Pallava king nor gives any clue that helps to identify who the king was.

(b) Epigraphy :

On the two flanks of the Gangādhara sculpture in the "upper rock-cut cave temple" (Laliṭānkura Pallavēśvara-grha) in Tiruchi

are inscribed some verses in Samskr̥t̥ (SII. I. Nos. 33, 34). It is said that the script of the inscriptions "remind us of those of the Pallava inscriptions at Māmallapuram and Kāñchipuram." The inscriptions refer to a king by name Guṇabhara—with the epithets Puruṣōttama, Śatrumalla and Satyasamdha—who caused the building of a Śiva temple in which was placed a *līṅga*. With great caution, the editor of these inscriptions (Hultzsck) remarked that it is "very probable that Guṇabhara was a Pallava prince, who ruled over the Chola country."

Hultzsck also drew attention to the *double entendre* of a verse in the inscription No. 33 running as follows :

Gunabhara-nāmāni rāja-
nyanēna līṅgēna līṅgini jñānam
prthatam cirāya lōkē
vipakṣavṛttēh parāvṛttam

This is a verse that has been discussed and has formed the sheet-anchor for several far-reaching conclusions (Śrīnivāsan, 1964; Mahalingam, 1969; Nagaswamy, 1971). Hultzsck rendered the stanza as follows: "While the king called Guṇabhara is a worshipper of the *līṅga*, let the knowledge, which has turned back from hostile (*vipakṣa*) conduct, be spread for a long time in the world by this *līṅga*!" He also noted in a foot-note that "This whole verse has a *double entendre*. It contains allusions to the Indian logic (*tarkaśāstra*), in which *līṅgin* means the subject of a proposition, *līṅga* the predicate of a proposition and *vipakṣa* an instance on the opposite side." Mahalingam (1969) has accepted both these contexts as bearing relevance to the religious background of Mahēndravarmān I and according to him, "This, when supplemented with the tradition embodied in the *Periapurāṇam*, may hint at his probable conversion." Nagaswamy (1971) also has accepted the general tone of Hultzsck's rendering, but gives a new version which appears to be a decided improvement on Hultzsck's; he also offers an elaborated commentary on the second meaning, that is, the context of the *tarka*. He sees in this verse "a clear reference to Mahēndra's conversion from Jainism to Śaivism in the words *vipakṣavṛttēh parāvṛttam*. There is also an unequivocal

reference to the worship of Śivaliāga in the terms *Liṅga* and *Liṅgin*, *Liṅgin* meaning one who bears the *liṅga*, i.e. worships *Liṅga*."

To what extent these categorical conclusions are warranted needs critical assessment. Granting for a moment that the verse under consideration contains two meanings, one is tempted to question the relevance of *tarka* to the context and content of the epigraph. Shorn of the much disputed *double entendre*, a paraphrase of the verse simply means: "The King named Guṇabhara is a worshipper of *Linga*. The knowledge—which was in a state of hostility but has now been turned away—be spread with the establishment of this *linga*."

Srinivāsan draws attention to an important point bearing on the religion of Mahēndra. The cave temple at Maṇḍagaṇaṭṭu, the first of his excavations, is dedicated to Brahma, Viṣṇu and Śiva; the one at Tiruchi, a later excavation, is dedicated to Śiva alone. Therefore, the temple building activities of the king do not suggest that he was a follower of Jainism. "The king, who is said to have returned from the path of 'hostile conduct' to Śaivism, would not have dedicated his early excavations to Trimurṭi, or subsequently to Viṣṇu, as he did at Mahēndravāḍi."

Srinivāsan further observes: "Perhaps it would be more correct to assume that he was a tolerant follower of Vaidikamārga (Brahmanical religion) and under the influence of the contemporary events and in the trend of the prevailing religious revival he became an ardent Śaiva in the latter part of his life, when all his three cave-temples Tiruchirapalli, Dalavanur and Siyamaṅgalam were dedicated to Śiva in preference to other gods."

If as suggested above *Vipaksavritti* is taken to mean "a conduct which deviates from the noun" in the context of *rāja-dharma* there would be no room to interpolate guesses with reference to the personal religion of Guṇabhadra.

(c) *Historical factors* :

According to tradition, Tirunāvukkarasar visited and sang about the presiding deities of the Śiva temples in the area north of the

river Ponnaiyār in the Tonḍaimaṇḍalam—Ālangāḍu, Pachchur, Kālahasti, Tiruvoṟṟiyūr, Tiruvānmiyūr, Tirukkaḷukkuṇṇam and Kāñchipuram. Many of the Śiva temples built by Mahēndra-varman I are scattered in the same area. Granting that Tirunāvukkarasar roamed about in this area devoutly visiting the Śiva temples, it is strange indeed that he never visited any of those created by his contemporary, Mahēndra I. This strange attitude causes greater bewilderment when it is realised that, according to another tradition, Tirunāvukkarasar was instrumental in converting Mahēndra from Jainism to Śaivism and that Mahēndra began to build the temples dedicated to Śiva only subsequent to his conversion.

Another important query also poses itself in this connection. Again, if it is accepted that Tirunāvukkarasar sang about the Śiva temples mentioned above and that he was a contemporary of Mahēndra I, who were the donors or builders of these temples? They could not have been the pre-Mahēndra rulers of the Pallava dynasty because nothing is known of their temple-building activities. Nor can they be ascribed to Mahēndra himself because they fail to exhibit any of the Pallava traits (excepting the one at Tirukkaḷukkuṇṇam). Nor could they have been built by the Čolas as they were unknown as a dynasty in the 6th/7th centuries; if it is contended that they could have been the Čolas of the so-called Čaṅkam Age (1st to the 3rd centuries A.D.), firstly their territory did not extend as far north as the Tonḍaimaṇḍalam, and secondly, there does not appear to be any references to the existence of temples dedicated to Śiva during that age.

The Tirukkaḷukkuṇṇam temples (Orukāl Maṇḍapa and Vēda-giriśvara temple) belong to the post-Mahēndra period; another temple of aspidal shape within the *prakāra* of the Bhaktavatsala temple at the foot of the hill is suspected to be of the time of the Pallava Skandasiṣya (Bālasubramanyam, 1968). Tirunāvukkarasar's *Tiruttaṇḍakam* on Tirukkaḷukkuṇṇam, it should be emphasized, does not refer to any one of these temples in particular.

2. Tirunāvukkarasar ond Tirujñānasambandar :

As early as 1895, Sundaram Pillay made extensive use of Sekkiārpurāṇam (Tirumuraikkaṇḍapurāṇam) and also Periapurāṇam to deduce the age of Tirujñānasambandar. The conversion of one Kūn Pandyan from Jainism to Śaivism is taken as "the most important historical fact connected with Sambanda's life." Sundaram Pillay then refutes the estimates of Caldwell (1875) and of Nelson (1868)—who placed Tirujñānasambandar respectively in the 13th (AD 1292) and 14th (AD 1320) centuries—on the ground that their view "betrays such an absence of the sense of historical perspective as cannot but produce the most amusing and grotesque results."

Sundaram Pillay takes the date of Umāpati Śivāçarya as the starting point for his thesis. He takes us through history in the retrospect until the time of Kaṇḍarāditya. He contends that Tañjāvūr was in existence in the days of Tirujñānasambandar and that his *tēvarams* do not allude to Parāntaka I; he also draws attention to the absence of this king's benefaction of gilding the roof of the Chidambaram temple in epigraphy. He further remarks that the Parāntaka I's line is a distant offshoot from that of Koççeṅgaṇan, "probably an offshoot of an alliance of the Old Choḷa family with the Pallavas of Kāñchi." Then he contemplates that a "long period of confusion would seem to have prevailed between the demise of Koççeṅgaṇan and the new Choḷa dynasty to which Parāntaka and Kandarāditya belonged." Thus, the time of Koççeṅgaṇan is fixed as the lower and that of Kandarāditya the upper limits for the age of Tirujñānasambandar. In order to circumscribe the latter's age within a still more restricted gamut, he refers to the occurrence of the word 'dravida siṣu' in Śamkarāçarya's *Soundaryalahari* and identifies this name as that of Āludaiyappiḷḷai, an alternative name of Tirujñānasambandar. He takes the date of Ādi Śamkarāçarya in the 7th century AD and contends that "Sambanda was a well known character" in the days of Śamkarāçarya.

It is important to realize in this connection that Sundaram Pillay wrote his thesis nearly 80 years ago and that much water

has flowed during this period both in regard to history and epigraphy, so much so; a rethinking on several older concepts and conclusions is strongly warranted. His thesis needs the following emendations :

(i) Sundaram Piļlay " borrowed valuable facts " from Sekki-ļarpurāṇam and Tirumuṛaikkaṇḁa purāṇam, both of which had been presumed for a long time to be the works written by Umāpati Sivācārya of the 14th century AD. Now-a-days serious doubts are being expressed as to the authorship of these compositions and the general opinion that it is not to be attributed to Umāpati is gaining ground (Sadasiva Pandarattar, 1963). It is quite possible that these works belong to the 16th/17th centuries.

(ii) The identification of Kūn Pāṇḁyan is a matter that has not been satisfactorily settled. It is suspected that the Pāṇḁyan ruler with this name could be Māravarman Arikēsari, AD 640-670 (Subramanian, 1955). This identification is made purely on subjective and artificial grounds. There are no historical or epigraphical evidence to support the equation. The Velvikuḁi copper-plate grant and the comments in Iraiyanār's Akapporuļ (stanzas 22, 106, 235. 309) glorify Māravarman Arikēsari's victories; the latter work upholds his devotion to Śiva (stanzas 256, 279). The Velvikuḁi grant further records his having performed *hiranyagarbha* and *tulābhāra* benefactions, worthy of a kṣatriya. Thus the available evidence does not suggest that he was a follower of Jainism. Now the question arises whether such a person would be referred to by a sacrilegious epithet ' kūn ' (hunchback) in spite of the probability that he could have had such a structural deformity. On considerations as these, not only is the identity of Kūn Pāṇḁyan with Māravarman Arikēsari repelled away, poles apart, but the fictitious nature of the character, also confirmed.

(iii) Tirujñānasambandar's *tēvarams* do not mention the name of Parāntaka I. Should we expect devotional literature to cite the names of all kings? Sundaram Piļlay notes the absence of authentic evidence for Parāntaka I's gilding the Chidambaram temple in epigraphy. The subsequently discovered Tiruvālaṅgāḁu

and Leiden copper-plates clearly refer to the fact of the gilding benefaction to the Tillai shrine by this king.

(iv) Sundaram Pillay suspects that Parāntaka I's lineage represents an offshoot arising out of a matrimonial alliance between the 'Old Choḷa' and Pallava dynasties. The history of the Coḷas from the pre-Vijayālaya times to the regnal years of Rājarāja I is yet imperfectly known. Our present knowledge of the Pallava-Coḷa political relationships is also next to nothing. The available epigraphs, however, fail to confirm Sundaram Pillay's guess. On the contrary, there appears to be a hint suggestive of the Rāshtrakuta blood in one of the sons of Āditya I (Sadasiva Pandarattar, 1967). Yet nothing is known about the mother of Parāntaka I.

(v) Sundaram Pillay fixes the lower limit of the age of Tirujñānasambandar in the period of one Koççeṅgaṅaṇ, who has been presumed to be a remote ancestor of the later Coḷas. Who was this Koççeṅgaṅaṇ?

According to Nīlakanta Sastri (1955), "The life of Koççeṅgaṅaṇ, like that of Karikāla, came to gather a haze of legend round himself"; the author has rightly warned us: "it is necessary to avoid mixing up facts drawn from contemporary sources with beliefs of later times." References to this king occur in the anthology *Puraṇānuṣu* (74) and in the poem *Kalavali* of Poykaiyār, which are believed to have been composed during the Caṅkam age. He is also referred to in the *tēvarams* of Tirujñānasambandar, of Sundarar and also in the *Prabandams* of Tirumaṅgai Ālvār. The earliest epigraphs to mention his name (his sequential placement in genealogy being subjected to variability) appear in the "legendary genealogy of the Coḷa copper-plates of the 10th and 11th centuries" (SII, II, pp. 152-3; 253; 377-9). Thus it appears that the legends concerning the person were first woven into literary works and later worked their way into the copper-plates. It should be noted that none of the stone inscriptions—even those that were incised earlier than the copper-plates—refer to Koççeṅgaṅaṇ directly or indirectly.

3. Narasimhavarman II and Sundarar :

Quite a number of scholars from the commencement of the present century have discussed the date of Sundarar. More recently, Dorai Rangaswamy (1958) and Vellaivaranan (1962) have dealt with the problem in an exhaustive manner and have offered their conclusions. However, the date of Sundarar is yet an open-question warranting further research and re-thinking. A broad survey of literature shows that the largest part of source materials have been taken from the writings of Sundarar himself with a rather pronounced sentimental bias. The dates arrived at may be sampled out as follows :

- (i) Sundarar, a contemporary of Narasimhavarman II Rājasimha (AD 690/1-728/9).
Mahalingam (1969)
Vellaivaranan (1962)
Sadasiva Pandarattar (1937)
- (ii) Sundarar, a contemporary of Nandivarman II Pallavamalla (AD 731-796).
Narayana Aiyer (1936)
- (iii) Sundarar, a contemporary of Dantivarman (AD 796-846)
Srinivasa Pillai (1949)
- (iv) Sundarar, a contemporary of Nandivarman III (AD 846-869)
Minakshi (1938)
Rajamanikkam (1960)

Dorai Rangaswamy (1958) and Vellaivaranan (1962) have taken great pains to refute the opinions of all those authors who place Sundarar later than the period of Rājasimha. While so doing and in propounding their own views, a major part of their arguments are involved in undercurrents and overtones of sentiment and emotion, which have no place in scientific scrutiny.

Vellaivaranan draws special attention to the use of the present tense in the reference to Kaḍavarkōn by Sundarar—*Kaḍalsūṇḍa*

ulakelām kākkinṇa perumān kāḍavarkōn kaḷarṇṇiṅkan (the Kāḍava King who rules over the entire earth surrounded by the sea). The epithet 'kaḍalsūḷnda ulakelām' (the entire earth surrounded by the sea) is admittedly a poetic exaggeration as no Pallava king ever ruled the entire peninsular India, which is the area surrounded by the sea. The use of the present tense in the phrase is obviously guided by the dictates of the prosodic metre and to stress that it refers to a contemporary historical event is wholly unwarranted.

Elaborate and extended scope is sought for the phrase *kadal-sūḷnda ulakelām* by Dorai Rangaswamy (1958). While it may be a fact that Rājasimha's diplomatic relationships were established across the waters of the Bay of Bengal in China and Sri Lanka and possibly in some areas of the Far East, and while it is equally probable that he possessed a strong naval arm, it is doubtful if he ever became the ruler of these areas. Is this not an instance of highly artificial and deliberate stretching of a somewhat little-known and slender evidence in order to justify a pre-conceived conclusion? Victories and valourous deeds of kings generally assume exaggerated proportions in poetry. In fact, traditionally, exaggeration (*utprēkṣa*) is considered to be one of the necessary qualities of poetry. Sundarar's phrase itself has accommodated this quality in considerable measure. There is no justification to expand its scope still further in reference to *Kaḷarṇṇiṅkan*.

Rather funny logic is evoked in identifying this *Kaḷarṇṇiṅkan* with Rājasimha. 'Ciṅkan' is taken to be the real name of the king and 'Kaḷar' is taken to refer to his valour. Analogies are cited as Rājasimha, Ksatriyasimha and Narasimha, which are all epithets borne by Narasimhavarman II and the conclusion is reached that 'kaḷar' represents a combination of the first half of the analogues, -Raja, Ksatriya and Nara (Vellaivaranan, 1962)! Dorai Rangaswamy (so also Mahalingam, 1969) takes the word 'kaḷar' as meaning 'heroic anklet' which is used as an epithet to a warrior of repute. Yet, out of several scores of *birudas* of Rājasimha, in spite of the fact that a good number of them refer to his prowess, it is strange that none approximates the sense involved in 'kaḷarṇṇiṅkan' (Lion wearing the heroic anklet).

It should be noted that both Sundarar and Sēkkiḷār use the word 'kāḍava' as a qualifying epithet; for Kaḷaṟṇṇiṅkan and this word, along with its variant *kāḍuveṭṭi*, has been invariably taken to mean the Pallava dynasty. The Kannaḍa epigraphs of the 7th-9th centuries (and of later periods as well) appear to clearly distinguish the Pallava and the Kāḍava (Kāḍuveṭṭi) as two separate clans (eg. EC VI. Siragunda); an impression is gained that the *kāḍuveṭṭi* clan perhaps represents a collateral or a subordinate branch of the Pallavas. The names of some of these chieftains also end in *ciṅkan*. The history of the Kāḍavas/Kāḍuveṭṭis is yet to be written. Under these circumstances would it not be premature and hazardous to look for this Kaḷaṟṇṇiṅkan within the limits of the Pallava lineage?

One more aspect of the Sundarar problem needs comment. A close connection is contemplated between the erection of the Kailāsanātha temple at Kāñchipuram by Rājasimha and the story of the saint Pūsālār (Sadasiva Pandarattar, 1957 Vellaivaranan, 1962). As rightly observed by Mahalingam (1969), "There is no dearth of valid criticism and objection to this identification. It is true that Rājasimha was a *Kāḍavarkōn* and built a stone temple at Kāñchipuram, the two things that tally with the description (of Pūsālār's life) in the *Periapurāṇam*. But while the inscription in the Kailāsanātha temple speaks of a heavenly voice heard by Rājasimha, Sēkkiḷār only refers to Śiva's appearance in a dream. Again Nambi Andār Nambi who lived prior to Sēkkiḷār refers only to the imaginary temple constructed by Pūsālār without any mention of the Pallava ruler of Kāñchi and his stone temple."

CRITIQUE 1

The end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries in Tamil Nāḍu witnessed a lively onset of literary and historical activities. During this period we see the discovery and printing of classical literary works, the development of new imaginative wings to the muse of poetry, the proliferation of the Tamil language to reach the common man through journalism, and the adoption of new literary forms like the short story, novel and drama. Independently of these activities was also initiated the

study of ancient monuments and decipherment of epigraphic records. In a way, one of the guidelines for the workers in the fields of archaeology and epigraphy was provided by the devotional works of the Śaiva *nāyanmārs* and Vaishnavite *aḷvārs*. The institution of centres of higher learning in liberal arts by the Governmental agency provided a meeting place for literature, culture, history and other disciplines. It is in this totality of environment that early attempts were made at reconstructing the history of Tamil Nāḍu. It should not be forgotten that practically very little was then known of the dynasties that ruled the different parts of South India. The few hundreds of epigraphs that had been discovered had not been collated on account of discontinuity and the sampling itself was yet inadequate. The only sources that were available at the time were some works of literature—religious and secular. It is but natural that Sundaram Pillay's studies (as also of other students of history, like T. A. Gopinatha Rao, Venkayya, Hultzsh, *et al*) were circumscribed by the limited nature of source materials. Thus their opinions and conclusions of 70–80 years ago represent only one side of the coin in the modern context.

The historical and epigraphical data that have accumulated over half a century and more, supply several points that aptly deserve to be juxtaposed with the old findings in order to understand the other side of the coin. Such a study is also necessary in order to bring home the correctness or otherwise of our beliefs, opinions and concepts.

The so-called 'internal evidence' gleaned from an intensive study of a literary source, certainly has value in historical studies. But the question arises: Can one expect to gather truly historical data from all types of literature? Every student of history is aware of the dearth of authentic writings in old literature of several languages. Apart from those narratives that directly deal with the life of a king or noble or place or event—where too, quite a wide degree of allowance is to be made in order to eliminate exaggerations—the devotional or sectarian books in general may not be expected to contain valid source materials for history; even if they do, it is a purely subjective assessment that has been

the guiding factor for isolating the 'historical' strands from the skeins. In this process, legendary events are confused as representing history and, mythical persons are attempted to be identified with those who actually lived in flesh and blood. It also happens that, already catapulted accounts in such literature are shot up to still greater heights and the meaning of certain words or events stretched up to or even beyond the snapping point. In view of these dangers it is obligatory to reserve a consideration of the 'internal evidences' until the 'external evidences' gleaned from epigraphy, architecture and allied disciplines of study are blocked out and their value and pattern assessed.

It is no over-statement that epigraphic records generally afford a much more reliable data than literature. Because of this advantage, this data, wherever possible, should be used to build the chronological framework with which the literary sources may be meaningfully compared. It is now clear from recent studies (Swamy, 1972^a), for example, that the institution of offering the *tiruppadiyams* in temples was initiated for the first time in the reign of Parāntaka I (139 of 1935, AD 910; 99 of 1928/9, AD 942; 111 of 1925, AD 943) and that the installation of the icons of the *tēvāram* trio in temples and offering worship to them commenced in the time of Rājarāja I (299 of 1917, AD 995; 68 of 1927/8, AD 1006; 37 of 1920, AD 1032). Vellaivaranan (1952) prefers to push back the commencement of *tiruppadiyam* offering to the time of Āditya I on the basis of two *Rājakēsari* inscriptions, but the identification of this title with Āditya I remains doubtful. Both these epigraphs are in the Tiruchi district. One of them is dated in the 3rd regnal year, while the other in the 6th. It is likely that both are referable to the period of Gaṇḍarāditya. Thus authentic references to the *tēvāram* trio and to their compositions commence appearing only in the earlier part of the Cola period, that is, the 10th century AD (Swamy, 1972^a).

In the foregoing pages attention has been drawn to the untrustworthy and often ambiguous nature of the source materials that have been projected to place the *tēvāram* trio in the early Pallava period of the Simhaviṣṇu line, that is in the 7th century

AD. The question naturally arises as to what had happened to the writings of these saints for the period between the 7th to the 10th centuries. Of course, sentiment-saturated stories and legends are readily brought forward to tell us that they had been *lost* and later *re-discovered!*

Here we are faced with a curious anachronism. The re-discovery is generally attributed to Rājarāja I, AD 985-1014 (Nilakanta Sastri, 1955^a), although the Annāmalai University school as already stated, argues that the credit should go to Āditya I, AD 871-907 (Vellaivaranan, 1962). The place where the *tēvārams* are supposed to have been re-discovered with the help of Nambi-Āndār Nambi by one of the above kings is now shown in the second *prakāra* of the Naṭarāja temple, Chidambaram. It is to be noted that there is unquestionable epigraphic evidence to show that the two inner *prakāras* of this temple came into existence in the time of Kulottuṅga I (AD 1070-1120) and his son/successor Vikrama (AD 1118-1135). This is just one of the instances to illustrate the variance of data obtained through literature (in this case, the Tīrumuṣaikkaṇḍa purāṇam) and through epigraphy. To presume the earlier existence of these *prakāras* and the concerned room in the time of Āditya I, that someone had demolished them or they had become destroyed of their own accord and that Kulottuṅga I and his son re-built the structures, is a theme for a *puṣāna* but not for history.

The writers of the history of Tamil literature emphatically tell us that the Golden age of the Caṅkam during the first three centuries of the Christian era was disrupted by the usurpation of the land and its domination by an ubiquitous but unknown clan called the Kaḷabhras, who were opposed to Tamil language and culture, and introduced Pali and Prakṛt languages. This situation, it is asserted, prevailed for the next three or four centuries. The Pallavas who followed this clan in the 7th century AD are charged with bias for Prakṛt and Samskṛt, and positive neglect of Tamil (Sadasiva Pandarattar, 1957). Yet in the same breath we are asked to believe that the *tēvāram* trio exerted a great impact on the Pallava rulers of the 7th century and wrote thousands and

thousands of *tiruppadiyams* in the Tamil language (Vellaivaranan, 1962). Are there sufficient evidences to warrant such sweeping assertions? What happened till the end of the 6th century AD does not concern us here. We are dealing with the situation and environment of the 7th century which is presumed to have been the productive period of the *tēvārams*. A new look at the old data in the light of what has accumulated during subsequent periods, however, appear to speak of a sequence and situation that are in every way different from the presently assumed quibbling version. Now let us critically examine the involved factors.

II. REVIEW OF "EXTERNAL" EVIDENCE

4. Pallava and Coḷa territories in the 7th century A.D.

The Samskr̥t portion of the Paḷḷankōvil copper-plate grant executed in the 6th year of Kō-Vijaya Simhavarman (that, is, the Pallava king Simhavarman) states that his son Simhaviṣṇu "conquered the land of the Coḷas, which had as its garland the daughter of kavera, as its waist-band the rice fields, the rich fields, of sugarcane, the groves of palm trees, plantains and the like (verse 5, TASS1, 1959, p. 81). The Tamil part of the same inscription, however, does not allude to this information. Simhaviṣṇu's victory over the Coḷa country finds a passing mention in the Kasakuḍi plates issued in the 22nd regnal year (AD 753) of Nandivarman II Pallavamallā; the Vēlur-pālayam plates (SII. II. No. 73) incised in the 6th regnal year of Vijaya Nandivarman (Nandivarman III), AD 852, the same victory is referred to: "He (Simhaviṣṇu) quickly seized the country of the Coḷas embellished by the daughter of Kavira whose ornaments are the forests of paddy (fields) and where (one found) brilliant groves of areca (palms)." (SII. II. No. 98). It may be noted that the descriptions of the land in this copper-plate is almost a copy of that in the Paḷḷankōvil plates, a situation which raises the suspicion that the (composer of the Vēlurpālayam grant could have taken the information almost *in toto* from the Paḷḷankōvil plates. It should also be noted that the information contained in the three copper-plates cannot be taken as independent evidences, but only as a repetition of a single source, that is, from the Paḷḷankōvil grant,

The Valurpalayam plates refer also to Buddhavarman as "The submarine fire to the ocean of the Coḷa army". This Pallava king is believed to have lived some time in the 4th or 5th century AD. In view of the ambiguous identity of this ruler, nothing more is known of him.

The inscription of the rock-cut cave temple at Tiruchi (SII. I. Nos. 33, 34) tell us that the hill at the place "resembles the diadem of the Coḷa province" and that in response to a question, "How could I, standing in a temple on earth, view the great power of the Coḷas or the beauty of the river Kavira?", "the king Guṇabhara...assigned to him this mountain temple..."

Hultzsch, who first edited these inscriptions, did not identify who the king was, and merely stated that "the characters of the two pillar inscriptions remind us of those of the Pallava inscriptions at Māmallapuram and Kāñchipuram" and this feature "makes it very probable that Guṇabhara was a Pallava prince, who ruled over the Coḷa country." Venkayya (EI. III. No. 38^a) suggested the possible identity of this Guṇabhara with Mahēndra-varman I, the reasons being:—

(i) Of the *birudas* Guṇabhara (which is unlikely to be the personal name of the king), Satyasamdhā, Satrumalla and Puruṣottama mentioned in the Tiruchi inscriptions, the name Guṇabhara and Satrumalla occur in the Vallam inscription (SII. II. No. 72).

(ii) According to the Periapurāṇam, Tirujñānasambandar visited Siruttonḍa-nāyanār and therefore both these persons were contemporaries; the former was also the younger contemporary of Tirunāvukkarasar "who was first persecuted and then patronised by an un-named Pallava king. One of the names of this king "appears to have been Guṇadhara."

(iii) "As the difference between the names Guṇadhara and Guṇabhara is very slight, Mahēndra potaraja alias Guṇabhara of the Vallam inscription may be identified with Guṇadhara, who, according to the Periapurāṇam, first persecuted and then patronised Tirunāvukkarasar.it is clear that the Mahēndra potaraja

alias Guṇabhara of the Vallam inscription, whom I propose to identify with the Guṇadhāra of the Periapurāṇam, could only be Mahēndravarmaṇ I."

In spite of this identity and the consequent acceptance Mahēndravarmaṇ I was the author of the Tiruchi rock-cut cave inscriptions, there are certain factors that are not reconcilable. Knowing fully well the undependability of Periyapurāṇam as a source book of history, is there justification to draw so heavily from that narrative? It should be noted that but for Sekkiḷār's account, Venkayya's inference would rest on very weak grounds. Because, the similarity of the *birudas*, in itself, as Hultzsch writes, is "a somewhat unsafe basis for identification."

Recently Subramaniam (1957) has drawn attention to the two varieties of scripts that were employed by the Pallavas of the 7th century AD: (i) "more or less Telugu-Kannaḍa in origin", and (ii) Grantha developed in the Tamiḷ country. The former has been employed in the Tiruchi inscriptions while the latter is found in Kūram, which, according to Subramaniam, "are much more developed." The inference reached by Subramaniam is that the use of certain Telugu-Kannaḍa letters in the Tiruchirappalli inscriptions of Mahēndravarmaṇ I "is peculiar and can be explained only by taking that the script in his records is Telugu-Kannaḍa and not the Grantha of the Tamiḷ country as seen in the Kūram grant." Furthermore, the Vallam inscription also belongs to the Telugu-Kannaḍa type. For the presence of the Telugu-Kannaḍa script in the Tamiḷ country at that early period, as distinct and in addition to the Grantha script, Subramaniam postulates that Mahēndra could have introduced the Telugu-Kannaḍa characters because of his "Telugu influence" as may be seen in some of his *birudas*.

This explanation is certainly one of the probabilities. There is also another which appears to be equally plausible. Firstly, it should be readily admitted that our present knowledge of the Pallavas of the Simhaviṣṇu line is based largely on later inscriptions; there is much to be known about the pre-Simhaviṣṇu genealogy. The recent discovery of new epigraphs by the Archaeology Department of Tamiḷ Nāḍu (Ganesan, 1971) appears to have a bearing

on the 6th/7th century history of the Pallavas. At least until this material is subjected to critical studies and until coherent working hypotheses are put forward, does it not appear justifiable to suggest that the probability of the Tiruchi (and perhaps the Vallam) inscriptions as referring to the benefactions of some other king or chieftain belonging to the Pallava alliance?

The determination of the boundaries of the Coḷa country on the 7th century AD which appears to have been taken by the Pallavas poses a major problem, not to speak of its limits during earlier periods. In addition to the reference to this country mentioned in the 7th century Pallava inscriptions, some of the Chālukya record of the same period attest to the existence of a district territory called Coḷikavisaya (FI. X. No. 22, Gadwal plates). Pulakēsin II's conquest of the Pallavas is said to have brought prosperity to the Coḷa along with Kēraja and Pāṇḍya (EI. VI. No. 1, Aihole inscription). Yuan Chwang, who visited South India in the same century speaks of the kingdom of Culiya (Colika?) on his way to the south. The Gaṅga king Srivikrama (AD c. 644-669) is said to have married a Coḷa princess to whom was born the son Bhūvikrama (Lakshminarayana Rao and Panchamukhi, 1946).

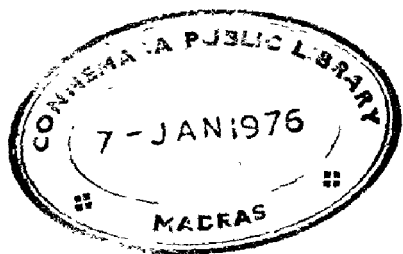
Therefore, the existence of a Coḷa territory in the 7th century AD need not be doubted. The task is to locate its limits and to identify the kings or the dynasties that controlled the area. The ancient capital of the Coḷa kings has been traditionally taken to be Uraiyr, Tiruchi district (Nilakanta Sastri, 1955) or Paḷaiyārai, Tanjore district (Sadasiva Pandarattar, 1967). Yet nothing is shown of the succession of the kings or chieftains who had control over the towns. It is true, some authors have attempted to identify them with the names occurring in the so-called Caṅkam literature. It must be frankly admitted, however, that the concept of a "Caṅkam Age" is itself wholly artificial and thoroughly baseless, thus rendering such efforts puerile and useless. At the same time, it should also be noted that the origin of the historically known dynasty of the Coḷas starting from Vijayālaya is another yet-to-be resolved problem. The recent attempts to trace

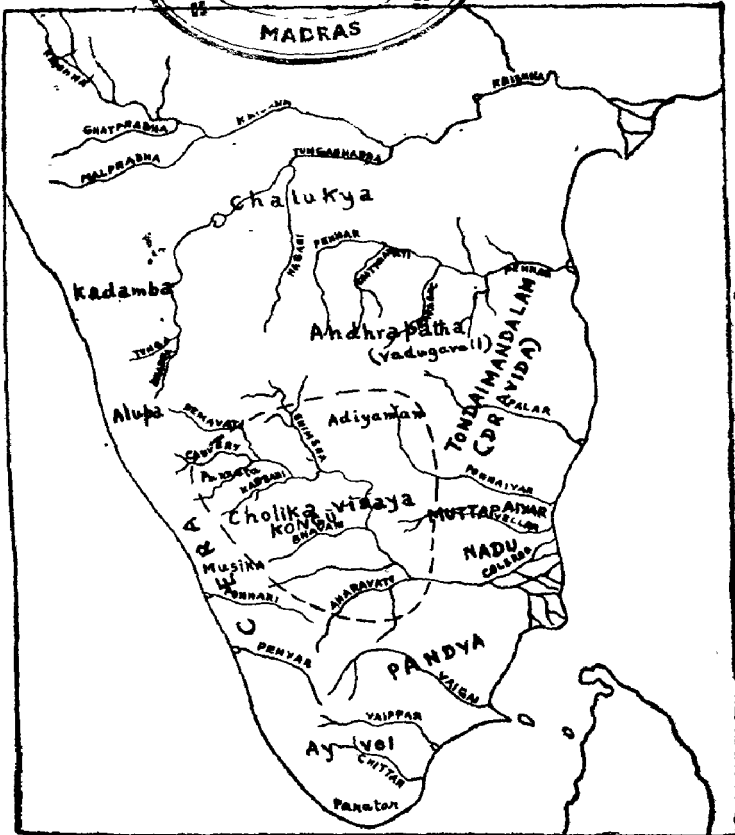
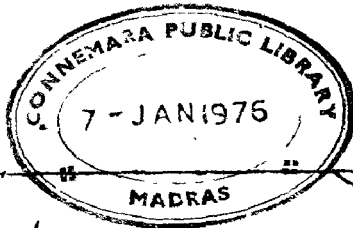
him to the house of Srikantha (Pottappi-Coḷa) although not in a direct way (Subramaniam 1955; Mahalingam, 1969) have certainly opened a new path of inquiry. While it is probable that further studies along this line may clarify the situation that existed in the 9th century, it is doubtful if such studies would take us logically and sequentially backwards to the 7th century.

In other words, the question poses itself: Should we take the Coḷa in the 7th century records as representing a country or as a dynasty of rulers? While commenting on the Tiruchi inscriptions of Guṇabhara, Nilakanta Sastri (1955) observes: "Hultzsch understands by *vibhutim colanam* 'the great power of the Coḷas.' But as it is not a proper description of the position of the Coḷas after their conquest by Simhaviṣṇu, and as such a description is hardly likely to be found in a Pallava grant, I take '*colanam*' to mean the country."

The Cu-li-ya country mentioned by Yuan Chwang has been presumed to represent the Siddhi 1000 and the Renadu 7000 (Nilakanta Sastri, 1955 b). Many other authors too have expressed a similar opinion. However, Yuan Chwang, it should be borne in mind, does not give the necessary clues to locate either the capital or the expanse of this country.

The three powers that dominated in the political scene of South India from about the middle of the 6th century to that of the 9th century are the Chālukyas of Badami, the Pallavas of Kāñchi and the Pāṇḍyas of Madurai. The Eastern Chālukyas and the Western Gaṅgās "took sides in the conflicts of the three kingdoms, sometimes with decisive results" (Nilakanta Sastri, 1955 b). The Coḷas of the Tamil country are said to have had "practically disappeared except that a line of Telugu rulers bearing their name and claiming a traditional connection with their capital at Uṛaiyūr now ruled in the area now known as Rāyalaseema." This situation clearly conveys that the Tamil Coḷas were nowhere in the picture. Nilakanta Sastri is followed by practically all historians in presuming that the "Ancient Coḷas" of the Tamil land were lingering on here and there, along the banks of the





Map 1. Topography of Cōḷihaviṣaya in the 7th century AD.

Kāvēri. Whether this is so or whether the Tamil Coḷas had never come into existence is a point that is yet to be decided by future investigations.

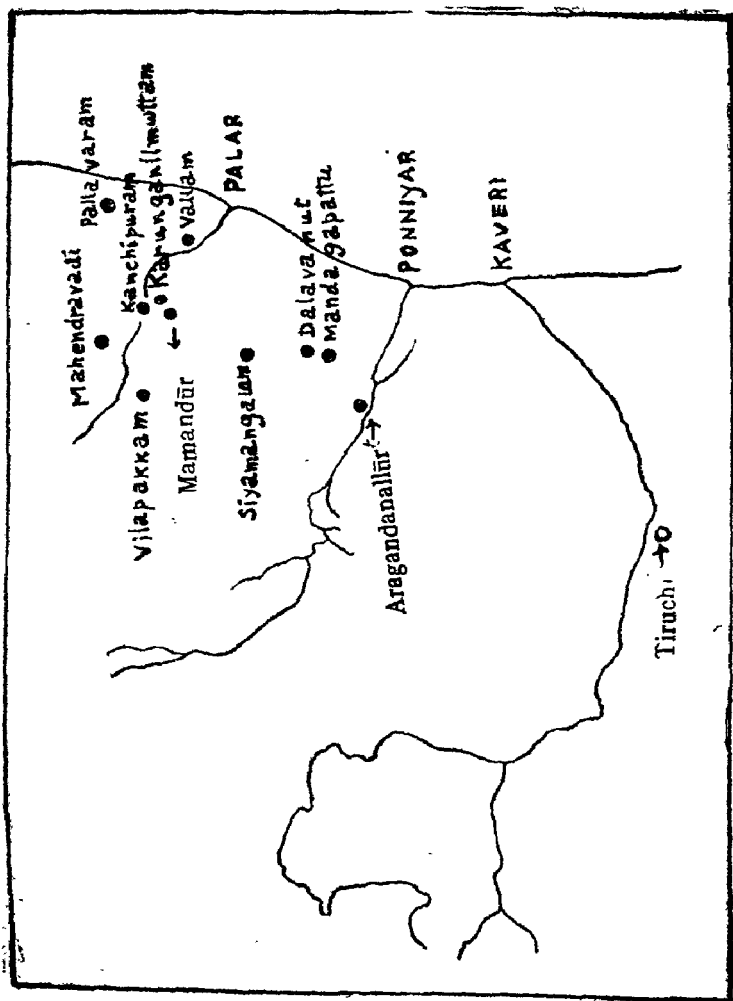
Yet, as already stated, that there existed a Coḷa terrain—apart from that of the Telugu Coḷas—cannot be denied in the face of available evidence. A general idea of the topographical divisions of the peninsular India in the 7th century AD is necessary at this point. The eastern coast-land north of the river Ponnīyār, perhaps up to the river Krishna was the Tonḍaimaṇḍalam. The terrain between the rivers Ponnīyār and Kāvēri and also some horizontal belt to the South of Kāvēri (northern parts of the modern Tiruchi and Tanjāvur districts) was the Muttaraiyar-nāḍu. The west-coast up to the modern Mangalore was the Cēra country. The area between the rivers Chandragiri and Nētravati including eastern parts of the modern Shimoga and Kaḍur districts was the country of the Alupas (Ramesh, 1970). To the north-east of this lay the Banavasi 12,000 country of the Kadambas. The region between the terrains of the Alupas and Kadambas on the west and the Tonḍaimaṇḍalam on the east was known as Āndhra-pātha (Vaduka-vali) and this was the region through which the Western Chālukyas invaded the Kāvēri region. The Koṅgu country was surrounded on the west by the Alupa and Cēra; on the north by the Banavasi 12,000 and Āndhra-pātha; on the east by the Tonḍaimaṇḍalam and Muttaraiyar-nāḍu; and on the south by the Pāṇḍya (Map 1).

While such were the regional relationships, somewhat coinciding with the contemporary political powers, each of these areas were being ruled by more than one dynasty or branches of one major dynasty. For example, the Cēra land was divided between, among others, Āy-vels and Musikas; the Pāṇḍya land between Parataṣ and possibly different houses of the Pāṇḍyas themselves; the Tonḍaimaṇḍalam, between the Salankayanas, and Kāñchi and Nellore—Guntur branches of the Pallavas (Subramaniam, 1966). Similarly, the southern part of the Koṅgu country was under the authority of the Koṅguṇis (who later became the Western Gaṅgas); the region between the Kāvēri and Kabhini was ruled by the

Punnata chiefs, and the Tagaḍur region (modern Dharmapuri) by the Adiyamān chieftains.

It should be emphasized that the borders of these political divisions were subjected to constant re-adjustments in the 7th century due to frequent battles amongst the neighbouring dynasties. The Koṅgunis expanded their dominion northwards by abrogating the Punnata region and eastwards by absorbing the territory represented by the modern Mysore, Baṅgalore and Kolār districts; one branch of the dynasty after the reign of Sri-vikrama appears to have invaded southwards and conquered the Koḍumbāḷur area in the Paṇḍyan land. There were continuous military encounters between the Gaṅgas on the one hand and the Pallavas and Muttairaiyars on the other. At the same time the Western Chālukyas were pressing southwards in their battles against the Pallavas.

The Coḷa or Coḷika-vasaya referred in the Asokan, Pallava and Chālukya inscriptions therefore should refer to some area overlapping the political and dynastic divisions referred to above. This word appears to denote a group of people who were ethnically and culturally homogenous, perhaps speaking a somewhat similar dialect. The remnants of this group are now distributed in the area comprising South Mysore, Coorg, Coimbatore, Sālem and Tiruchī districts and goes by the name of Soliyars, Soligars and their variants. Thus the land inhabited by this group would be the Coḷa (Colika-visaya) country. Thus the word Coḷa under the contexts referred to above appears to mean merely the land where the Soliyars lived and nothing more. This area (demarcated by broken line in Map I) consisted of different regions, ruled by separate dynasties: the Punnata, the Gaṅga, the Kōnguni, the Adiyamān and probably the chiefs of Koḷi (modern Uṛaiyūr). Therefore the Coḷa country figuring in the 7th century records need not necessarily point to Tiruchi or Uṛaiyūr alone but to any locus in the Colika-visaya that adjoined the Tonḍaimaṇḍalam. With particular reference to the Pallava records at Tiruchī it must be noted that the word *Colanam* occurring therein refers to the Colika-visaya and not to any dynasty of rulers by that name. Likewise, Simhaviṣṇu's conquest of the Coḷa is to be understood as his victory over some



Map 2. Inscriptions and monuments of Mahendravaram I.

part of the *Colika-visaya* and not as his having defeated the rulers of the *Çola* dynasty either at *Uṛaiyūr* or at any specific locale.

As already stated, the identification of the Pallava donor of the Tiruchi inscriptions as Mahēndravarman I, rests largely on flimsy and legendary grounds. There are no valid evidences for such an identification. That the architecture of the temple in which the inscriptions are found belongs to the Mahēndravarman's period is based purely on stylistic features, and as we know now, the Mahēndra style continued even after the reign of Mahēndravarman. In view of the *Muttaraiyarnāḍu* wedging between the *Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam* and the *Pāḍḍyanāḍu*, it is doubtful if Mahēndravarman's dominion extended in the south beyond the river *Ponniyār*, in order to touch the river *Kāvēri*. Furthermore, the script of the inscriptions incised in the Tiruchi rock-cut temple also belongs to a type different from that in the authentic inscriptions of Mahēndravarman I, elsewhere. More than all, there is no other inscription or monument either of this king or of his successor, *Narasimhavarman I* south of *Aṛagāḍanallūr* on the bank of the river *Ponniyār*. In other words, all authentic monuments and inscriptions of Mahēndravarman I are strictly limited to the region between the river *Ponniyār* in the south and *Pallāvaram* in the north (Map 2). Under these circumstances, it appears very likely that the rock-cut cave temple and the "Pallava" inscriptions therein could not have been the benefactions of Mahēndravarman I. A new study and analysis of the architecture from an objective approach may lead to conclusions similar to the ones in reference to the rock-cut cave temple at *Sittannavāsai* and the musical inscription at *Kuḍumiyāmalai*, as a result of which these monuments are now removed from the Pallava alliance.

5. Siva temples in the 7th century *Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam* :

The 7th century AD is a glorious period in the architectural history of the Pallavas. The largest number of temples sprang up through the period from Mahēndravarman I (AD 610-630) to *Narasimhavarman II* (AD 620/1-728/9) all over the *Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam*, with a pronounced concentration in the modern *Chingleput*

district (Map 3). Amongst these, the temples at the following places are the Saivite institutions of worship :

Mahēndravarmaṇ I

| | |
|------------------|-------------|
| Maṇḍagappaṭṭu | South Ārcot |
| Dalavanūr | ” |
| Śiyamaṅgalam | ” |
| Kuraṅgāpilmuṭṭam | North Ārcot |
| Pallāvaram | Chingleput |
| Māmaṇḍur | ” |
| Vallam | ” |

Paramēśvaravarmaṇ I

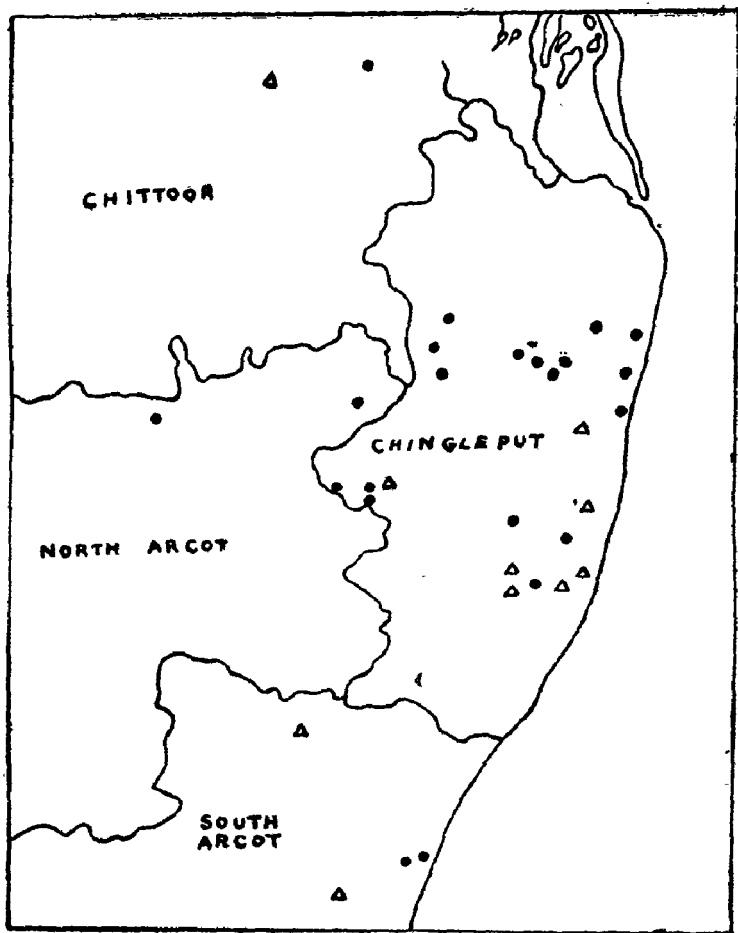
| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Mahābalipuram | ” |
| Tirukkaḷukunṭam | ” |
| Kūṭam | ” |
| Kālabakkam | ” |

Narasimhavarmaṇ II

| | |
|---------------|-------------|
| Mahābalipuram | ” |
| Sāḷuvankuppam | ” |
| Kāñchipuram | ” |
| Panaṃalai | North Ārcot |

Some of these temples have remained incomplete while others were fully constructed, thus having attained the status of ‘live’ institutions wherein the deity received worship and rituals. It should also be pointed out that all these institutions were built or carved out of stone.

The *teṅvāram* trio are said to have sung in about 32 temples in the Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam. A number of these are located in places quite near to these of the Pallava temples (Map 3) of the 7th century. In Kāñchipuram itself Tirujñānasambandar is said to have sung in Kaṇṇi-nerikkaraikkādu and Kaṇṇi-ēkampam; Tirunāvukkarasar in Kaṇṇi-mērraḷi and Kaṇṇi-ēkambam; Sundarar in Kaṇṇi-anēkataṅgāpatam, Kaṇṇi-ēkampam, Kaṇṇi-mērraḷi and Ōṇakāntantāḷi. Yet, as already noted, it is strange indeed that Tirunāvukkarasar,



Map 3. Saivite temples of the Pallavas of the 7th century AD (triangles) and the temples presumed to have been visited and sung about by the *tēvaram* trio (solid circles) in the Tondaimandalam.

who is said to have been instrumental in converting Mahēndra-varman I to Śaivism failed to visit and sing even in any of the Śiva shrines consecrated by his own disciple patron. Tirujñana-sambandar also failed to take note of any Pallava-founded Śiva temple during his journey in the Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam. Likewise, Sundarar, who has paid highest encomium to Kaḷarççiṅkan (identified as Narasimha II Rajasimha) as a devotee of Śiva, has totally ignored the Śiva temples built by this king at Kāñchi, although he has chosen to sing on some other temples in its neighbourhood.

What could be the reason for this reluctance on the part of the *tēvāram* trio? There appears to be an opinion in some quarters (not published as far as I know) that the *āgamas* prescribe only *structural* temples worthy of consecration and worship of Śiva and not *rock-cut* cave temples; and that for this reason the *tēvāram* trio did not visit the Pallava founded temples. This appears to be a rather sentimental explanation. Although a large number of temples of the Pallavas are of the rock-cut type, the Vēdagiriśvara temple at Tirukkaḷukunṇam, Vidyāvintapallavēsvaram at Kūram (Paramēsvaravarman I), Kailāsānātha temple at Kāñchi (Narasimhavarman II), and shore-temple at Mahābalipuram (Narasimhavarman I) are structural constructions. Of these, the shore-temple was in existence in the time of Tirujñanasambandar and this along with the remaining ones in the time of Sundarar.

Incoherent and confused thinking has persisted ever since the time of publication of the Maṇḍagapaṭṭu inscription of Mahēndra-varman I (EI. 17 No. 5), wherein it is mentioned that the king caused creation of a temple for the *trimūrtis* without the use of brick, timber, metal and mortar. Some scholars appear to infer from this that Mahēndra I was the very first ever to have instituted the art of creating temples in stone. The inscriptional statement does not allow such a wide and sweeping conclusion. What is implied in the statement is that this king created a temple out of stone alone, that is, by the process of scooping out in a boulder. It should also be noted that the inscription does not state that this king was the first to invent this technique in the whole of the Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam or in the Tamil country.

Again on the basis of the same inscription wholesale assumption has been made by several scholars that prior to the erection of the *lakṣitāyatanām* at Maṇḍagapaṭṭu all temples were constructed only of perishable materials like wood, brick, mortar, etc. Granting so for the sake of argument, the question arises whether there were so many (nearly 500) consecrated Śiva temples in the Tamil country of the 7th century AD, all having been built of perishable materials. Secondly, it must be remembered that structural buildings in stone were in vogue prior to the Pallava period in several parts of India. Beginning from the Gupta period we have examples of Buddhistic structures exhibiting highly intricate and exquisite workmanship in stone. The earliest Hindu architecture in stone in South India may be traced from the 5th century AD in the temple complex at Aihole right up to the middle of the 7th century. The Western Chālukyas continued the tradition of temple building from the 6th century throughout their domain. Their political expansion caused a spread of this trend to the newer regions conquered by them. Their inroads to the south and their wars against the Pallavas in the 7th century established cultural diffusion. Thus the erection of structural temples in stone was quite a well known feature in the 7th century Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam.

It should be clearly understood that whether a temple was constructed of stone or of perishable materials depended mainly on economic factors. Stone has always been a relatively costlier material requiring specially skilled craftsmen to handle it than perishable materials like wood, brick, etc. Because of the ubiquitous use of the latter media in building the dwelling quarters of common men, there could not have been much difficulty in procuring workmen. Those who could afford—like kings, noblemen and the rich—could have chosen stone for erecting a temple; those belonging to a lower economic status naturally had to depend on less permanent materials.

Therefore the query whether the temples built of perishable materials *always* preceded those that were constructed of stone has no meaning. It is true, however, that the Cola records of the 10th century refer to the re-building of some temples in stone which had existed earlier as structures of brick. On the basis of this infor-

mation, a rather sweeping generalisation has been reached to the effect that *all* temples in the Tamil country—particularly those that were visited by the *tēvāram* trio—*originated only as brick foundations*. Coḷa later being replaced by stone. It should be noted that there are several Coḷa records of the same period referring to the erection of new temples directly in stone and that there are clear indications in the compositions of the *tēvāram* trio that many of the temples presumed to have been sung about by them were structures of stone (Kaṟṟali).

According to the stabilised tradition, the *tēvāram* trio visited the following places in the Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam (Map 3) :—

Aḇḇiṟupākkam
 Ālankaṟu
 Ālakkōyil (Tirukkaḇḇūr)
 Idaiḇḇuram
 Iḷambayamkōttūr
 Irumbaimākālam
 Kalatti
 Kaḷukkuṟam
 Kaḷḷam (Tirukaḷḷil)
 Kāñḇḇipuram
 Kuruḷgaṇḇilmuṭṭam
 Kūvam
 Mākaraḷ
 Mārpēru
 Mullaivāyal, Vada-
 Mayilai (Mylāpore)
 Orriyūr
 Ottur
 Pāḇḇūr
 Pāḇi
 Panaḷkāṭṭur
 Vakkarai
 Vallam (Valam)
 Vānmiyūr
 Veṟpākkam
 Vēṟkattu
 Volindiappattu (Araḷīli)
 Uṟal (Takkōlam)

It should be especially noted that none of the temples in these places are Pallava foundations. From the points of view of architecture and sculpture, they present unmistakable features of the Imperial Coḷa period; this is confirmed by the epigraphs that have been discovered in them. (Balasubramanyam, 1906, 1971) If the *tēvāram* trio visited these temples in the 7th century AD, who could have been the founder-donors of these temples? The Coḷas of the Tamil country were nowhere in the contemporary scene. Even if it is granted that they were lingering on as a weak and subdued house in Uṛaiyūr or Paḷaiyārai as postulated by some scholars, how could they build these temples in the stronghold of the Pallava territory?

Tirujñānasambandar has one decad on the temple at Pallavanīṇṇuram and two on that at Mahēndrappaḷi (modern Koyilaḍipālayam). The former place has been identified as the temple that is situated $\frac{1}{2}$ mile east of Caykkaḍu, lying 9 miles south-east of Sirkali, while the latter is 4 miles north-east of Aṇṇapuram, which, in turn, is situated 3 miles from Koḷḷiḍam railway station. It will thus be seen that the locale of both these temples is clearly outside the southern limits of the Pallava dominion of the 7th century. Furthermore, in spite of the Pallava-sounding names, the temples have nothing in common with the Pallava architecture of the 7th century AD. It is doubtful if these were Pallava erections at all.

6. Śaivite iconography :

The Somaśkaṇḍa motif repeats itself in several of the Pallava temples of the 7th century. This panel formed the chief sculptural representation in the main cells of temples dedicated to Śiva and was obviously the object of worship (Soundara Rajan, 1969). While it is true that the *tēvāram* trio never visited the Pallava temples and while it is also true that they have referred in their compositions to a large number of Śaivite iconographic concepts like Tripūradahana, Brahmaśiraṇṇhēdana, Ravaṇānugraha, Ardhanārī, Dakṣiṇāmurti, Tāṇḍava, etc., that are found sculptured in the Pallava temples, the Somaśkaṇḍa theme is conspicuous by its absence. In other words, it appears that while many of the Śaivite iconographic

concepts were in vogue in the 7th century and continued into the following centuries of the Coḷa period, the Somaskaṇḍa motif for some reason lost its importance in the Śaivism of the Coḷas and was relegated to the status of a processional icon (*utsavamūrti*). Would not this situation indicate that the *tēvāram* trio should have lived at a period when the Somaskaṇḍa icon had ceased to be the main object of worship in the Śīva temples?

Several *pūrāṇic* themes found graphic representation on the walls of the Pallava temples during the 7th century. Amongst these may be mentioned a variety of *anugrahamūrtis* (Ravaṇānugraha, Nandiśānugraha, Candeśānugraha, Brahma-anugraha, Indra-ānugraha, Viṣṇuanugraha, Kāma-anūgraha) and *samhāramūrtis* (Tripurāntaka, Gajasamhāra, Daksayāgnabhaṅga, Kālasamhāra and Brahmasiraṅḍhedana). Episodes from Kiratārjunīya were also a favourite theme. The *tēvārams* refer to some of these episodes like Ravaṇānugraha (as also Ravaṇa lifting the Kailās mountain), Kālasamhāra, Brahmasiraṅḍhedana, Daksayāgnabhaṅga, Tripurasamhāra and Gajasamhāra. Also they speak of Andhakāsuravada Kāmadahana and Jālandharavada, which have no parallels in the Pallava sculptures. In other words, the *aitavirattāna* (the loci of the eight heroic acts of Śīva) concept had become codified during the time of the *tēvāram* trio. It is to be particularly noted that the *anugrahamūrtis* pertaining to Nāndi, Iṅdra, Viṣṇu, etc. find no reference in the *tēvārams*. The episodes of Markandēya and of Śīva drinking poison are also new entrants into the *puranic* lore of the *tēvāram* period.

Of the *tāṇḍava* forms of Śīva, the Pallava sculptures depict the *samhāra* types in addition to what may be designated as *sāndhya* or *pradōsa tāṇḍava*. Characteristically in these poses Śīva is shown as possessing more than two pairs of arms, each hand holding a weapon of some kind and the icon as a whole presenting a fierce aspect. The *tēvāram* trio not only refer to these aspects of Śīva's dance but also to the *ānandatāṇḍava*, a form depicting the *pañcakṛtya* (Five-fold functions) of Śīva. This concept is exclusive to the Kashmir school of Śaivism (*pratyabhigṇa Darsana*). Some followers of this cult settled down at Chidambaram

in the period of Parantaka I (A.D. 907-955). In unambiguous terms the *tēvāram* trio refer to the *ānandatāṇḍava* at Tillai (Chidambaram). The origin of the *Pratyabhigñā* school in Kashmir is itself in the middle part of the 9th century, and as such the *tēvāram* trio would not have sung about the Dancer of Tillai in the 7th century (Swamy, 1972 d).

The *tēvāram* trio refer to *Kāmakōṭṭam*. As Srinivasan (1960) has pointed out, a separate shrine for the consort in the temples of Tamiḷ Nāḍu is of a late origin. There is an ample degree of confirmation to this view from a study of the history of the Golaki school of Śaivism in the Tamiḷ country (Swamy, 1972 d). This cult of Śaivism in its original habitat has been greatly influenced by *Śakti* worship and, as far as evidence goes, came to the Tamiḷ country in the middle part of the 10th century. This new entrant began to exert itself firmly in the time of Rājarāja I, which, however, is another trend in the history of Śaivism in the Tamiḷ country.

Śrinivasan (1960) has drawn attention to the appearance of Gaṇeśa in the Pallava sculpture only from the time of Gajasimha, that is, the late part of the 7th century, which clearly, means that Tiru-nāvukkarasar and Tirujñānasambandar could not have referred to this deity in the early part of the same century. Srinivasan therefore suggests that Tirujñānasambandar could have lived about AD 730.

The sculptured representation of deities like Dakṣiṇāmūrti, Ardhanāri, Candēsa, Liḡgodbhava, etc., are found in the Pallava temples of the 7th/8th century. Many of these find repeated mention in the *tēvārams*. As the *tēvāram* trio did not visit any of these temples, they must have had some other independent source for having recorded the incidents concerning these motifs. Either the trio were conversant with the concerned legends or could have drawn inspiration from the anthropomorphic representations of the incidents sculptured in the Coḷa temples. These icons began to appear in profusion in the Coḷa founded temples of the 10th century. As Srinivasan (1960) has pointed out, in so far as Gaṇeśa is concerned, the icon of this deity is spoken of by Tirujñānasambandar as having been found on the southern

wall of the *garbhagrha*. This clearly means a period when the loci of the *kōṣṭha* images had attained codification. As the largest number of the temples visited and sung about by the *tēvāram* trio are undoubtedly Coḷa temples, would not this situation suggest corresponding date for the trio?

7. The Liṅga cult and temple rituals :

That there were no *Śivaliṅgas* consecrated in the Pallava shrines of the 7th century has to be recognized as a fact ; there are no valid evidences to the contrary (Soundara Rajan, 1969 ; Mahalingam, 1969). Laboured and assertive arguments are however advanced (Nagaswamy, 1971) to presume the presence of *liṅga* in the temples built by Mahēndravarmaṇ I. Such attempts are obviously the necessary consequences of the unwarranted assumption that Tirunāvukkarasar was the contemporary of Mahēndravarmaṇ I. It may also be pointed out here that the type of *liṅga* implanted in the Pallava temples at a later date (faceted type) belongs to a different morphological category than the ones (cylindrical type) in the Muttaraiyar, Pāṇḍya and Coḷa temples.

That the *liṅga* concept was well known to the *tēvāram* trio is witnessed by their own references which are not infrequent in their writings. They refer to the aniconic form of Śiva not only as *liṅga* but also of *tāpu*, *kampam*, *tāparam*, etc., in the context of referring to the story of Brahma's and Visnu's search for the beginning and end of Śiva (*cōti-liṅga—Jyṭirliṅgam*) or to that of Čandēsa (*tāparam*).

It is strange, however, that none of the trio make more direct references to the *liṅga* that had been consecrated in the temples of their choice. Nor are their writings explicit about the *liṅga* of the *garbhagrha* in the temples. Therefore questions such as these arise : What could have been the main deity in the temples visited by them ? Could it have been an anthropomorphic icon of Śiva or the aniconic *Śivaliṅga* ? If it was the latter, why is it that they do not refer to the object of worship by its name generally ending in the suffix-*Iśvarā* or by the numerous names by which Śiva's anthropomorphic icons are known as is the practice in modern times ?

Nearly half the number of temples sung about by the *tēvāram* trio are located in the Coḷa country. A close study of the early Coḷa epigraphs concerning these temples clearly reveal the fact that the name of the deity was chosen after the village or town in which the temple was situated, eg Mudūkunṇamudaiya Mahā-dēva, Tiruvorriyur Mahā-dēva, Tiruppāççur uḍaiyar, Tiruverkkātu uḍaiyar Mahā-dēva, Tiruviḍaimarudūr uḍaiyār, Tirupuṇambiyam uḍaiyār or merely as Mulattānamudaiyār, Tirukaṇṇali Mahā-dēvar, etc., irrespective of the locale. This was the situation that was continued to be in vogue as late as the 18th century. The application of the iconographic names to the *līṅga* is decidedly a latter tradition. As will be shown in another contribution, the concept of the *sthalavṛikṣa* ('temple-tree') and the name of the *līṅga* derived therefrom is a tradition that appears to have commenced from as late as the 17th century AD.

The procedure adopted by the *tēvāram* trio is not much different from the custom seen in the 10th to 15th century epigraphs of the Tamiḷ country. A large number of the *tēvārams* sing about the Lord of such and such a place, rather than referring to Him by any specific proper name. Most repeatedly He is described in the context of *Purānic* episodes rather than in his iconographic or aniconographic forms. The trio do not appear to have become much interested in the architectural or sculptural representations of the Lord on the walls of the temple excepting in a casual way. In other words, they seem to have sung about the Lord of a place glorifying His acts of heroism and greatness, of His power of control over living beings and of His faculty of conferring beatitude on them. The temple, the presiding deity and the architectural/sculptural representations therein were all more external symbols to them, signifying Śiva in His somewhat all comprehensive and generalized aspects. The trio, however, refer to certain aspects of the *āgamic* tenets, to the modes of worship and rituals in the temples, to the 14 *upaçāras* offered to the deity, and to the religious festivals and ceremonies, as also to the diverse kinds of worship through prayer, song, chanting of *mantras*, dance, etc. Yet, one is left with the over-all feeling that the trio were decidedly outside the fold of the ritualistic traditions of the temple. They were *bhaktas*, perhaps

of the type 'paramanaiyē pāḍuvār'; they thus, sang only about Him, in His *purānic* role but did not become themselves involved in the ritualistic worship that was in vogue in the temples.

Therefore the pure *Bhakti* cult of the *tēvāram* trio was very different from the contemporary religious practice that existed in the Śiva temples. A careful reading of the *tēvārams* brings to light the strong *āgamic* grip over the people who offered worship in the temples as prescribed in the *āgamas*. This situation is clearly indicative of the high degree of completeness and codification that the *āgamic* canons had reached at the time. A couple of the 7th century Pallava inscriptions refer to *āgama* and one of Paramēśvaravarman I specifically refers to the ritualistic mode in a Śiva temple; *pūja*, *snāpana*, *kusuma*, *gandha*, *dhūpa*, *dīpa*, *havis*, *upahara*, *bali*, which are to be conducted to the accompaniment of conch and music. The *āgamic* legacy of later period prescribe 16 steps for the worship of the presiding deity of a temple (*liṅga*). Although the different canonical texts are by no means uniform, either in the sequence of the steps or in the content of these steps, all recognize the 16 steps as constituting the *śōḍaśopaçāra*. The *tēvārams* mention nearly the full gamut of steps, which means that the authors of the decads should have lived at a period when the *āgama* texts had reached fuller maturity and near completeness.

The *tēvārams* refer to the religious cults that were in vogue when they were composed. They are the *akaccamaya* and *puṇaccamaya*. The names of the cults that were accommodated in the first category are not known. It is generally believed that it represents a group of Saivite sects. Rājamanikkam (1958), following *Tirumantiram*, contends that there were six subsects, but does not name them. Venkaçami (1959) counts them as four: *Pāsupata*, *Kapālika*, *Mahāvrata* and *Bhairava*. Doraisami Pillai (1958) mentions three of them—*Pāsupata*, *Kapālika*, and *Mahāvrata*; he does not, however, indicate the source of his information. Tirunāvukkarasar, in his decads, speaks of *Saivā*, *Pāsupata*, *Kapālika* and *Mahāvrata*. Granting that the play *Mattavilāsa-*

prahāsanam is the work of Mahēndravarmān I*, we see only two of the above Śaivite subjects—*Pāsūpata* and *Kāpālika*—having figured in it.

Although many authors have written about the religious following of the Pallavas of the 7th/8th centuries, much re-thinking and fresh analysis is needed in order to have a clearer and accurate understanding of the situation. For the present, suffice to note that critical study of the 7th century monuments of this dynasty impresses the uniformity of the Śaivite cult that was in vogue. This was the theme of the *trimūrti* cult the *mūrtis* being worshipped in their anthropomorphic form—Brahma Viṣṇu and Śiva in the aspect of Śomāskanda—in spite of the fact that Śiva appears to have been specially favoured. The sculptured panels in the contemporary temples clearly demonstrate the inclusion of Brahma and Viṣṇu: often in the very same panel or in adjacent panels to the Śomāskanda motif. The Śaivism of the Pallavas is said to be of the *Pāsūpata* type (Mahalingam, 1969). This system, it must be noted, underwent significant changes both in practical and philosophical contents during its period of growth. Bhasarvagna's *Ratna-tīka* (AD 940–980) prescribes that the *Pāsūpata* follower should address morning prayers to Brahma, Viṣṇu and Rudra for two hours before sun-rise (Chakroberti, 1970). Is it likely that this was the specific type of *Pāsūpata* doctrine that was in currency during the 7th century AD in the Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam region?

In spite of the fact that the *tēvāram* trio were non-chalant of the main deity of the temple and of the rituals connected with it, we have already seen that they do refer to *liṅga* in the

* In spite of the accepted opinion that this play is a work of Mahēndravarmān I, there is yet a shadow of uncertainty about its authorship and date of composition. This play centres around a *Kāpālika* drunken couple, a *pāsūpata* and *bhīkū* thrown in as *dramatis personae*. Their acts and behaviour as depicted in the play represent a degenerate and, debased state of the respective cults. These Śaivite cults became decadent sometime during the 12th/13th centuries and therefore the presumed 7th century appears to be a date too early for the play.

context of some *purānic* stories. Therefore, it is clear that they were well aware of the an iconic object of worship in the temples of their time. In so far as the Pallava land is concerned, there were no *lingas* consecrated in the temples constructed by the rulers and the temples elsewhere in the *Coḷa* country, referred to by them could not have been in existence in the 7th century AD.

A large number of Śiva temples which the *tēvāram* trio have sung about together with their references to many others (*vaippu-sthalas*) mentioned by them in the *tēvārams* is clear enough indication of the *āgamic* type of worship that had become stabilized in the country. People at large visited these institutions and offered worship to the main deity consecrated therein mainly according to the injunctions of the *āgamas*. In contrast, the attitude and outlook of the *tēvāram* trio do not appear to have involved direct participation in the ritualistic modes of the temples. They sang the praises glories and mightiness of Śiva in devotion pure and simple. Thus they contributed the *bhakti* element into religion. Bhāskarācārya (10th century) and Apararka (12th century) recognize two varieties of contemporary Śaiva religion: *Śaiva āgamic*- (ritual centred) or *Naiyāyika* and Pāsupata (*bhakti* centred) or *Vaiśēśika*. A much later author, Hariḥbadrasūri (?14th century) notes four kinds of worshippers of Śiva: *Bharatas*, *Bhaktas*, *Laiṅgikas*, *Tapasas*. The first kind are those that accept certain specific vows and conduct worship in the temples while the others bow from a distance. Is it not more probable that the *tēvāram* trio belonged to the latter kind, more specifically the *Bhaktas*?

Tirunāvukkarasar's *tēvārams* speak of Lord Śiva as the embodiment of *mantra* and *tantra*; and of the concept of the human body as a temple. The second theme repeats itself in the *vaṇa* literature of Vira-Śaiva saints of the Kannaḍa country. Concepts such as these found formulation and codification into the *āgamas* at a much later period than the 7th century AD, (that is) at a period when the temples and the rituals therein had left a strong impact on the people.

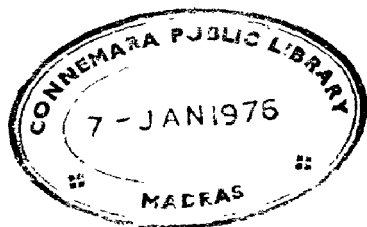
CRITIQUE 2

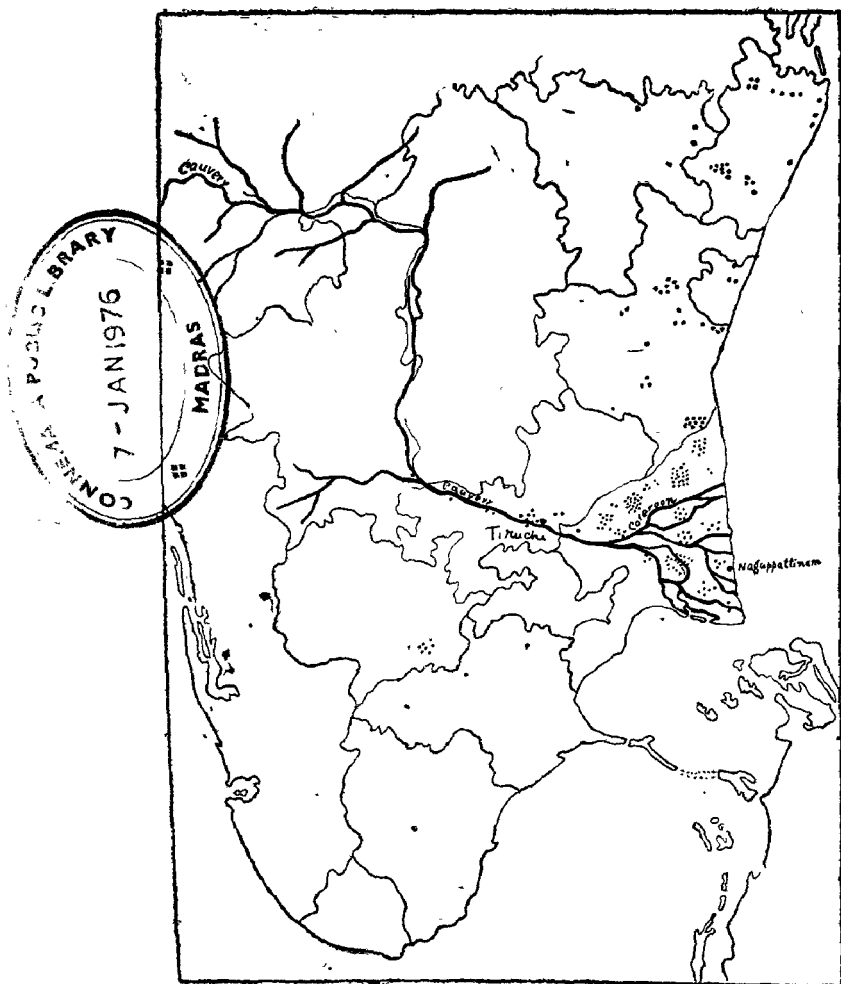
The only assumption that I have made while writing the past topics under critique 1 is the traditional insistence that the *tēvāram* trio visited 275 temples. Most of them are dispersed in the Tamil country and a few outside it. The latter include Tirukkōnamalai and Tirukkētīśvaram in Sri Laṅka, and Tiruparupadam (Śrīśailam), Indrānīlaparvatam, Anēkataṅgapatam, Tirukkēdāram and Nodittānmalai (Kailās) in the northern beyonds, some in the Himālayan region. The question naturally arises whether the trio or any one of them actually visited these places that are so far remote from their chief arena of activity.

This question must have occurred to several others in the past and an explanatory story has taken birth in regard to Tirunāvukkarasar. In his old age, due to weakness in body, he could not negotiate the long and difficult route to the Mount Kailās; at one point he fell down in exhaustion. The Lord, having come to know this, Himself came down to the spot and stood before Tirunāvukkarasar. This story is perhaps equally applicable to the trio in general, particularly in reference to those places in the Himālayas and Sri Laṅka. The remaining temples, perhaps, at least some of them, could have been visited by them.

In addition on the 275 temples presumed to have been sung about by the *tēvāram* trio, the body of their decads mention slightly more than an equal number of contemporary temples (*vaippusthalas*). While the loci of many of these have eluded identification and fixation, the total number of over 500 temples is really staggering for the 7th century Tamil Nādu. It should be noted, however, that the largest number of these were situated in Coḷa country of the 10th century ruled by the Vijayālaya line of kings.

We have seen that there was no politically recognizable Coḷa dynasty of rulers, nor a country belonging to them in the early Pallava period. If the land of the Sōliyars are taken to mean the Coḷa country referred to in the Pallava and Chālukya records of the 7th century, it appears to be an area surrounded





Map 4. Spectrum of temples presumed to have been visited and sung about by the *tevaram* trio.

on all sides by other dynasties, and the *Coḷika-visaya* itself having been divided amongst the Koṅgunis, the Punnata chiefs, the Adiyamāns. etc. The *tēvāram* trio are said to have actually visited 190 temples in the Coḷa-nāḍu alone. Excepting a couple of these, the largest number lay outside, eastwards of the *Coḷika-visaya*. And this eastward land was shared from north to south between the Pallavas, the Muttaraiyars and the Pāṇḍyas. We know of temples which the latter two dynasties had built in the 7th century in these parts. The trio are, however, credited with having visited 14 temples in the Pāṇḍya-nāḍu, but all these lie south of Madurai. Furthermore, there is no evidence that these temples were in existence in the 7th century AD.

Under these circumstances it is extremely perplexing that there should have been 500 Śiva temples which were known to the *tēvāram* trio in the Tamiḷ country of the 7th century AD. It is much more perplexing to identify their authors. However, there appears to be one clue revealed by the distribution spectrum and architectural idiom of the temples which are presumed to have been visited by the trio. The spectrum exhibits a diffuse radiation on either bank of the river Kavēri between Tiruchi and Nāgappaṭṭinam (Map. 4). Architecturally and iconographically these temples conform to a norm with little fluctuations. This situation raises the question whether it could not be that these temples belong to a specific period of history and to a particular school of craftsmanship?

It is necessary also to bear in mind in this connection that on several counts, the age of the *tēvāram* trio points to a much later period than the 7th century AD. We have also seen that an analysis of the "external" factors amply confirm this. One of the important points that has emerged out of the analysis concerns the proliferation of Śaivism into sub-cults/sub-sects in the period of the *tēvāram* trio. The dominant cult was the āgama-propelled, temple-centred, ritual-oriented *liṅga* worship. Into this matrix was interpolated the *purāṇa*-propelled, love-dominated praise-oriented *bhakti* cult of the *tēvāram* trio.

III. CORRELATIONS

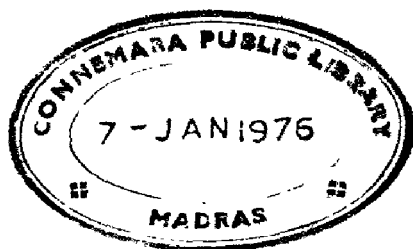
8. Special factors and, temples presumed to have been visited by the tēvāram trio.

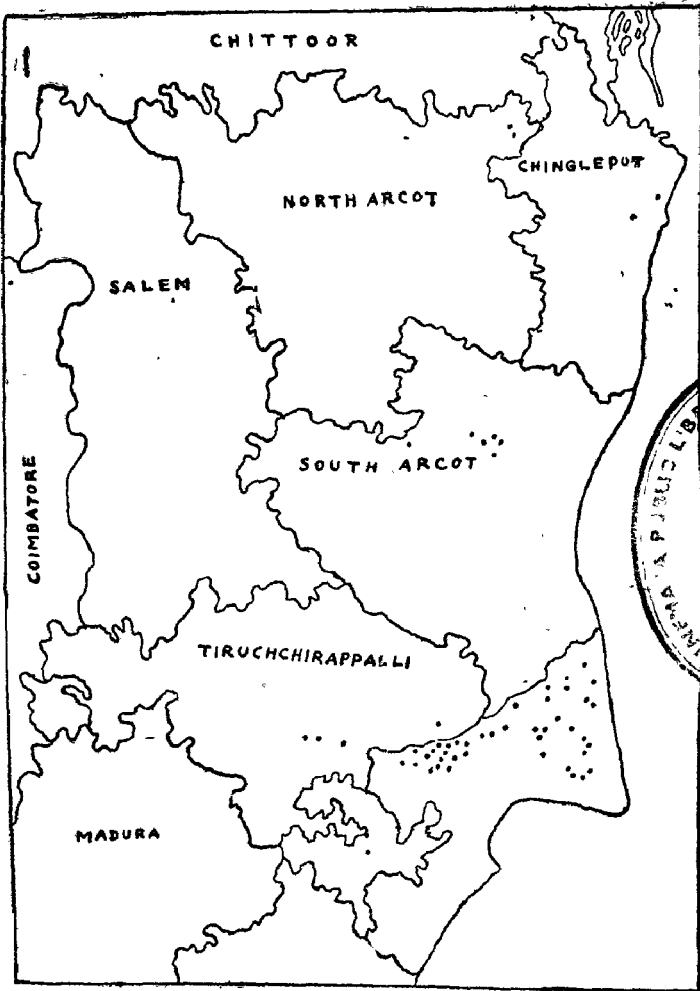
As stated earlier, according to tradition, the 275 temples and places which were visited and sung about by the tēvāram trio are accommodated under the following topographical units :

| | |
|-------------|-------------|
| Coḷa nāḍu | 190 temples |
| Toṇḍai nāḍu | 32 " |
| Naḍu nāḍu | 22 " |
| Pāṇḍya nāḍu | 14 " |
| Koṅgu nāḍu | 7 " |
| Vaḍa nāḍu | 8 " |
| Īḷa nāḍu | 2 " |
| Tuḷuva nāḍu | 1 temple |
| Malai nāḍu | 1 " |

As already observed, the temples in the Vaḷa nāḍu, Īḷa nāḍu and Tuḷuva nāḍu, may be presumed to have been sung about by them without having actually visited them. The remaining land divisions, it must be emphasized, do not conform to any known political, dynastic or geographical units. The first five and the last taken together, however, suggest an area of cultural and linguistic homogeneity. The area corresponding to these units in the 7th century AD. represents a heterogeneous assemblage, culturally and linguistically, being shared by the Pallavas, Pāṇḍyas, Koṅgunis, etc., into which the Western Chālukyas were all the time trying to build inroads. Such a disturbed environment obviously could not have given birth to a rather homogeneous and stereotyped architecture and sculpture all over the area.

A single ruling power over a territory appears to be the most congenial pre-requisite for the evolution and stabilization of a uniform cultural norm. The territorial units Coḷa nāḍu, Toṇḍai nāḍu, Naḍu nāḍu, Pāṇḍya nāḍu and Koṅgu nāḍu, all together, must have become subjected to the impact of such a power during some period of history. Such a situation prevailed





Map 5. Cōla-founded temples of the 10th century AD, presumed to have been visited and sung about by the *tēvaram* trio.

in the late 9th and in the major part of the 10th centuries AD during the reigns from Āditya I to Uttama ÇoĶa.

Balasubramanyam's recent studies (1966, 1971) spotlight the temple building activities of the 10th century ÇoĶa kings. Among other items, his studies reveal the existence of nearly 100 Śiva temples, each with complete complements of architectural and sculptural embellishments. These temples are distributed in the modern TiruchĶi, TañĶjāvūr, South Ārcot, North Ārcot, and Chiñgleput districts, overlapping the traditional topographical units, ÇoĶa-, NāĶu-, and PāñĶya-nāĶus.

Of the 10th century Śiva temples listed by Balasubrahmanyam, nearly 40% have been sung about by the *tēvaram* trio. The spectrum of distribution of these (Map 5) reflects the same trend as that of the nearly 270 temples presumed to have been visited by them (Map 4). The break-up figures are as follows :

| | 10th century ÇoĶa temples sung about by the <i>tēvaram</i> trio | 10th century ÇoĶa temples not sung about by the <i>tēvaram</i> trio | Total |
|-------------|--|--|-------|
| Āditya I | 19 | 26 | 45 |
| Parāntaka I | 16 | 13 | 29 |
| Uttama ÇoĶa | 5 | 15 | 20 |
| Total | 40 | 54 | 94 |

This factual data leads to certain obvious inferences: (a) that there were quite a number of temples that had attained institutional stability and architectural completeness of which the *tēvaram* trio chose only a few for the purpose of glorification; (b) that the largest concentration of the temples sung about, lay in the 10th century in the heart of TamiĶ-nāĶu that is, the land ruled by the Vijayālaya line of ÇoĶa kings with their chief seat in the TañĶjāvūr district; (c) that the expansion [of ÇoĶa power during the time of Parāntaka I and Āditya I radiating in the northern,

southern and western directions was accompanied by the diffusion of Śaivite religion and (d) that as a result, numerous temples for Śiva came into existence all over the Coḷa territory.

Why the *tēvāram* trio restricted their choice only to a limited number of temples/places for their visit in spite of the fact that similar Śiva temples existed all over the Tamil country—many of them lying quite near to those sung about by them—is not clear. Nor can a convincing explanation be given as to why they selected only such and such temples. Any guess would be a plausible answer!

Verse 18 of the Anbil copper-plates attest to the building of a large number temples by Āditya I on the banks of the river Kāvēri. Balasubrahmanyam's (1966) recent studies identify 45 temples constructed by this king, most of them being situated in the locus specified by the Anbil record. His son added another 29 temples, some in extended loci (Balasubrahmanyam, 1971). Of these put together nearly half the number were visited by the *tēvāram* trio and received *padikams* (decads).

Balasubrahmanyam's studies are very revealing and are of a singular significance. His conclusions drawn from a scientific approach, are refreshingly contradictory to the traditional dating of the temples that are presumed to have been visited by the *tēvāram* trio. His inferences categorically confirm that the concerned temples were built by the Coḷa kings of the 10th century. Yet he appears to be strongly influenced by the legendary tradition and has cautiously—though not warranted—added riders to the effect that such and such temple was visited by one, two or all of the *tēvāram* trio and that therefore there should have existed an earlier shrine in place of the existing one! It is sheer cussedness to maintain that a nucleus of these temples were in existence in the 7th century.

9. Relative chronology of the *tēvāram* trio :

Attention has been drawn on a previous page to the two sub-cults of Śaivism—possibly among others—that had been in vogue in the 10th century Tamil Nāḍu—the *āgamīc* (*tantric*)-

centred cult of the temples and the *bhakti*-centred cult of the *tēvāram* trio. It should also be borne in mind that there are no evidences to presume direct cross-currents between the two during that period. This background is important in discussing the relative chronology of the *tēvāram* trio.

Apart from positing the *tēvāram* trio in the 7th century A.D., the tradition also asserts that Tirunāvukkarasar was an elder contemporary of Tirujñānasambandar; and that Sundarar followed the latter in sequence with no appreciable time-lag. Highly laboured attempts have been made to establish this chronological order, the sole source being a statement that occurs in the Tirumuraikkaṇḍappurāṇam (Vellaivaranan, 1962). In a sense, Vellaivaranan's justification appears to be redundant as it is also the generally accepted view for one reason or the other.

Through the painstaking and highly productive studies of Bālasubrahmanyam (1966, 1971) some new data have become available which can be used to test the validity of the presumed relative chronology of the *tēvāram* trio. After taking into consideration all the available epigraphic data, architectural features and iconographic characters, Bālasubrahmanyam has convincingly determined the period of construction of a number of Coḷa temples. While there may be differences of opinion in reference to the dating of about a dozen temples, on the whole, it must be admitted that the conclusions reached by the author in reference to the remainder is impeccable. The following table lists the temples/places that are presumed to have been visited and sung about by the *tēvāram* trio.

| District | Location of the Temple | Tirunāvukkarasar | Tirujñānasambandar | Sundarar |
|------------------------------|------------------------|------------------|--------------------|----------|
| Āditya I (AD 871-907) | | | | |
| Tanjāvūr | Vedāraṇyam | * | * | * |
| „ | Tiruvīḍaimarudur | * | * | * |
| „ | Tiruççoṟutturai | * | * | * |
| „ | Tiruvaiyāṟu | * | * | * |

| District | Location of the Temple | Tirunāvukkarasar | Tirujñāna-sambandar | Sundarar |
|------------|------------------------|------------------|---------------------|----------|
| Taṅjāvūr | Tirunāgēsvaram | * | * | * |
| „ | Tirumaḷapāḍi | * | * | * |
| „ | Tiruveṅkādu | * | * | * |
| „ | Tiruppuṟambiyam | * | * | * |
| Chingleput | Tirukkaḷukunṟam | * | * | * |
| Taṅjāvūr | Tillaisthānam | * | * | |
| „ | Tiruvēdikkuḍi | * | * | |
| „ | Tiruppaḷanam | * | * | |
| „ | Kaṇḍiyur | * | * | |
| „ | Tirukkāṭṭuppalli | * | * | |
| Tiruchi | Tirupparāittuṟai | * | * | |
| Taṅjāvūr | Tiruvēlvikkudi | | * | * |
| „ | Tiruppūntuṟutti | * | | |
| Tiruchi | Tiruveṟumbur | * | | |
| Taṅjāvūr | Tiruppanandaḷ | | * | |
| „ | Tirunāḷurmayānam | | * | |
| Tiruchi | Kilpāḷuvur | | * | |
| N. Ārcot | Takkolam | | * | |
| „ | Tiruvaḷḷam | * | | |
| S. Ārcot | Tiruvakkarai | | * | |

Parāntaka I (AD 907-955)

| | | | | |
|------------|---------------|---|---|---|
| Tiruchi | Uyyakkoṇḍan | * | * | * |
| . Ārcot | Tiruvāmaṭṭūr | * | * | * |
| Chingleput | Tiruvoṟṟiyūr | * | * | * |
| Taṅjāvūr | Vijayamaṅgai | * | * | |
| „ | Tirukkaḷavūr | * | * | |
| N. Ārcot | Tirumaṟpēru | * | * | |
| S. Ārcot | Tirukkovaḷūr | * | * | |
| „ | Grāmam | * | | |
| Taṅjāvūr | Tiruppaḷuvvār | | * | |
| S. Ārcot | Vaḍugūr | | * | |
| „ | Tirunāvalūr | | | * |

| District | Location of the Temple | Tirunāvukkarasar | Tirujñāna-sambandar | Sundarar |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|------------------|---------------------|----------|
| Uttama Cola (AD 969-985) | | | | |
| Tañjavūr | Tiruvārūr | * | * | * |
| S. Arcot | Tiruveṅṅainallūr | * | * | * |
| Chingleput | Vridhāçalam | * | * | * |
| Tañjavūr | Tirunāçaiyur | * | * | |
| „ | Mayūram | * | * | |
| „ | Tirumaiyaççūr | * | * | |
| „ | Tirumaṇaṇçēri | * | * | |
| „ | Tiruturutti | * | * | |
| „ | Tirukkodiççāval | * | * | |
| „ | Ādutturai | * | * | |
| „ | Konerirāçapuram | * | * | |
| Chingleput | Tirumullaivāyal | | | * |

The table shows categorically that the *tēvāram* trio lived during the period of the three successive Çoḷa kings of the 10th century AD. The time-span covered by these kings adds up to 114 years. If an allowance of 10-15 years is made as the time required for the construction of the temples by Āditya I (both these visited and not visited by the *tēvāram* trio), the *tēvāram* trio will have to be accommodated within one hundred years, with an average of 33 years for each, especially if it is assumed that one followed the other. However, there is absolutely no evidence in favour of such an opinion, because, all the three *tēvāram* composers have sung on temples during the period of Āditya I; so also on a couple of temples during the regnal years of Parāntaka I and also of Uttama Çoḷa, which means that each one of the trio should have lived for 70-80 years. Thus a most improbable conclusion becomes inevitable, although the date in the table suggests it.

This situation again rakes up the question already posed on a previous page (Critique 2)—Did the *tēvāram* trio actually visit the temples in order to dedicate the respective decad? A super-

ficial study of the table again *apparently* confirms the tradition that Tirunāvukkarasar and Tirujñānasambandar were contemporaries, having visited certain temples together. A closer examination, however, nullifies the traditional belief, as it is difficult to reconcile as to how they could have done this in the time of Āditya, Parāntaka, and again in that of Uttama ÇoĶa unless it is presumed that all the three lived for 70-80 years and that too contemporaneously.

Thus, based on the traditional account provided by the Periapurāṇam and the TirumuĶaikkaṇḍappurāṇam in reference to the visits of the *tēvāram* trio to temples and, juxtaposing it with the historical data on some of these temples raises two propositions concerning the relative chronology of the trio.

(i) If Tirunāvukkarasar and Tirujñānasambandar had been contemporaries, they should have been so, through a gamuṭ of nearly 80 years in the 10th century, as both of them have sung about the same temples during the regnal years of Āditya I, Parāntaka I and Uttama ÇoĶa. It may be seen that Sundarar also has joined them in reference to 15 temples in the same gamuṭ of time. Therefore he should have also been coeval with the former two.

(ii) If successive gamuṭs of time are assumed for the trio in the order Tirunāvukkarasar, Tirujñānasambandar, Sundarar, the historical data is clearly against the proposition, again because all the three have sung about the temples built by the successive ÇoĶa kings of the 10th century.

It must not be forgotten that the historical data are reliable and valid, while the traditional data are undependable and useless for the study of chronology. The doubt raised in reference to the presumed visits of the *tēvāram* trio to the temples thus becomes amply confirmed. The cult of the *tēvāram* trio was *bhakti*, towards the propagation of which they leaned heavily on *purānic* lore. This cult was [in contradistinction to that of the Śaivite temples which leaned equally heavily on the *tantric* lore. To both, however, Śiva was the supreme Lord. The *tēvārams* glorify him

through prayers and devotion, while the temples endeavoured to do the same through *āgama*-prescribed rituals. The mention of a specific temple/place by the *tēvāram* trio is purely incidental and their sole purpose appears to be merely to emphasize that Lord Śiva, irrespective of the town or temple occupied by Him, is the same all over, that He, the only supreme One is the very same every where. In order to convey this message it is not necessary for them to have actually visited all the temples. Just as they sang about the Lord residing in the Himalayan and Ceylon regions from a distance, they could have adopted a similar procedure in reference to several other temples as well. The rather nostalgic repetition of the same *purāṇic* incidents and episodes in *tēvāram* after *tēvāram*, temple/place, after temple/place, only emphasizes their attitude and outlook about Śiva—that he is that One Principle and the Only Principle, which, irrespective of its external manifestation and location, resides everywhere. Therefore the mention of a place/temple is incidental and inconsequential.

10. The tradition of Kṣētrayātra :

It is undoubtedly the Periapurāṇam that first speaks of the *tēvāram* trio as having visited the temples of Śiva located in diverse places. The author of the work, Śekkiḷār, is believed to have been a contemporary of a Coḷa king whose title was *Anapāya*, who, in turn, has been identified with Kulottuṅga II, AD 1133-1150 (Nilakanta Sastri, 1955) or with Kulottuṅga III, AD 1178-1816 (Śadasiva Pandarattar, 1967). Having become saturated with the pious urge of glorifying the religious lives of the 63 Śaiva devotees, he composed the *acta sanctorum*. As may be naturally expected, there has been a free use of story telling devices—exaggeration, twisting of probable factual material to the extent of obscuring the original character, invention or superimposition of new ideas and concepts, all creation of his own imagination.

It should also be stated that the *tēvāram* trio had already been deified in the time of Rājarāja I, as witnessed by the installation of statues of the trio and by sponsoring their compositions to be recited in the temples. Here again the generality of

the *tēvārams* is emphasized by the fact that endowments for the purpose were initiated even in those temples that were not sung by them (Swamy, 1972 a).

In this connection it is necessary to recall the nature of the Śaivite religion during the time of Rājarāja I. It was a period when the Goḷaki school of Śaivism (*Śaiva, sensu strictu*) was finding popularity in the land under the royal patronage. This entrant-wave soon swept the Tamil country largely by incorporating and digesting the indigenous Śaivite cults. It is as a result of this process that Aluḍaiyappiḷlai was absorbed into the new fold after re-christening him as Tirujñānasambandar. Another instance of syncretism is provided by the encouragement given for the recital of the *tiruppadiyams* (*tēvārams*) in the temples, probably after having initiated the singers into some kind of *dikṣa* that was specific to the new cult. Thus the interaction between the indigenous and the entrant cults was one of mutuality and cordiality (Swamy, 1972 b). Such a process of synthesis continued into the successive centuries till the 13th.

It is in such an environment of amalgamation that Periapurānam was composed. This work *par excellence* is again an attempt towards providing a meeting point for the two streams of Śaivism. It is towards the achievement of this end that Śekkiḷār's genius portrayed the *tēvāram* trio as having actually visited the concerned temples in order to sing about them, thereby unifying the *bhakti* cult of the *tēvāram* trio with the *āgamic* cult of the temple.

The custom of visiting holy places at regular intervals is an old one in India, going backwards to Buddhistic times. The Jainas too followed the same tradition. Amongst the Hindus, the disciplines prescribed for the *Sannyasins* of certain orders, include touring around the holy places for most part of the year excepting the rainy season. In fact, this is the tradition that is living in our own day and therefore it is not as if Śekkiḷār had not known about it. It should also be noted that the way of life of the *tēvāram* trio was not that of householders; they lived the lives of the detached and emphasizing this aspect of the trio appears

to be one of the main intentions of their first biographer. Thus, Śakkiḷār's imagination and ideals made him aptly super-impose the *Kṣētrayātra* concept on the lives of the *tēvāram* trio by utilizing their very compositions.

We may also note one particular point in reference to the decads themselves. Almost invariably there has been an eleventh verse besides the ten verses in each *padikam* of Tirujñānasambandar. This appendix is obviously an after-thought by some one other than the composer. Although the eleventh verse follows the same prosodic idiom of the preceding ten verses, its content, message and tenor with which it is conveyed are wholly different. It is in this verse that the name Jñānasambandar repeatedly occurs. On considerations such as these, the eleventh verse of the decad is deemed to be a later interpolation (Swamy, 1972 a). It is likely that this could have taken place during the absorption of indigenous cults by the Golaki school, at any rate, prior to the period of composition of the Periapurānam.

IV. CONSEQUENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS :

The main conclusion of this study is that in contrast to the widely held contemporary opinion, the *tēvāram* trio were not the contemporaries of the Pallava kings of the 7th century AD. All the temples that have been traditionally associated with Tirunāvukkarasar, Tirujñānasambandar and Sundarar are structures which came into existence through the benefaction of the Coḷas of the 10th century AD, and therefore it is but appropriate that the age of *tēvāram* trio should coincide with this gamut of the Coḷa dynasty. This is the period covered by the regnal years of Āditya I through Uttama Coḷa.

(1) This conclusion stands as a serious negative evidence in studies bearing on the nature of the Śaivism in the Pallava country of the 7th century AD. All authors who have dealt with this topic have invariably been strongly influenced by the presumed coevity of the *tēvāram* trio (particularly Tirunāvukkarasar and Tirujñānasambandar) and the Pallava rulers from Mahēndravarman I

through Narasimhavarman II. In the light of what has been concluded in the present study, the religious history of the 7th century Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam will have to be re-written, totally eliminating the *tēvāram* trio from the arena.

The Pallavas who incidentally figure in the *tēvārams* and Periapurāṇam are therefore to be looked upon as legendary personae introduced by the authors in order to render the respective stories fulsome and *apparently* convincing. In other words, any other king of any other dynasty, real or fictitious, would have equally suited the purpose and context of these authors. Implying that such literary personae are established historical individuals and identifying them with this or that otherwise known king, is most unwarranted and such attempts result only in a highly distorted and therefore misguided history.

(2) The *tēvāram* trio were not the contemporaries of the 7th century Pāṇḍyas either. The presumed identity of the Pāṇḍya king who is said to have received Tirujñānasambandar with Māravarman Arikēsari has not been determined on convincing grounds. Even granting for a moment that it is satisfactory, there is no evidence whatsoever to presume that this king was a follower of Jainism. Either this king together with Maṅgaiyarkkaṛaṣi and Kulaççirai are persons who lived during the 10th century or are fictitious characters evolved through the imagination of the authors.

(3) Consequent upon the placement of the *tēvāram* trio in the 10th century A.D. as contemporaries of the early kings of the Imperial Çoḷas, it becomes necessary to reconsider the dates of the remaining 60 *nāyanmārs* of the Śaiva hagiology. The *tēvārams* of Tirunāvukkarasar mention 10 of them; those of Tirujñānasambandar refer to 13 of whom five are seen in Tirunāvukkarasar's list. Presuming the author of Tiruttoṇḍattokai is Sundarar, there is a huge list of 62 *nāyanmārs* amongst whom are included not only the persons mentioned by Tirunāvukkarasar and Tirujñānasambandar, but also the latter two persons as well. If the *nāyanmārs* mentioned by the *tēvāram* trio are deemed to have been coeval as asserted by tradition, then the age of all the 63 *nāyanmārs* would fall in the 10th century itself.

It should, however, be noted that there are no infallible arguments that favour the attribution of the authorship of the Tiruttoṇḍattokai to Sundarar. Praising Śiva and glorifying His acts appear to be quite natural to Sundarar as they are to the remaining two of the trio. Their references to some devotees of Śiva in casual contexts is also understandable. But, it is doubtful if the glorification of the devotees, of Śiva (*Sivanaḍiyārs*) had become a stabilized institution in the 10th century A.D.

In the literary history of most languages in India, the original and elaborate places of writing chronologically precede their respective abridged versions. In the Kannaḍa language, for example, Harihara's Sivaganada ragalegalu was the original detailed work dealing with the lives of the Śaiva devotees and its abridged forms followed much later. There are no valid reasons to postulate the contrary in the Tamil language. Tiruttoṇḍattokai and Tiruttoṇḍattiruvandādi are examples of abridgements of Śekkiḷār's Tiruttoṇḍarppurāṇam (Periapurāṇam).

It should be realised that abridged versions of religious works have a specific purpose—to help one's concentration on a meditation theme and thus allow the mind to dwell in that state. In other words, they were a kind of practical guides for meditation, particularly for the lay devotee or for one who could not devote himself wholly for the pursuit of religion; they admirably suited the purpose of daily *pārāyana* (recitation). From considerations such as these, both the Tiruttoṇḍattokai and Tiruttoṇḍattiruvandādi clearly appear to be post-Periapurāṇam compositions. Such being the case, it is quite probable that the largest majority of the nearly 60 Śaiva devotees lived from the time of the *tēvāram* trio (10th century AD.) to the time of the composition of the Periapurāṇam by Śekkiḷār (12th/13th centuries AD.).

(4) There is a deep-rooted belief amongst historians that there was a domination of Jainism and Buddhism in the 7th century Tamil country and that the *tēvāram* trio and possibly the Vaiṣṇavite *Āḷvars* were responsible for putting down these religions then and there, and in turn, raise the popularity of their own respective religions to domination. There are, however,

weighty evidences to point out that Jainism, though not Buddhism, continued to be a major religion in the Tamil and Kannaḍa countries as late as the middle of the 12th century as witnessed in literature, architecture and epigraphic records. It is the 10th century Jainism and the residue of Buddhism that the *tēvāram* trio had to combat in the Tamil country. It is as if a culmination of the Śaivite movement, that Periapurānam in the Tamil country and Sivaganada ragalegalu in the Kannaḍa country were composed, thereby codifying and edifying the 63 *nāyanmārs*. As to why they fixed the number as 63, however, is another problem that has to be studied separately.

It does not appear that Harihara copied from Sekkiḷār or vice-versa. Just as the names of some of the 63 *nāyanmārs* occur in the writings of the pre-Periapurānam period, in Kannaḍa too some of them figure in the *vaṇanās* of the pre-Sivaganada regalegalu period. Thus some common matrix appears to have been the source for both. This source need not necessarily be a written book or composition. It could as well be the legends that were in popular currency during their time.

The religious movements in India have not known political barriers. During the early part of the medieval period, the Jainas maintained a kind of liaison between the Kannaḍa and Tamil countries. Although much work is yet to be done in this connection, a couple of instances clearly indicate a similar liaison that existed in the Śaivite cults as well. The Kālamukha school from the Kannaḍa country had found placement, although temporarily, in some loci of the Tamil country; interestingly, the movement of this school is intimately associated with the Rāṣṭra-kūta-Çoḷa battles (Swamy and Nanjundan, 1972). The mention of a pontiff from Kogali in some of the poems included in the VIIIth *tirumuṟai* clearly suggests the common connection of the author of these poems with the Kālamukha centre at Kogaḷi 500, which territory in the 10/11th centuries was constituted as parts of the modern Bellary and Harapanahalli districts (Swamy, 1974). Both in the Tamil and Kannaḍa areas the *yogic* system and the philosophy of Gorakhnāth were quite well known (Nanjun-

dan, 1972). In both areas, again, the tantric-based *pratyabhigña* system had found currency (Krishna Rao, 1970 ; Swamy, 1972 d). Some of the minor Saivite cults—Kāpalika, Bhairava, (?) Kaula, and the like—appear to have been common during the period in the Tamil, Telugu and Kannaḍa areas. Some social customs like the cutting off of one's head or limbs were shared by these regions.

Besides political factors like wars, the liaison appears to have become strengthened by merchant-guilds like the Maṅgrāmam, the Pattana-svāmīs of Ayyavole and the Virabanajiṅgas, who travelled with their commodities of trade all over and between the linguistically different regions. The religion of the constituent members was either Jainism or Śaivism, the exact cult-patterns of which need further study.

(5) Although rarely, the students of history of Tamil literature are faced with the question—Why is it that no commentaries have been written on the *tēvāram*? This indeed is a very important question particularly in view of the fact that old commentaries (often by more than one commentator) are available for the *divyaprabandams* of *āḷvars*, the canonical texts of the Śaiva-siddhānta, two of the books of the *tirumuṟai* series (the VIIIth and Xth Books), the *Eṭṭuttokai* and *Paṭṭupāṭtu*, the *Peruṅkāppiyam* like *Čilappadikāram* and *Maṅimēkalai*, and several classical works of literature including the texts on grammar and rhetoric.

This question has occurred to a few others in the past, and as far as I am aware, two explanations are offered. According to some scholars (I am not certain if this has appeared in print), the *tēvāram* represents the 'word of God' and therefore humans have no authority to comment on it. While this naive explanation deserves to be respected purely on sentimental grounds, it is difficult to understand how the *divyaprabhandams* also considered to be the 'word of God' have been commented upon. The second explanation — if it be an explanation — is an incident narrated by U. V. Swaminatha Aiyer in his autobiography. Tyagaraja Chetti-

yar, a brilliant scholar and a devout Śaivite, was often pressed to write a commentary on the *tēvārams*. He preferred to remain silent to the request. On one occasion when Swaminatha Aiyer and Tyagaraja Chettiyar were standing on the banks of the Kāveri, the former reminded the latter of the old request, to which the latter declared, 'If you press me about it, I shall jump into the river.'

The incident is abruptly left at this point and no moral is drawn. Tyagaraja Chettiyar's reluctance could not have been because he lacked the background or ability, but his attitude and mental reservations could have been due to some other factors. Attention has been drawn on previous pages to the two distinct major cults of Śaivism, the *āgamic* and *bhakti* cults, that were in vogue during the period of the *tēvāram* trio, and how in subsequent periods of history serious attempts were repeatedly made to fuse the two into one. While such endeavours attained popularity at religious and ritualistic levels, there does not appear to be that degree of reconciliation at the philosophical level. The latter was especially so with the orthodox followers of the Śaiva-siddhānta tenets as expounded in the Siddhānta-sāstra texts. It is surprising that none of the commentators on the Siddhānta-sāstras refer to the *tēvāram* for the elaboration or elucidation of the tenets. In other words, they had no use for the element of *bhakti* in their philosophy, as it was an alien element to the *āgamic* tradition.

The legacy of writing commentaries on texts, religious as well as secular, is a comparatively old one in the Tamil Nādu, having commenced in the 12th/13th centuries. It was maintained during the succeeding centuries by a galaxy of brilliant commentators. The secular literature drew its own coterie of commentators, so also the canonical texts of Śaiva-siddhānta attracted another set. The element of *bhakti* associated with the concept of love and absolute surrender, being one of the basic tenets of Vaiṣṇavism, caught up both at practical and philosophical levels and received commentaries on the hymns of the *āḷvars*. The *tēvāram*, however, remained in a rather isolated position at the theoretical level as its intrinsic content could not be successfully amalgamated with

the Śaiva-siddhānta system of thought. Such a situation is by no means exclusive to this system alone. The *vācana* literature of the Vira-śaivas and the *dāsa* literature of the Vaiṣnavas in the Kannaḍa language form their own encystments at the respective philosophical levels, in spite of the popularity they continue to enjoy at the practical levels (Krishna Rao, 1970). It is interesting to note that excepting the category called the *bedagina vacana* of *tantric yogic* import, the remainder of *vacana* literature and *dasa* literature have remained without commentaries.

Attempts to find the germs of the Śaiva-siddhānta philosophy in the *tēvārams* are all of recent origin in the 20th century. To what extent such endeavours would be successful cannot be assessed at present. Historical retrospective, however, clearly establishes the independent origins and parallel development of the *bhakti* and Śaiva-siddhānta movements, the former being chronologically earlier.

(6) A question has been raised on a previous page as to why the *tēvāram* trio failed to sing about the Pallava temples of the 7th century AD. After having had a rule by this dynasty for a continuous period of nearly 250 years, the kingdom suffered heavily on account of the military inroads of the Rāṣtrakūṣas and the Coḷas from the time of Dantivarman. His period marks the onset of decadence of the Pallava dynasty which became practically extinct by the end of the 9th century (Mahalingam, 1969). The indigenous religious life of Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam during the period of decadence cannot be expected to have flourished with continued vigour, particularly in view of a new wave of Śaivism (*kālamukha*) that had been introduced by the Rāṣtrakūṣa invaders (Swamy and Nanjundan, 1972). The rituals in and the working of the Pallava temples should have become degenerate and the people's faith turned away from the old institutions. By the time the *tēvāram* trio appeared in the 10th century AD, the Pallava temples had almost completely lost their once popular image and a large number of them had been neglected and rendered useless. Thus the reason for the *tēvāram* trio for not having offered the decads to the Pallava-founded temples appears to be due to the chronological lag.

(7) There has been a growing trend in the methodology of historical research in the Tamiḷ Nādu to draw freely from literary works in the Tamiḷ language. Intrinsically there is nothing wrong in the method, provided the dates of the concerned texts are known with at least — fair degree of accuracy and certainty. It is a pity that the largest number of texts available in the literature of the Tamiḷ language are yet undated or have been dated on a series of dogmatic assumptions and assertions. Likewise, the presumed age (7th century AD) of the *tēvāram* trio has been taken for granted as a reliable thumb-rule to determine the dates of some of the early Pāṇḍya Pallava or Ćōḷa kings. The chronologies and genealogies reconstructed in this manner are in turn used as an equally reliable time-measure to assess the period of certain other events in the fields of culture, arts, religion, etc. Therefore several aspects of the history of the Tamiḷ Nādu are in need of fresh and objective approaches with due respect for chronology. Then alone can one expect to obtain a factual history free from prejudices and anachronisms.

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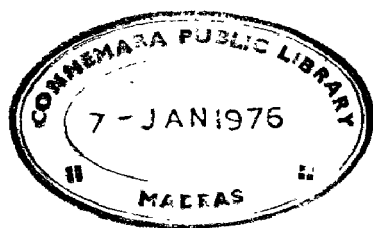
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CASTE AND MARRIAGE SYSTEMS OF THE TRIBALS OF LAKSHADWEEP

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The literal meaning of Lakshadweep, the smallest Union Territory in the country, is one lakh islands. But it comprises only 22 islands and 5 attached islets with a total area of 32 sq. km. These tiny lush coral islands encircled by the mighty Arabian sea are only 3 to 5 metres above sea level. They are situated at 200 to 400 km. off the Kerala coast and at 10 to 330 km. from one another. Only ten of them are inhabited. From north to south they are Chetlat, Bitra, Kiltan, Kadmat, Amini, Androth, Kavaratti, Agatti, Kalpeni and Minicoy.

Tourists' Resorts

With vast and varied spectrum of tourists' attraction Lakshadweep is potentially one of the most interesting, exciting and beautiful regions of the country. It has proved a tourist's paradise due to its romantic panorama. The evergreen feathery coconut groves, crystal clear blue water of the extensive lagoons suitable for all kinds of aquatic sports and the idyllic combination of sun, sea, surf-washed sand and fresh air of these colourful and distinctive islands of strategic importance have now acquired a unique position in the tourism map of the world.

People

The population of this territory is only 31,980 according to 1971 census. It recorded a decennial growth of 31.5% between 1961 and 71. The density of population is 994 per sq. km., the third in rank in the country. The entire inhabitants are Muslims classified as scheduled tribes. Mostly, they belong to the Shafi school of the Sunni sect. The Wahabis and Ahmediyas constitute a minority. The Wahabis have considerable following in Minicoy

and Agatti islands. They possess separate mosques in these islands. Ahmediyas have following only in Kalpeni island. Minicoy is an exception in every respect while the customs, culture and mode of life of the people in the other islands are more or less the same.

Language

Malayālam and Mahl are the mother tongues of the inhabitants of these islands. The people in all the islands except Minicoy speak Malayālam with local variations from island to island. But it is different from the Malayālam spoken in Kēraḷa. The people of this territory lived in isolation for many centuries. Hence they were not influenced by the new developments which effected changes in the old Malayālam in Kēraḷa. A great deal of original Tamil and many Arabic words are in common use in these islands. The Malayālam spoken in the five northern islands was influenced by Kannaḍa language because of their connections as part of the former South Canara District, while the other islands were part of former Malabār District both under the erstwhile Madras State till 1956. The inhabitants of Minicoy speak "Divehi" popularly known as 'Mahl', a mixture of Urdu and Sinhalese. Mahl has its own script 'Divehi Thana'. Like Arabic and Urdu, Mahl is written from right to left.

Origin

The people are drawn from two distinct racial stocks. Island tradition points out to their Hindu origin. Many of their house names also support this view. But the inhabitants of Minicoy, the southern-most islands are of Maldivian stock, unlike other islanders who are of the same ethnic stock as those on the Malabār coast.

According to one legend, Bhāskara Ravi Varma, the last Chēraman Perumaḷ who ruled over Kēraḷa embraced Islam and left for Mecca. An expedition set out in search of him at the instance of the Hindu rulers of Kēraḷa. The members of the expedition became settlers in the islands as a result of ship wreck. They were converted into Islam by the Arab saint

Ubaidulla in the 14th century. It is worth mentioning that the first person who embraced Islam was a women of 'Kadukketh' house in Ameni island despite strong opposition from the entire islanders. This woman took the Islam's name of Hamidat Bibi and later married the saint. The couple then lived at Pattakkal house constructed for them in Androth by the people of that island. The grave of Ubaidulla in this island is held in high esteem.

Caste System

The inhabitants of these islands observe caste system. The people in all the islands except Minicoy are divided into three castes. They are Koyas, Malmis and Melacheris. Koya is the highest caste. The memberr of this caste usually use the title of Koya with their names. They were landlords and owners of most of the country crafts "ođams". till recently. Some of the Malmis were also landlords but only on a smaller scale than the Koyas. They are mostly sailors and fishermen. Melacheris belong to the lowest caste, They are petty tenants, coconut tree climbers, barbers, goldsmiths, blacksmiths and mostly servants of the Koyas. They form nearly 60% of the population in the Malayalam speaking islands.

The Koyas are generally the leisured class. Only a few of them are engaged in fishing and cultivation. The Koyas of Ameni, Androth, Kavaratti and Kalpeni claim as the first settlers who descended from "Nambudiri" and other high caste Hindus of the Malabār coast. These four islands are therefore, regarded as the "Taraward" islands.

The Koyas of Androth, the largest island due west of Calicut follow a profession of learning and piety, tour extensively in South India and some foreign countries and earn good sums on that account. The pride themselves on their theological education in which they acclaim superior to the Muslims of the West Coast.

Melacheris are considered to be the descendants of "Thiyya" and other low castes. They were not allowed to wear chappals,

shorts or bunyan or to use umbrella. The people of the upper classes mainly the Koyas wanted to enforce these distinctions more strictly while Mēlacheris demanded greater freedom. Strife between them often took place. Intercaste marriage is not permitted.

These are four castes in Minicoy. Manikfan is the highest caste. They were managing the internal affairs of the island till recently. Thacrufans are mariners with social status. Thackrus are also sailors and khalasis, but socially inferior to Thackrufans. Raveris, the lowest caste, are the labour class, mostly tree climbers and tappers. The women of Manikfan, Thackrufan, Thackru and Raveri are known by the caste names of Monikka, Bifan, Bibi and Kambilo respectively. Inter-caste marriage is not usually permitted. But there is no objection for a male belonging to a higher caste in marrying a female from a lower caste. The children of such couples take the caste of the father. But a male member of a low caste is never allowed to marry a woman from a high caste.

The people of Minicoy are generally good seamen and fishermen. Both men and women of this island are progressive, hard-working and well disciplined from time immemorial.

The people in all the islands are intensely religious. In almost all the islands there are a number of mosques, big and small, including the main mosques of Jamath, Moideen and Ujra. But there is no Ujra mosque in Minicoy. The Juma mosque is generally the largest where the 'Id' Congregation meets. The other two mosques are mainly intended for performance of 'Rathib' peculiar to these islands with the exception of Minicoy. The people are generally honest and law-abiding even though they were illiterate, ignorant and superstitious for many centuries in the past, because of isolation and lack of facilities for progress. In olden days they did not give any attention for the education of children except for the regular classes conducted in Madras to teach them reading and recitation of 'Koran' without knowing its meaning.

Ornaments

Women are lavish in the use of ornaments. A variety of jewellery are found in all the islands except Minicoy where they are frugal in wearing ornaments. Certain traditional restrictions exist in the use of jewellery among women of the different castes, In all the islands women of Koya and Malmi castes wear gold ornaments while Melacheri women use only silver ornaments. In Minicoy, ear-rings and ear-drops made of gold are used by Monikka, the women of the highest caste. Beefans are also permitted to wear golden ear rings but not golden drops. Bibis use ear rings made of silver. Kambilos, the women of the lowest caste, are permitted to use only ear-rings made of copper or thick black string. These restrictions are gradually fading out.

Marriage

The traditional customs connected with Nikkah and marriage are the same in all the islands except Minicoy. Child marriage, polygamy and frequent divorce are common in these islands. The boys are generally married between the age of 16 and 20 and girls between 10 and 13. The first marriage is arranged for a boy by the parents of both the parties and subsequent marriages by himself. A suitable date is chosen by the guardian for Nikkah and marriage. Nikkah usually precedes marriage festivities. Both the ceremonies rarely take place consecutively. The Nikkah ceremony is generally arranged at the mosque or the bride's residence in the presence of the Khazi. The relatives and friends of the couple are invited for the function. The Khazi administers the oath which is repeated by the bridegroom in the presence of at least two witnesses. The bride is represented by her father. Before the oath is administered, the Khazi ascertains from him whether the consent of the bride was taken for the alliance. In case of any doubt the Khazi can summon the girl and ascertain her consent in person. Nikkah is followed by a grand feast. But the actual marriage ceremony takes place after a few weeks, months or sometimes, years after Nikkah. It is usually performed at the bride's house, if the girl belongs to a high caste and in the mosque if she is a Melacheri. The customary dowry by

the husband known as Mahr to the wife is at the rate of Rs. 22 or Rs. 30/- for Koya, Rs. 15 or Rs. 12/- for Malmi and Rs. 3 to 6 for Melacheri. A little difference is noticed in the amount of Mahr from island to island.

In the morning of the marriage day the bridegroom sits in his house surrounded by a group of singers. They sing "kettupattu" i. e. songs for marriage for about 2 hours. At this time a similar function takes place in the bride's residence also. Here the singers are women. After some time a party consisting of the bride's father, relatives and friends accompanied by a group of singers and folk dancers goes to the boy's house in order to bring him ceremoniously for the marriage. This procession is known as "Duyyappalaye Thedippokal", which means going in search of the bridegroom. On arrival a warm reception is accorded to the party. The guests are ushered inside the specially erected pandal. Light refreshments are served to them. The bridegroom is then brought to the centre of the pandal and seated on a decorated stool or chair. One of the singers of his party then asks loudly for permission to bring the "ossan" (barber) for a clean shave for the boy. The question is repeated thrice. One of the representatives of the audience gives permission. The family 'ossan' is then called for. A new 'Dhoti' and a few coins are given to the barber by the boy. The bridegroom is then shaved cleanly. The shaving process continues for about one hour. Singing takes place during this time. After bath, the boy who is dressed ceremoniously for the occasion, is conducted to the bride's house in a colourful procession with singing and folk dances like 'Kolkali' and 'Parchakkali'. But Melacheris are allowed to sing songs or to arrange dances only in the premises of their houses and not on the way. "Kattupattu" "Oppana" which is a musical session by separate groups of men and women are essential items of the marriage. The bride's house is generally decorated beautifully to suit the occasion.

When the procession arrives near the bride's house, the party is received with honour by the people of the bride. Rose water and raw rice are sprinkled on them. When the bridegroom first

enters the bride's house, he gives an amount according to his capacity to the guardian of the bride. The groom and his party are seated in the decorated pandal specially erected for the marriage.

The Nikkah ceremony is performed first, if it has not taken place earlier. Music and dancing are resumed. Then the party settles down for a grand feast. After the feast the bridegroom is taken back to his house in a procession.

The marriage festivities continue like this for 3 to 7 days. Singing and dancing are essential on all the days. A total of eight feasts are arranged during these days. But feasting is generally confined now-a-days to relatives and youngsters who act as companions unlike in olden days. On the 3rd or 7th day, the last day of the celebrations the bridegroom sleeps in the bride's house for the night. A large-scale feast, sometimes to the entire people of the island is arranged to mark this function, known as 'Veedukoodal'. The bridegroom is received by the brother-in-law who washes his feet, just before entry into the house. The bridegroom meets his bride for the first time on the night of 'Veedukoodal'.

After the marriage the couple continue to live in their own houses. According to tradition the husband goes to the wife's house each night, sleeps there and returns to his own house in the morning after taking a cup of black tea or "kañji". The children live with their mother. They are governed by 'Marumakkathāyam' i.e. succession in the female line. "Tarawad" or ancestral property known as "Velliyarcha" (Friday) property is inherited only by women. "Thinkalarcha swath" (Monday property) or self-acquired property can be spent according to the wish of the earner or divided to children according to Mohamadan law. Self-acquired property is known as "Belarcha" property (literally Thursday property) in the northern five islands.

The entire expenses connected with the marriage are usually incurred by the bride's people. Rich families spend a substantial amount for marriage feasts. In some islands it is customary to

give a part of the expenditure varying from Rs. 100/- to Rs. 1000 to the bride's people by the bridegroom. But in some other islands this customary payment is made only after one year of the marriage. This is paid by co-operative borrowing known as 'Bir'. It is collected from relatives and friends either in cash or kind on the condition of repayment to them, free of interest under similar circumstance.

Divorce

Divorce is quite common. If the husband wants to divorce he has to forfeit all that he gave to the wife. If it is the other way, he will get back all that he had given to her including Mahr, clothes and jewellery. There are very few men or women who have not married or divorced several times. Marriage, divorce and remarriage are a regular feature in these islands with the exception of Minicoy.

Minicoy is unique in this respect. Minicoyites are monogamous. Child marriage is not permitted. Divorce is quite uncommon. The Minicoy girls have the right to choose their husbands. Their communal system affords a good deal of scope for young men and women for courting prior to wedding resulting in love-marriages. Wedding ceremony is comparatively simple. Unlike in other islands, the bridegroom has to incur all the expenses connected with marriage and reception.

On the night prior to the Nikkah, the bridegroom and the bride are summoned to the Khatib's house. The Khatib asks the bride whether she is prepared to marry the bridegroom and the former announces her willingness for a fixed amount as Mehr. Then they sign the marriage register kept by the Khatib. The Nikkah takes place the next day after evening prayer. The oath is rendered by the Khatib to the bridegroom, the former holding the latter's hand.

The wedding clothes for the bride have to be sent to her house by the groom on a fixed day prior to the marriage. In addition to the clothes another presentation consisting of two beds,

two bed sheets, six big pillows, three small pillows, a pair of door curtains, cosmetics and two sets of night dress one each for the bridegroom and the bride has also to be sent by him.

One or two days prior to the marriage a few friends of the bridegroom come to the bride's house to string the curtains to the door of the bride's room. The guests are entertained to tea. After the curtains are hung they are shoved out of the house and water is poured on their heads by women for making fun of them.

A peculiar feature of their custom is the absence of the role of parents at the marriage ceremony which is performed by the Khatib. The bridegroom is accompanied by a few friends and the bride by two or three elderly women. The ceremony is followed by a small feast or tea party. Then the people disperse and the groom returns to his house. Afterwards the bride sends a messenger to bring the bridegroom to her house. The groom becomes a member of the bride's house since then.

In Minicoy the Mehr varies according to the caste. The customary rate is Rs. 100/- for Manikfan, Rs. 50/- for Thackrufan, Rs. 15/- for Thackru and Rs. 5/- for Raveri. But there is no objection in giving higher amounts according to the capacity of the groom.

Apart from Mehr the husband has to make certain customary contribution to the wife towards maintenance, in all these islands. It is four bags of rice and 2 complete set of dress per year. But in Minicoy the annual contribution was not less than Rs. 75/- in the case of Thackru and Raveri, Rs. 150 for Thackrufan and Rs. 300 for Manikfan besides 5 sets of dress according to the old rate. The amount has subsequently been increased many times in view of the high price of essential commodities. All expenses of the children are also borne by the father in this island.

In all the islands except Minicoy on the birth of a child, the father and his relatives are first informed of the event. After bath, 'bank' is rendered to the baby by an elderly person. The father has to give his wife nearly one bag of rice, 15 bottles of coconut

oil and 40 fowls on the birth of the first child. This is collected on 'Bir' system. The child is named on the 7th day by the father or grandfather without any ceremony or feast. The child's head is first shaved on the 14th day. This ceremony is celebrated on a grand scale at the expense of the father. Circumcision is usually carried out between the of 6 and 10. Some people especially the poor postpone it till the age of 15. Circumcision is performed by the "Ossan", when singing and dancing take place. Festivities including feasts to relatives and friends for 3 to 7 days are essential for this ceremony. In the case of girls, the ear boring ceremony is celebrated between the age of 5 and 10. It is performed by a goldsmith or one of the women with gaiety and enthusiasm.

In Minicoy on the date of birth of a child, the father sends to his wife a small bed with curtains, pillows, necessary dress, cosmetics etc. for the baby. If it is the first birth, beaten rice (Aval) and coconut are sent to the houses of the relatives on the date of delivery itself. Immediately after birth the baby is bathed and "bank" rendered to it. The head of the baby is shaved only after 20 days. The entire expenses connected with this function known as "Bobylen" are mainly met by the father.

In Minicoy circumcision is arranged between the age of 5 and 8. Friends and relatives are invited. Circumcision is carried out in the most hygienic way by experts. The person who carries out circumcision is paid from Rs. 35/- to Rs. 60/- according to the status and capacity of the family. Elaborate festivities including singing, dancing and feasting follow the function for about a week.

The ear boring ceremony of girls takes place between the age of 8 and 9 in this island. It is usually performed by a woman generally known as "Kamphaithorufamiha" who is a family friend well experienced in ear boring. Sometimes a present in the form of cloth or money is paid to her. According to tradition there are no hard and fast rules regarding this payment. A few friends and relatives are invited for the ceremony. In

certain cases singing and dancing are also arranged. The ceremony ends with a simple tea party.

Changing face

Constitution of these long neglected islands into a Union Territory in 1956 was a glittering ray of hope for progress and prosperity. Since then due to implementation of massive development programmes, the territory has recorded remarkable progress in all the spheres of economy especially in the fields of education, fishing, agriculture, land reforms, co-operation, electrification, public health, transport and communication as a result of which great changes are taking place in the life and culture of the people of these islands.

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HEROES OR GODS IN TAMIL SAṄGAM

M. SUNDAR RAJ

Are we sure that many of the pieces in the Pura-nānūru (புராநானூறு), which are now read as being purely historical and secular in nature do not carry a deeper religious significance? It may be thought that there can be no doubt about the answer, but it would be worthwhile taking a fresh look.

Let us take a small selection of about 55 pieces which refer to the so-called Seven Last Vallāls, or Minor Chieftains, of the Saṅgam age (கடைஏழு வள்ளல்).

I. Adiyamān Nedumān Añji. (அதியமான் நெடுமான் அஞ்சி)

Of these chieftains Adiyamān is the one who receives the largest attention, some 17 poems (87-108) being about him alone.

He is described (100) as holding up the sharp (88) spear (வேல்) in his hand, with the warriors' anklets (கழல்) on his feet, and wearing the vetchi (வெட்சி) and veṅgai (வேங்கை) garlands. He has curly black flowing hair, fiery eyes and wounds on his body. We have also a description (103) of the musicians and devotees who go to him. The women come with drums and musical instruments, slung from their shoulders and hanging on two sides (as from Kāvaḍi, காவடி). They hold in their hands their begging-bowls (மண்கடை). Adiyamān is said to fill their bowls (give them food and drink) at all times, regardless of whether there is famine or plenty in the land. In 104. his enemies are not to be misled by his child-like (mild) appearance, for in spite of his appearance he could be a terror in the battle-field. The Poetess Avvaiyār is like a child to him for he showers on her his grace (அருள்) like a father (92). His followers are like children to him, and he is gentle with them and fierce to his enemies (94). Sometimes he does not grant requests quickly (101), but it is certain he will meet them sooner or later. Out of compassion for the suffering in wars, he often hesitates to fight, though there is no one equal to him in bravery (90).

It is useless to expect success by confronting him on the battle-field (88), which he is always ready to enter (89). A comparison is made (95) between the state and condition of his troops and their equipment, and those of Thoṇḍaimān (தொண்டைமான்). The latter are well-fed and possess beautiful weapons; Añji's people, however, with whom he shares his food are starved and ill-fed, but his Vēl (வேல்) is sharp and pointed. People are advised not to stand against him, but to surrender and pay his dues (97). The deeds of his fore-fathers are recounted (99). They offered sacrificial oblations to the Dēvas and they brought to earth, the rare and difficult-to-obtain sugar-cane (கரும்பு) from the heavens; they established the wheel (ஆழி) (this might mean Rule or Dharma) in the land. So likewise (ஒப்ப) are Añji's deeds.

An extra ordinary event is related in 91, where he is said to have given the life-giving (immortal) fruit, (நெல்லி) to the poetess, Avvaiyār. He is described as having the white crescent moon on his tuft, and the blue-stone string on his throat (like Śiva). His people drink and create an uproar (ஆர்கலிநறவிள்) (even as the followers of Śiva). (The poem is given in Appendix).

Añji's little son, who is referred to in 100, is described in greater detail in 96 and 102. Pogettezhini (பொகுட்டெழிணி) is his son, and the most remarkable things about him are his beauty with which he destroys (attracts) damsels, and his warlike qualities which destroy his enemies (96). He is available to support his father's rule, as the axle base supports the axle (102).

(I do not comment upon poems 87 and 93, even though their mythological and ritual contents are of very great interest. It will require a separate paper to examine their significance, and, in any case, their substance is not of immediate relevance here).

II. Pāri. (பாரி)

There are 16 poems sung about Pāri (பாரி) by Kapilar, which are numbered 105-120 in the collection (Puṣa-nānūru by A. Doraiswami, Kazhagam, Madras, 1947).

Poems Nos. 109, 110 and 111 are interesting in that there it is said that Pāri will not submit to people who came to him in arms, but only to songsters, dancers etc. Poem No. 109 which is the most characteristic is given in Appendix. This, as will be readily appreciated, sounds very much like the devotional "marg" of the Bhakthi cults. It is also (109) that Pāri can well live on bamboo-rice, jack-fruits, roots and honey, the traditional sattvic food of Sanyāsis and Yogis, the first of whom is, of course, Śiva. It is significant also that Pāri's abode is said to be on a mountain which reaches up to the firmament.

Poem No. 106 is also in the Bhakthi mode, in that it compares Pāri to God, and says that even as the latter entertains with equal warmth the good and bad amongst his followers, symbolised by the எருக்கன்டூ (which, incidentally, is the favourite flower of Śiva) so also, Pāri will not discriminate against the stupid, rather than on the cowardly which would normally be deemed as the relevant degrading characteristics of a warrior. Note also the deliberate application of the word கடவன் (bound by duty) to Pāri in the last line, contrasting with கடவுள் in line 3.

It is said that he would give bits of "paṛambu" to those who go to him. If he has no more of this to give, and if his devotees ask for him, he himself would go to them (106, 108, 110, 111, etc.), and he will also confer on them Aṛam (அறம்), Dharma or Merit. Paṛambu is the name of his land, but the etymology of the word is not clear. It is apparently derived from the root "paṛam" (பறம்) in the same way as "paṛanthalai" (பறந்தலை) meaning the graveyard, which, in Saivism, is the haunting ground of the giver of Aṛam (Knowledge) that is Śiva. The description of his abode and personality abound in such matters which are associated with Śiva, as koḷḷi (கொள்ளி), or faggots used in the burning ghat, sandal wood (ஆரம்) and veṅgai flowers (favourites with Śiva) are all referred to (106) and he said to give not only Aṛam (அரம்), but even himself (108). There are said to be beautiful waterfalls (அருவி) in Pāri's land, and blue lotus in his rivers (105), which are always full, whether there is rainfall or not. There is nothing of history or warfare in these

matters, and one has even the feeling that Pāri is another name for Śiva as known in later times.

On the other hand, the moaning dirges over the death of Pāri and the sad fate that has overtaken his land and his daughters (112 to 120) have, on first reading, some realistic touch, and might well refer to historical facts. If so, it may appear difficult to reconcile such elements with the theory of a deified Pāri. There is, however, the possibility that these apparent historical events (113 to 120) are really symbolic, and that there is a covert Śaivite mythology which is hidden in them. In any case the events described have little historical value, and the basic event related, even if factual, is very simple.

III. Kāri. (மலையமான் திருமுடிக்காரி)

Kāri is invariably referred to as a hill-man “மலையன்” a term which, in Tamil religious literature, is specially applicable to Śiva and his various forms. It is possible, therefore, that the epithet “of the holy tuft” (திருமுடி), often applied to Kāri, and generally considered to refer to his royal status, could well refer to the unruly and holy tuft of Shiva.

In poem No. 122 (Appendix), which is about Kāri, each one of the lines requires careful examination to bring out the deeper meaning of what on the face of it appears to be plain matter-of-fact descriptions. It is said that neither the sea nor enemies can take his land (line 1). Reading this together with (lines 2-3) the statement that it belongs to “priests” (அந்தணர்), it could only mean that it is holy land. Kāri himself is said to wear the warrior's anklet, and to be well-versed in the (warriors') dance (line 2). The gifts that three kings (வேந்தர்), which is a term applied in religious literature to the three Gods (அரி, அரன், அயன்), bring to him singing his praises (lines 4-7) belong to his devotees. His wife who is seated (?) on his shoulder, and is said to speak sweetly, is compared to the star Arundhati (Ārdra Bāhu) (which is, in mythology, on the right arm of Śiva) (lines 8-9). He has nothing which can be called his own except his wife (line 10); he is so poor and yet so wealthy and proud (line 11).

It is difficult to find a satisfactory interpretation for poem No. 121. Plainly the poet wants the patron, Kāri, to discriminate in favour of poets while bestowing his gifts, but the spirit of the poem is contradictory to the general sentiment of praise for universal liberality of rulers. If, however, the poet's intention is to address the divine, not only does the reference to people, "coming from all four directions", but also the complaint about the indiscriminate generosity of the giver, take meaning. The appeal that the poets, that is, the "knowers" (புலவர்) (here one well-equipped with knowledge) be specially favoured becomes understandable, and a hint of sectarianism can even be felt in the poem, as if preference should be given to "the believers" or "the true devotees".

In poem No. 123, Kāri is said to be unlike other chieftains whose generosity arises under the influence of drink, and his gifts are bestowed from a free and bountiful heart. A similar sentiment appears in piece No. 124, where the seeker is told that it is not necessary to observe omens and auspicious time for seeking Kāri's aid. Even harsh words will not deprive the supplicant of his generosity. Here the "hill-man" is said to reside in high mountains, where water-falls (அருவி) abound.

The poet, in 125, (reproduced in Appendix), says that to him is attributable both the success of the victors who has his support, and the defeat of the vanquished, who do not have. Pāri here is referred to as "The One" (ஒரு நீயாயினை). It is interesting also to note that Kāri is called "வல்வேல்" (powerful spear, it may also refer to Śiva's *trisul*), a term specially reserved for Ori. Kāri is described as "wearing anklets and coming with beautiful measured steps" (that is dancing), and the deliberate use of the words "சேவடி", "தாளவாழ" etc., are very significant. In lines 1 to 4 of this poem we find the poets eating fatty meat and drinking toddy in vessels called "மண்டை", or skull, which is a favourite vessel of Śiva. Kāri is also said to drink the "கள்" (toddy).

I reproduce poem No. 126 also in the Appendix as it is equally interesting, for, some of the landscape descriptions are not only very beautiful poetry, but are also very significant for our

purpose. Lines 6 to 8 may be translated as "O Lord of Mu||ūr, in whose beautiful forests the night comes to rest (so dark and dense are the trees) and the water-falls sound like drums beating, etc.". We may here speculate on the word "முள்ளூர்" as perhaps describing a thorny land (as would be Śiva's territory), or as referring to his weapon, the pointed *Trisul*, These words could well fit Śiva, and then the previous line (4) would suggest that the qualities of Śiva are now being assigned to Kāri, a mythical descent from the God being assigned to him. In line 11, the poet is described as "புலனமுக்கற்ற அந்தணுளன்" (= புலன் அமுக்கற்ற அந்தணுளன்). Here "லன்" obviously refers not only to mere knowledge but also to the senses, and the poet is said to be, therefore, free from the control of the senses, a quality more to be expected in a Śaiva saint, than a courtier flattering a chieftain.

IV. Āy. (வெள் ஆய் அண்டரன்)

Poem 128 (reproduced in Appendix) purports to describe the land of Āy. "Right in the meeting place (மன்றம்) of his city which is on the Podiyil (hill), there is a big Jackfruit tree where monkeys dwell. From its branches are suspended drums hung by people who come to receive his gifts, and these drums are mistaken for the jack-fruit, and so are beaten, (thus the drum-beat is continuously heard in his land). This in turn makes the swan rise up and gives its call. In the midst of this, Ay dances wearing the warrior's anklets (leg ornament) (கழல்). This city, it is said, cannot be reached by kings and chieftains, but can be reached only by one (her, விறவி) who goes there to dance". Quite obviously the last lines refer to Pārvathi, and the whole verse is a description of Śiva and His Abode. It may be recalled that in Hindu Mythology, the hill "Podiyil" acts as a counter-weight to the Himalayas where Śiva is seated, and by implication it is also Śiva's abode. The commentator finds an etymology for "அண்டரன்" (Aṅḍiran) in "ஆந்திரன்" (Āndhiran) that is, a man from "Andhradēsa". But perhaps a better derivation would be from "ஆண்டி" (Āṅḍi), a common appellation for Śiva. "ஆண்டு" (Āṅḍu) meaning "to take refuge" could, if acceptable, also provides a better etymology (ஆண்டு + இரன் or one who give refuge).

In verse 127, Āy is said to have given away everything to his followers, thus making his country very poor, unlike the lands of those who enjoy without sharing their food with others.

The three poems, 129 to 131, describe Āy's dress, habits, etc. He is drunk and dances the Kuravai dance, near the Vēṅgai tree (Śiva's favourite), on a hill near the small huts of poor hunters (129), where there are plenty of jack-fruit trees, and elephants (129). He wears a garland made of shining beads (விளங்குமணி Viḷaṅgumaṇi). (விளங்கு Viḷaṅgu) means also "to know", and the beads could well refer to the Rudrāksha, the bead of knowledge (130). The garland is also said to be of flowers from the "வழை" tree (a kind of gamboge tree) (131). There are plenty of elephants on this hill of Āy, which is so high as to reach to the clouds (131).

Poem No. 132 (reproduced in Appendix) is a very significant one. It says, "I thought of him (that is, I came to him in my difficulties) last, whom I should have thought of (that is, come to) first. May I suffer for this shortcoming! May my tongue be cut (for praising others and forgetting him)! As I have listened to others being praised and not him, may my ears become choked (plugged) like old disused wells! Here in his land lives deer, feasting on fragrant grass, in the midst of streams in which the blue water-lily blooms, and in the shade of fragrant trees, with his female deer. This is the hill which looks northward to the Himalayas, and if these two were not there, the whole world will be destroyed". That there is a veiled reference to Śiva in "the deer" will be quite easily seen.

"To see Āy, you must go to him, singing and dancing the peacock dance" (133). "He gives gifts freely, and not like a merchant, expecting a return in the next birth" (134).

Poem 135 describes his abode, and the poet's longing for him. Tigers and elephants abound in his forest, and the weary path to his abode is narrow and passes through mountain cliffs. The poet has come alone (his wife is coming behind) not for gifts, but to see one who is the subject of so much praise, and who is sought

by so many. Another poet, however, in the next poem (136), describes his poverty and wants in the most pitiable terms and begs for, sustenance. His description of the difficulties in the approach to Āy's abode is, however, the same.

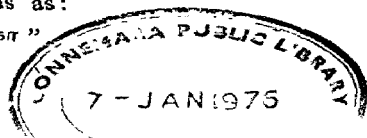
V. Ori. (வக்ஷிலோரி)

A very interesting poem No. 152 is dedicated to Ori, of the mighty arrow. A single arrow of his is said to have pierced in turn five animals, viz., an elephant, a tiger, a deer, a pig and a big lizard. The first three it will be noticed are animals whose skin serve Śiva in various ways; the pig and lizard are favourites of the Kuṛavars amongst whom He is said to live. This arrow is said to be an excellent and famous one belonging to a great hunter, who hunts not for profit by trade, being himself very rich. (Would it be too daring to treat this myth of five animals as a veiled reference to the five letters, the Pañchākshara, arranged in a line as by an arrow). His broad chest is smeared with sandal paste, and he is the lord of the hills which has plenty of fruits and water-falls. The poet and his female companion sing to him on the lute (பாழி) with drums and cymbals. Calling on him by his name, which is "Ko" (கோ) (God-King) (compare the call of "GOVINDA" by Vaiṣnavite pilgrims to-day) they go daily to him who has no peer as hunter. They receive plenty of rich meaty venison food, and drinks, as also gifts of neck-wear made of gold and beads. He is the lord of high mountains called Kolli (கொல்லி), which is full of caves and caverns (152). Similar details of these matters are to be found further in poem No. 153. Here we find among other things the blue lotus in Ori's land.

VI. Pēkan. (வையாவிக்கோப்பெரும்பேகன்)

Pēkan (பேகன்) is said (141) to give valuable gifts (142), and appease the hunger of the music troupes out of pure compassion, and not for the sake of recompense in the next birth. Here is mentioned the famous incident of Pēkan having placed a covering over the peacock. The word used is "paḍām" (படாம்) which means both "a simple covering" (சீலை), but connects also "a large banner". The line (11) which reads as:

"படா அமைஞ்ஞைக் கீத்தரவங்கோ"



and on re-casting as “படாமஞ்சுக்கு ஈத்தடுவங்கோ”, is translated as “he who gave the covering to the peacock”. It may also, however, be rendered as “he who gave shelter to the peacock”, or more freely as “he who took the peacock under (or on) his banner”, all of which would point to Pēkan as Muruga.

In poem No. 143, it is mentioned that Pēkan's wife, Kaṇṇagi was abandoned by him. At the same time, his gifts are said to be innumerable, and his abode is said to be a small town set on the top of a hill abounding in water-falls. The first few lines refer to the Kuṇṇavar's pūja for rain, and we are left with the feeling that the rains came by Pēkan's grace. The story of Kaṇṇagi's estrangement is continued in poem No. 144, and his new love is said to be like one from amongst the musical troupe. (The close resemblance between this and the story of Muruga raking for second wife Valli, of the Kuṇṇavar community, may be seen).

Referring to the grace (அருள்) exhibition by Pēkan in the peacock incident, the musician (devotee) beseeches him (145) to do justice (நரும்படர்களைமே), and take back Kaṇṇagi. This, he says, is his only prayer.

In poem Nos. 146 and 147, these matters are further developed, and details of Pēkan's dress, bearing, abode, etc., are added as also about the musicians and songsters. The latter come with small lutes, singing melodious tunes, by paths leading over many hills, where there are many water-falls, and where the rain drops make sweet music.

Naḷli (கண்டரக்கோப்பெருநள்ளி)

The Seven Last Chieftains (of the Saṅgam) (கடை ஏழு வள்ளல்) are listed in poem 158 (by Peruñchittanār) as (1) Pāri, (2) Ori, (3) Malaiman (Kāri), (4) Adiyamān, (5) Pēkan, (6) Āy and (7) Naḷli. This last chieftain is celebrated in these poems (148-150), where he is treated in most general terms. Naḷli lives on the top of a high mountain with roaring waterfalls, and gives bounteous gifts (148). His generosity in food and drinks has confused the musicians, and made them forget the proper time

assigned to the various melodies (149). Poem No. 150 describes an incident when Naḷḷi appears, while on his deer-hunting rounds, one day, with blood-stained anklets (கழல்) on his feet before a group of tired, hungry and poverty-stricken musicians resting on the way-side. Having cooked some venison food, he offers it to them. Then he quietly disappears without revealing his name and country to the now curious musicians, who now learn from other way-farers that he is the guardian of the high mountains (கனிமலை நாடன் நள்ளி அவன்), and of the neighbouring hills where the waters run crystal-clear. The plot and whole atmosphere of this poem is suggestive of those stories which pilgrims love to relate about their favourite saint or God.

Review

The need for keeping this article as brief as possible made me select this compact group 55 poems where common theme and strain can be presented. The fact that the personalities dealt with are from the earliest times brought together in the legend of the Seven Last Chieftains of the Saṅgam gives them a much-needed compactness and cohesion. But the real fact is that there is little to differentiate between poems dealing with these "chieftains" and those concerning other "minor chieftains" such as Kumaṇan, Yēnadi Thirukiḷḷi, Pittankotran, and so on. The distinction is obviously purely conventional (the convention of choosing the number seven will be examined in a separate article). But there is one poem (No. 139) about Nāṅḷil Valluvan (நாஞ்சில்வள்ளுவன்) which holds matters so relevant to the subject under discussion that I cannot help covering it also. It is only the first 8 lines which are of relevance here:

“ சுவலமுந்தப் பலகாய
 சில்லோதிப் பல்வினாளுருமே
 அடிவருந்த நெடிதேறிய
 கொடிமருங்குல் விறலியருமே
 வாழ்தல் வேண்டிப்
 பொய்க்குறேன் மெய்கூறுவல்
 ஓடாப் பூந்கை யுரவோர்மருக
 உயர்சிமைய வழா அநாஞ்சிற்பொருத ”

This may be read as :

தோள்வடுப்பட பல முட்டைக்களையும் காவியு சில்வாய மயிரை யுடைய பல இனையோரும் அடிவருந்த நெடும்பொழுது ஏறிய கொடி போலும் இடையினையுடைய விறலியரும் இவர் ; பொய் சொல்லேன் மெய் சொல்லுவேன் ; புறங்கொடாத மேற்கோளையுடைய வலியோர் மரபிலுள்ளோனே !.....

Translated this would mean : "O Lord of the high if (im-movable or unploughed) hills called Nāñjil, descendant of him who never fled from the battle-field, I address you on behalf of those who come behind me, and hence I speak the truth. They come with lacerated wounds on their neck and shoulders climbing long distances with great difficulty, children with scarce any hair (bald, Clean-Shaven) on their head, and young women with dainty waist".

Such scenes are seen even to-day of the pilgrims climbing the hill-shrines, such as Paḷani, the heads of children being clean-shaven in fulfilment of vows. The wounds on the shoulders and neck (line 1) could only come from carrying hard loads, such as the Kāvaḍi of today (காவடி), on the long rough climb up. In passing, attention may be drawn to line 7, which agrees almost verbatim with line 4 of poem No. 126 (quoted earlier), addressed to Kāri, even though the poets are different, the composer of the first being called "ஒருசிறைப் பெரியனார்" and of the latter "மாறோக்கத்து நப்பசலையார்"

Preliminary to drawing any general conclusions, the important features of the poems studied here may perhaps first be listed.

First, in regard to their value as historical materials, there is very little that could serve the purpose. There are no doubt names of the "chieftains", and of places whose geographical location could be placed with some plausibility, but the personality, dress and habits of the chiefs and their people, and the nature of their territory are described in very general and stereotyped terms. Some of the phrases, words and poetic imagery repeat themselves, indicating their conventional nature. The lack of distinct individual traits seem to indicate that they are all

based on one single model. The misfortune of Pāri's daughters may perhaps be deemed to be an exception, but even here there is so little concrete details available that a suspicion arises that it is a myth. The exact nature of such a myth and its context in Hindu mythological systems can only be established by a separate study, which would take into account other mythological material, of which there is much in this compilation of poems.

There is much description of songsters, dancers and musical troupes (பாணர். விநாயர்). Their relationship with their patrons is that of devotees rather than that of followers.

In this connection it would be relevant to refer to the account given by Megasthenes (the Greek Ambassador to India C. 300 B.C.), and quoted by the Roman writer Arrian in his "Indica" of some religious activities, which are thought to be the earliest descriptions of Bhakthi cults in India.

Arrian says, " and that the Indians worship other gods, and Dionysus himself in particular with cymbals and drums, because he so taught them ; and that he also taught them the Satyric dance, or, as the Greeks call it, the Kordax ; and that he instructed the Indians grow long in honour of the God, and to wear the turban ; and that even up to the time of Alexander the Indians were marshalled for battle to the sound of cymbals and drums" (p. 221 "Classical Recounts of India" by R. C. Majumdar (Firm K. L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1960).

The similarity between this and the practices mentioned in the Puṛa-nānūru cannot be missed.

The deity concerned in the Bachanalian scenes of Megasthenes cannot be definitely established (though much speculation exists thereon), but there can be no such difficulty in identifying the deity of these poems. It is undoubtedly Śiva. Who but He can have the blue-throat (which is also the same thing as blue ornaments on the throat), the spear in hand, the waxing moon on the head, the hair-style, the addiction to the vēṅgai (வேங்கை),

and the anklets? Who but He can be the hunter of deer, living in remote forests and on hill-tops abounding in water-falls? It is Śiva who loves his dance and eats from the skull bowl. It is Śiva, the medicine-man, who gives the immortal goose-berry and who bestows grace (அருள்) on his devotees. He is available to poor songsters, dancers, and musicians, and not to warriors and kings, even though He himself is the undefeated Lord of Wars. To His devotees He gives not only earthly gifts but even Himself, and He has a son, young and beautiful, himself a warrior of no mean ability.

Conclusion

We are, therefore, led to the conclusion that these so-called Seven Last Chieftains of Saṅgam are really various manifestations of Śiva not exactly Śiva as we know him to-day, but One as known to that age, when many of the qualities had not, as in later times, been separated from him and bestowed on His son, Muruga, and also when philosophy and metaphysics had not bestowed on His new attribution.

One thing, however, is very clear that these poems reveal the existence of Bhakthi cults in Tamil Nāḍu at the very earliest times. The fact that the mode and style of worship should bear such a close similarity to Greek accounts of the 3rd Century B.C. may prove to be useful data. Further and more detailed researches may help to date the period of these poems and it may even prove possible to find in the Coḷas, Cēras and Pāṇḍyas of these poems, the rulers of those names referred to by Asoka in his edicts, if a satisfactory explanation could be found for the evidence which seems to point to a contradictory conclusion.

I would not like it to be thought that I am denying in toto the historical existence of these chieftains. It is possible that they did in reality exist, but if so, the poet and devotee has combined his art with that of the courtier in skilfully weaving into his praise of his liege-lord attributes of divinity. Whether a warrior chieftain would be pleased if his praises are limited to these matters is, of course, another matter.

But these are only preliminary conclusions which require much more analysis of the literature before they can be treated as final. A detailed comparative study of the mythology, and religious symbolism, as well as a careful examination from the angle of Linguistics of the whole literature is called for. It is possible that such a study might even find in these poem a cultura connection with the beginnings of the Tamil Śaiva Siddhāntism, and Tirumūlar's Tirumandiram.

APPENDIX

91

வலம் படு வாய்வாள் ஏந்தி, ஒன்றூர்
களம் படக் கடந்த கழல் தொடித் தடக் கை
ஆர் கலி நறவின், அதியர் கோமான்!
போர் அடு திருவின் பொலந் தார் அஞ்சி!
பால் புரை பிறை நுதற் பொலிந்த சென்னி
நீலமணி மிடற்று ஒருவன் போல
மன்னுக—பெரும: நீதிய, தொல் நிலைப்
பெருமலை விடரகத்து அரு மிசைக் கொண்ட
சிறியிலை நெல்லித் தீம் கனி குறியாது,
ஆதல் நின் அகத்து அடக்கி,
சாதல் நீங்க, எமக்கு ஈத்தனையே:

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அளிதோதானே, பாரியது பறம்பே!
நளி கொள் முரசின் மூவிரும் முற்றினும்
உழவர் உழாதன நான்கு பயன் உடைத்தே!
ஒன்றே, சிறியிலை வெதிரியின் நெல் விளையும்மே;
இரண்டே, தீம் சுளிப் பலவின் பழம் ஊழ்க்கும்மே;
மூன்றே, கொழுங் கொடி வள்ளிக் கிழங்கு வீழ்க்கும்மே;
நான்கே, அணிநிற ஓரி பாய்தலின், மீது அழிந்து,
திணி நெடுங் குன்றம் தேன் சொரிபும்மே
வான் கண் அற்று, அவன் மலையே; வானத்து
மீன் கண் அற்று, அதன் சுணையே; ஆங்கு,
மரம்தொறும் பிணித்த களிற்றினிர் ஆயினும்,
புலம்தொறும் பரப்பிய தேரினிர் ஆயினும்,

தாளின் கொள்ளலிர் ; வாளின் தாரலன் ;
யான் அறிகுவென், அது கொள்ளும் ஆறே !
சுகர் புரி நரம்பின் சீறியாழ் பண்ணி,
விரை ஒலி கூந்தல் நும் விறலியர் பின் வர,
ஆடினிர் பாடினிர் செலினே,
நாடும் குன்றும் ஒருங்கு ஈயும்மே.

122

கடல் கொளப்படாஅது, உடலுநர் ஊக்கார்,
சுழல் புனை திருந்து அடிக் காரி! நின் நாடே;
அழல் புறந்தருஉம் அந்தணரதுவே;
வீயாத் திருவின் விறல் கெழு தானை
மூவருள் ஒருவன், ' துப்பு ஆகியர் ' என
ஏத்தினர் தருஉம் கூழே, நும் குடி
வாழ்த்தினர் வருஉம் இரவலரதுவே ;
வடமீன் புரையும் கற்பின், மட மொழி,
அரிவை தோள் அளவு அல்லதை,
நினது என இலை நீ பெருமிதத்தையே.

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பருத்திப் பெண்டின் பனுவல் அன்ன,
நெருப்புச் சினம் தணிந்த நிணம் நயங்கு கொழுங் குறை,
பருஉக் கள் மண்டையொடு, ஊழ் மாறு பெயர
உண்கும், நிற் காண்கு வந்திசினே,
நள்ளாதார் மிடல் சாய்த்த
வல்லாள! நின் மகிழ் இருக்கையே.
உழுத தோன் பகடு அழி திள்ளுங்கு
நல் அமிழ்ந்து ஆக, நீ நயந்து உண்ணும் நறவே;
குன்றத்து அன்ன களிறு பெயர,
கடந்து அட்டு வென்றோனும், நிற் கூறும்மே;
' வெலீஇயோன் இவன் ' என.
' கழல் அணிப் பொலிந்த சேவடி நிலம் கவர்பு
விரைந்து வந்து, சமம் தாங்கிய,
வல் வேல் மலையன் அல்லன் ஆயின்,
நல் அமர் கடத்தல் எளிதுமன், நமக்கு ' எனத்
தோற்றோன்தானும், நிற் கூறும்மே,

‘ தொலைஇயோன் இவன் ’ என.

ஒரு நீ ஆயினை—பெரும! பெரு மழைக்கு
இருக்கை சான்ற உயர் மலைத்
திருத் தகு சேஎய் : நிற்பெற்றிகிளோர்க்கே.

126

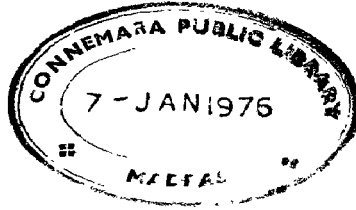
ஒன்றார் யானை ஓடைப் பொன் கொண்டு,
பாணர் சென்னி பொலியத் தைஇ,
வாடரத் தாமரை சூட்டிய விழுச் சீர்
ஓடாப் பூட்கை உரவோன் மருக!
வல்லேம் அல்லேம் ஆயினும், வல்லே
நின்வாயில் கிளக்குவம்ஆயின், கங்குல்
துயில் மடிந்தன்ன தூங்கு இருள் இறும்பின்,
பறை இசை அருவி, முள்ளூர்ப் பொருந:—
தெறல் அரு மரபின் நின் கிளையொடும் பொலிய
நிலமிசைப் பரந்த மக்கட்கு எல்லாம்
புலன் அழுக்கு அற்ற அந்தணைன்,
இரந்து செல் மாக்கட்கு இனி இடன் இன்றி,
பரந்து இசை நிற்கப் பாடினன் ; அதற்கொண்டு
சினம் மிகு தாளை வானவன் குட கடல்,
பொலம் தரு நாவாய் ஓட்டிய அவ் வழி,
பிற கலம் செல்கலாது அணையேம் அத்தை
இன்மை துரப்ப, இசை தர வந்து, நின்
வண்மையின் தொடுத்தனம், யாமே—முன் எயிற்று
அரவு எறி உருமின் முரசு எழுந்து இயம்ப,
அண்ணல் யாணையொடு வேந்து களத்து ஓழிய,
அருள் சமம் ததையத் தாக்கி, நன்றும்
நண்ணுத் தெவ்வர்த் தாங்கும்
பெண்ணை அம் படப்பை நாடு கிழவோயே!

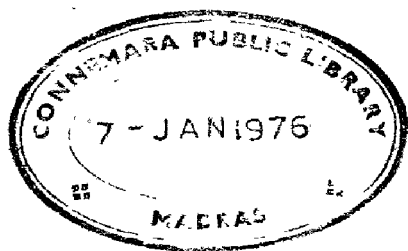
128

மன்றப் பலவின் சினை மந்தி
இரவலர் நாற்றிய விசி கூடு முழுவின்
பாடு இன் தெண் கண், கனி செத்து, அடிப்பின்,
அன்னச் சேவல் மாறு எழுந்து ஆலும்,
கழல் தொடி ஆஅய் மழை தவழ் பொதியில்—
ஆடுமகள் குறுகின் அல்லது,
பீடு கெழு மன்னர் குறுகலோ அரிதே.

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முன் உள்ளூவோனைப் பின் உள்ளினேனே !
 ஆழ்க, என் உள்ளம் ! போழ்க, என் நாவே !
 பாழ் ஊர்க் கிணற்றின் தூர்க, என் செவியே !—
 நரந்தை நறும் புல் மேய்ந்த கவரி
 குவளைப் பைஞ் சுனை பருகி, அயல
 தகரத் தன் நிழல் பிணையொடு வதியும்
 வட திசையதுவே வான் தோய் இமயம்,
 தென் திசை ஆஅய் குடி இன்றாயின்,
 பிறழ்வது மன்றோ, இம் மலர் தலை உலகே.





REPORTS OF SEMINARS

The Institute of Traditional Cultures held a Seminar at 4 p.m. on 4th September, 1974 in Room No. 48 of the University Departmental Building on "Ancient Tamil Music" led by Dr. Selvi L. Isaac, Head of the Department of Indian Music, Madras University. The following is a Report of the Proceedings of this seminar.

Present

Dr. Smt. Alamelu Govindarajan, M. Litt., Ph. D., Department of Music (Research Section), Kalākshētra, Adyār, in the Chair.

Dr. Selvi L. Isaac, M. A., Ph. D., Head of the Department of Music - Leader.

There was an audience of 62 persons.

In the absence of the Director of the Institute, Dr. K. K. Pillay, Dr. Smt. Alamelu Govindarajan presided, introduced the Leader and requested her to lead the seminar.

Dr. Selvi Isaac then read out her leading speech.

I am grateful to Dr. K. K. Pillai the Director of the Institute of Traditional Cultures for giving me this opportunity to lead this seminar and place before you the following facts about Ancient Tamil Music. I also thank Dr. Mrs. Govindarajan for consenting to take the chair and for the nice things she said about me.

From very ancient times music has occupied a very elevated place in the lives of the people. Great poets have sung its praises and kings have patronised and bountifully rewarded eminent musicians. It is universal and its power and its greatness can never be fully assessed. To us in India it represents God and many great men have attained bliss by worship of sound or nāda. While outside Tamilnāḍu—specially in the north—music went through

many vicissitudes due to various invasions, in the South, protected by the natural barriers of the Vindhya and Satpuras, music continued to grow in its pristine purity. The Tamil people gave the central place in their culture *i.e.*, Iyal, Isai and Natakam, to Isai or music, as the other two could shine only when accompanied by music. The greatness and power of music can be gauged from the taming of the mad elephant by Udayapan playing on the *yaḷ* and the Asunama being captured by playing music to it. To fully appreciate the music of the Tamil people, we should know something of their time, language, history and society.

The date of the third Tamil Saṅgam has been fixed at the 2nd Century through the researches of scholars like Bishop Caldwell, Dr. Kanakasabai Pillai, L. D. Swamikannu Pillai, Venkayya, Raghava Iyengar, Dr. Arokiasami, Vyapuri Pillai and Dr. K. K. Pillai. The foreign travellers and writers of the 1st and 2nd century, like Strabo, Pliny, Ptolemy and the work Periplus Maris Erythraci also furnish us with reliable data for fixing the age of Tamil literature. Seṅguṭṭuvan's campaign to the north also took place in the 2nd century, as, we are told in the Silappadikāram that many kings of the north ranged themselves against him. Hence the Saṅgam age can be fixed at 3rd century A. D. as not only Silappadikāram, but also almost all the works of the period describe Seṅguṭṭuvan as a contemporary.

This conclusion is strengthened by the fact that when Seṅguṭṭuvan built a temple for Kaṇṇagi, and made grants of land and arranged for daily pūja to be performed, Gajabāhu the King of Śri Laṅka who ruled between 171-193 A.D. and other kings prayed in the temple along with him. According to Pattupāṭṭu Seṅguṭṭuvan ruled for fifty five years, roughly between 170 and 226 A. D. Hence we can conclude chronologically and historically that no poet of the Saṅgam age could have lived earlier than the 2nd century A. D. Further evidence of the age of the last Saṅgam comes from the study of stars by astrologers. According to the position of the stars Kaṇṇagi burnt Madurai on Ādi Friday, Bhavāni Kritigai which is equivalent to some where between 100 and 198 A. D. Having fixed the time of the Saṅgam let us now go into the subject proper.

From a study of the works of the Saṅgam period it is evident that music played a very important part in the daily life of the people. Encouraged and patronised by the kings and chieftains, poets and musicians brought forth poetical and musical works of high quality in great numbers. Mr. Sesha Iyer in his book "The Chēra kings of the Saṅgam period" says that "those kings liberally patronised poetry and song and were easily accessible to poets and singers of both sexes of all classes and creeds and they were all munificently rewarded without any distinction." Music was patronised not only in courts, but also in urban life. Poets and bards going from one court to another with their instruments in their bags, in the hope of obtaining the favours of the king was a common sight in Tamiḷnādu.

Music was held in high esteem in those days. It is from the works of the last Saṅgam that we are able to gather much material regarding the music and musical instruments of the Tamiḷ people. There are references to works on music like *Mutunārai*, *Muthukuruku*, *Sikaṇḍiyār*, *Isai nuṅṅukkam*, *Ciṅṅisai*, *Pērisai* and *Pañcha-bhāratīyam* in the Tamiḷ literature of the period. These works are believed to have been lost in the great deluge which destroyed Tenmadurai, Kapāḍapuram and Kāviriṅṅampattiṅgam. What little we know of the music of the early Tamils is gathered from the works of the third Saṅgam such as *Pattuppāṅṅu*, *Eṅṅuttogai*, *Agam*, *Narṅṅinai*, *Kuṅṅuntogai*, *Paripādal*, and *Tēvāram*, *Divyaprabandam*, *Tiruvilaiyāḍalpurāṅgam* and above all, the *Silappadikāram*. The last mentioned work, though it relates the story of the anklet, is also considered to be a text book on music, because it gives us a clear picture of the art, as it was practised in the 1st and 2nd centuries i.e. the last Saṅgam.

About 1800 years ago, for more than four hundred years, Iyal, Isai and Nātakam, together known as Muttamiḷ was in the height of its glory. Language was divided into poetry, music and drama and the munificence of kings and genius of poets and musicians developed and perfected them. When Iyal Tamiḷ was sung to music, it came to be called puṅ. Though the term 'puṅ' usually denoted rāga, it was also attributed to poems

sung to music. Puṣ combined with abhinaya or actions came to be called Nāṭakam. Since music was loved and practised in all parts of the country, undoubtedly the people would have been highly cultured. We are told that they sang 12000 puṣ played on the Yāls having 1000, 100, 27 and 17 strings.

The power of music can never be over-estimated. Sambandar calls it “பகையுமவியும் பாட்டு”. The reference to Rāvaṇa singing the Iraṅgaṟ puṣ when caught under the Kailās mountain, Ānāyanānār and his divine flute play, Tiruneelakaṇṭha Nāyanār and his yaḷ play, Bānabadrar and his music, the Tēvarakāras and the miracles they performed are sufficient evidence of the fact that music was held in high esteem by the ancient Tamils.

Srutis and Svaras

Music in all its varied aspects developed in Tamil Nāḍu from very ancient times. Srutis, Svaras, Rāgas, Tālas, musical instruments and compositions are the important concepts of music and they all find elaborate treatment in Tamil works, especially the Silappadikāram. It was an accepted fact that there are twenty two srutis as seen from the following lines in Āḷḷiār Kuravai.

“குரற்றுத்தம் நான்கு கிலை மூன்றிரண்டாம்
குரையாவுழை யினிநான்கு—விரையா
விளரிசனின் மூன்றிரண்டு தாரமேனச் சொன்னார்
களரிசேர் கண்ணுற்றவர்”

The srutis allotted to the seven svaras gives us the total of twenty two. Sruti is the smallest audible difference in pitch that could be clearly distinguished by the human ear. It is also sometimes referred to as ‘பற்று’ patru.

The twenty two srutis were distributed among the seven svaras which were known as Isai. The term svāra does not occur in any of the Saṅgam works. Kallāḍanār says “நான்மறைப் பயனும் ஏழிசையும்” i.e. they are the fruit of the four vedas. Sometimes svaras are referred to as “Narambu”. Narambu usually stands for the string of the yāḷ, but since the seven strings of the common yāḷ are tuned to the seven svaras, they too came to

be called narambu. The seven svaras were named kural, tuttam, kaikiḷai, uḷai, ili, viḷari and tāram.

“குடமுதலிடமுறையாக குரற்றுத்தம்

கைக்கிளைபுழையினி விளரிதாரமென

விருதருபூங்குழல் வேண்டிய பெயரே” ஆச்சியர் குரவை 38-40

We find these names given in *Piṅgala Nigaṇḍu* and *Chēndan Divākaram* also. Another set of names given to the svaras is found in the same Āṇḍiyar Kuravai where seven shepherd girls named after the seven svaras stand in a circle and dance to entertain Kaṇṇagi. Here Kural is Māyavan or Krishna, Tuttam is Pinnai his beloved Vellayāyavan in paṇḍama and Tāram is Mundai the brother of Krishna. The other three notes Kaikiḷai, Uḷai and Viḷari did not have other names. These seven svaras were indicated by the long vowels.

“ஆ, ஈ, ஊ, ஏ, ஐ, ஓ, ஔ இவ்வேழுத்தும் ஏழிசைக் குரிய”

says Chēndan Divākaram. Āḍiyarku-nallār says that the twelve svarastanas were placed under the twelve constellations, starting with Taurus. The seven notes of the basic scale, beginning with pa or iḷi come under Taurus, Cancer, Leo, Libra, Sagittarius, Aquarius and Pisces.

As in the case of the music practised out side Tamilnāḍu, found in Sanskrit treatises, every puṇ has four kinds of notes. namely, iṇai, Kiḷai, Pakai and Natpu.

“இணை கிளை பகை நட்பென்றிந்நான்கி

விசை புணர் குறிநிலை எய்த நோக்கி”

i.e. the puṇ should be played with due attention to these notes. Iṇai means pair or that which unites. It unites the other notes and is the basis on which the other notes of the puṇ are calculated. Kiḷai is the fifth note which supports the iṇai and produces a melodious effect.

“கிளை எனப்படுவது கிளைக்குங்காலைக்

குரலையினியே துத்தம் விளரி கைக்கிளை—

எனவந்தாகு மென்ப”

The five svaras, kural, iḷi, tuttam, viḷari, kaikiḷai are said to be kiḷai i.e. yiḷi is the kiḷai of kural, tuttam of iḷi, viḷari of tuttam and kaikiḷai of viḷari. These are the first five notes obtained by the Kural-iḷi relationship or the shadja-pañçama bhāva and is the mōhana rāga.

Pakai as the name indicates is the enemy or the discordant note, which should be avoided while singing a puṇ, as it tends to deviate from the real bhāva of the rāga. The third and the sixth notes are pakai. Natpu is the friend—a note of lesser status, but important nevertheless. These four svaras are equivalent to vādi, samvādi, vivādi and anuvādi mentioned in Bharata's *Nāṭya Sāstra* and other lakshana grantas. These four played a significant role in exposing the svarupa of a puṇ, iḷai by its uniting nature, kilai by its co-operation, natpu by following the other two and pahai by its absence or by its judicious use.

Piṅgala Nigāṇḍu and *Chēndan Divākaram*, also give us a fund of interesting details regarding svaras. The seven isai are produced by the beetle, parrot, horse, elephant, cuckoo, cow and goat and in human beings they emanate from the chest, throat, tongue, palate, head, forehead and nose. The fragrance attributed to them, their flavour and the Gods patronising them are also enumerated. Similar details like these we find in *Nārada Siksha* also.

The stāyis were known as Eyakku (இயக்கு), Tānnilai (தான்லை) or tānam. Three stāyis or tānam are mentioned with different names in different works. In *Arangeṭṭukātai* of *Silappadikāram* they are given as valivu, melivu and saman. (aran : L. 93). They are also termed eduttal, paduttal and nalital. *Piṅgala Nigāṇḍu* calls them talai, iḷai and kaḷai (p-27). *Adiyārkunallār* names them “மந்தோச்சமன்”. All these names stand for tāra, madhya and mandra stāyis. In *Tolkāppiyam* (Kalaviyakkam-78) the upward and downward movements of notes are called selavu and varavu i.e. going and coming. In *Periapurāṇam*, *Ānāyanārpurāṇam*, it is said that he played the flute with the knowledge of ārosai and amarōsai which are same as ārohana and avarōhana.

The ancient Tamils also derived the svaras and puṇs by the Kural-iḷi bhāva also known as Cycle of fifths or śaḍja pañcama bhāva. Piṅgala Nigāṇḍu says,

“தாரத்துருழையும் முழையுட் குரலுங்
குரலுளினியும், மினியுட் துத்தமுந்
துத்தத்துள் விளரியும், விளரியுட்கைக்கினையும்
தம்முட்பிறக்கும் தகுதிய வென்ப”

i.e. from tāram, ḷai, from ḷai, kural, from kural iḷi, from iḷi tutṭam, from tutṭam viḷari and from viḷari kaikiḷai. All these pairs have the kural-iḷi relationship. What is this relationship? Speaking of the flute master, in *Araṅgēḷḷukātai*, Ilaṅgo Aḍikal says,

ஏற்றிய குரலினி என்று இருநரம்பின்
ஓப்பக்கேட்கும் உணர்வினன் ஆகி (59-60)

that, it is the consonance produced by sounding kural and iḷi (sa and :pa) together. Iḷi is also referred to as ‘பட்டடை’ Ilaṅgo Aḍigal says “வண்ணப்பட்டடை யாழ்மேல் வைத்தாங்கு” i.e. he placed the colourful paṭṭadai or iḷi note on the yāḷ or in other words, puṇs were played on the yāḷ through the kural-iḷi bhava. Even tuning the yāḷ was done by plucking these two strings together to produce a pleasing effect. This may be the origin of the practise of tuning instruments to these two basic notes.

Rāgas-Puṇs

The raga concept is the glory of Indian music. It forms the basis of all melody in India. Musical compositions are concrete delineations of the abstract ragas and hence their special value. In ancient Tamil music ragas were known as puṇs. There can be no music without the puṇ, for it is this that glorifies Tamil music. Isaipa and Iyalpa are two forms of poetry, but their difference lies in the fact that the first can be sung only by those who have a knowledge of puṇs, while the second can be studied and recited by anyone. The *Silappadikāram arumpada urai* tells us how puṇs are formed.

“மன்றுமளிகள் மலர் தேடி மதுவையுண்டு
மன்று சாரலவை எங்குமன்றியார்க்கும் வகையேபோன்
முன்ன மோசை பலவாகி முழுதும் வேராய் யொன்றாய்த்தென்ன
வென்னுமிசை வளர்த்தும் பண் னுமாறு தென்போல்”

Just as bees collect honey from various flowers, so also the singer selects notes which combine together beautifully, and creates puṇs.

Puṇ is a general term denoting rāga. It also stands for a musical mode with seven svaras and is the sampūrna raga of the present day. *Piṅgala Nigāṇṭu* and *Divākaram* define it as follows. “நிறைந்த நரம்பு நிகழ்ந்த பண்ணெனலாகும்” and “நிறை நரம்பிற்றே பண்ணெனலாகும்.” A puṇ has seven svaras. A tīraṁ is a rāga where all the seven svaras will not be present “குறைந்த நரம்பு திறமெனக் கொள்க” and “குறைந்த நரம்பிற்றே திறமெனப் படுமே”. The term puṇ also stands for mēla from which tīraṁs or janyas are derived. Shādava, audava and Svarāntara rāgas are known as Punniyaltīraṁ, Tīraṁ and Tirattīraṁ. These are scales with six, five and four notes. The same classification is seen in the music outside Tamiḷnāḍu also. Bharata is the earliest writer to mention shādava and audava scales.

It is an interesting fact that the people of Tamiḷnāḍu had recognised the value and logic of classifying rāgas into genus and specie, something which is seen in Sanskrit works only after the 12th century and even then the sampūrna character of rāgas was not envisaged. In Tamiḷnāḍu the concept of Sampūrnatva of parent rāgas was recognised long before it was in the music of India in the 18th century. Even Veākatamakhi who formulated the mēlakarta scheme names Bhūpala as the 8th mēla, a rāga which does not have the seven svaras even when the ārohana and avarohana are taken together.

The seven svaras kural, tuttam, kaikilai, Uḷai, iḷi Viḷari and tāraṁ had a certain number of srutis allotted to them in the fundamental scale-Vaṭṭappālai.

Pitṅala nīgaṇḍu says :

“நான்குநாலு முன்று மிரண்டு
நான் முன்று மிரண்டு
குரல் முதலாக் கூறு மென்ப”

kulal, tuttam and iji have four srutis each, kaikilai and viḷari three each and uḷai and taram two each. Bharata says—

चतुष् चतुष् चतुष् चैव षड्जमध्यम पञ्चम ।
दैदौ निषाद गान्धार त्रिलि रिषभ दैवत ॥

Chatush Chatush Chatush Chaiva Shaḍja Madyama Pañchama|
Dai Dai Nishada Gāndhāra Trisri Rishaba Daivata||

allotting three srutis each to sa, ma and pa, three each to ri and da and two each to ga and ni, deriving the shadja grama which with slight adjustments is almost equivalent to our Kharahara-priya the suddha scale of Sanskrit works. The arrangement 4, 4, 3, 2, 4, 3, 2, gives us the suddha scale of Tamil music which is Harikāmbhoji or Vattappālai. Aḍiyārkunallār mentions four puṇṣ or pālai namely, Āyappālai, Caturappālai, Tirikōnappālai and Vaṭṭappālai, the last one being the most important. How these are derived is not explained.

Rāgās or Puṇṣ

In *Āḍciarkuravai*, Aḍiyārkunallār, diagrammatically demonstrates the Vattappālai. A circle, a span in diameter is taken and divided into four parts according to the four directions and these are again divided into three each and the twelve parts are allotted to the twelve constellations. The twelve svarastānas are placed under these. The seven svaras commencing from Kural will come under Libra, Sagittarius, Acquarius, Pisces, Taurus, Cancer and Leo. This is Vaṭṭappālai our Harikāmbhoji.

From Vaṭṭappālai four puṇṣ are born. These are Pālaiyāl, Kurinji yāl. Marutayāl and Neital yāl. Neital yāl is called Tiranil yāl (திருணில் யாழ்) as it cannot be sung due to dissonant intervals.

தாரத்துழைதோன்ற பாலையாழ்—தண்குர
 லொரு முறை தோன்ற குறிஞ்சியாழ்—நேரே
 இனி குரலிற் தோன்ற மருதயாழ்—துத்தமிளியிற்
 பிறக்க நெய்தலியாழ்”

Apart from these big puns or ‘நாற்பெரும்பண்’ or big puns another set of seven puns are derived from Vaṭṭappālai by the process of the modal shift of tonic.

“குரல் குரலாகிக் செம்பாலை, துத்தம் குரலாகிப் படுமலைப்பாலை
 கைக்கிளை குரலே செவ்வழிப்பாலை, உழைகுரலாகில் அரும்பாலை
 இளிகுரலாகில் கோடிப்பாலை, விளரிகுரலாகில் விளரிப்பாலை
 தாரம் குரலேல் மேற் செம்பாலை”

Cempālai is the original Vaṭṭappālai. With ri, ga, ma pa, da and ni as the tonic or starting note and by playing the same svaras we get Paḍumalaippālai, Cevvaḷippālai, Arumpālai, Koḍippālai, Viḷarippālai and merḇempālai, equivalent to Natabhairavi, a pūṣ with two madhyamas and no pa, Sankarābharana, Kharaharapriya, Hanumatōḍi and Kalyāni melas of the present day. It is interesting to note here that when Bharata applied the modal shift of tonic to his Shaḍja grāma, the same scales were derived, but in a different order, as Shaḍja grāma is Kharaharapriya.

According to the following lines of Aḍiyārkunallār in *Ācciar Kuravai*.

“குரலிளியிற் பாகத்தை வாங்கியோரொன்று
 வரையாது தாரத்துழைக்கும்—விரைவின்றி
 எத்தும் விளரி கிளைக் கீக்க ஏந்திழையாய்
 துத்தங் குரலாகுஞ் சொல்”

pūṣ are derived by re-alloting the srutis among the svaras thus changing the tonic note and producing new rāgas. The fundamental scale has srutis arranged as follows in Vaṭṭappālai.

Kural—Tuttam—Kaikiḷai—Uḷai—iḷi—Viḷari—Tāram

4 4 3 2 4 3 2

Now two srutis from Kural and iḷi are taken and given to tāram-
 ulai, viḷari and kaikiḷai, resulting in the new arrangement 2, 4,
 4, 3, 2, 4, 3, with ri as sa. This is Paḍumalaippālai or Natabhairavi.

The same process is repeated for each rāga or pālai which gives us Cevvaḷipālai; Arumpalai Koḷippālai, Viḷarippālai and Merçempālai, with ga, ma, pa, da, ni as Kural or sa.

In Tamil music, there were 103 puṇs but it is not clear how they are derived. The four big puṇs, palaiyāḷ, kurunji yāḷ, Maruta yāḷ and neital yāḷ, have four eight, four and five tirams, respectively under them. These twenty one, due to the four varieties, Akanilai, Puṇailai, Aruhiyal and Peruliyal, become eighty four. The four big puṇs also have these four types. So we have a total of hundred puṇs. These with tārappantiram, paiyulkāñci, and padumalai give a total of hundred and three puṇs. A puṇ is formed from the eight tānās, or stanas from the human body. These are chest, throat, tongue, nose, palate, lips, teeth and head. The eight actions or kriyas through which a puṇ is exposed are, eḍuttal, paḍuttal, nalital, mandra, madhya, kuḍilam, kampitam, oli, uruṭtu and taḅku.

“பாவோடணைதலிசையென்றார், பண்ணென்றார்
மேவார் பெருந்தானம் எட்டானும்—பாவாய்
எடுத்தல், முதலா விருநான்கும் பண்ணிப்
படுத்தமையாற் பண்ணென்று பார்”.

Eḍuttal, Paḍuttal and nalital is singing in the three stāyis. Kuḍilam is modulating the voice and making it soft and pleasing. Kampitam is singing with shake or gamaka. Oli is the loud, audible singing or reciting of a mantra. Uruṭtal is singing with a circular motion or producing a quavering effect. Taḅku is to sing or play with emphasis or good volume.

The lakshanas of puṇs may be studied through the following Mudal, Muṇai, Muḍivu. Niṇai, Kuṇai, Kiḷamai, Valivu, Melivu, Saman, Varaiyaṇai and Niṇmai (முதல், முறை, முடிவு, நிறைவு, குறை, கிழமை, வலிவு, மெலிவு, சமன், வரையறை, நீர்மை) Similar to these are Graha, Amsa, Mandra, Tāra, Nyāsa, Apanyāsa, Alpatva, Bahutva, Shādava, Audava mentioned by Bharata and other writers. Mudal is graha or the starting note of a puṇ, muṇai is the sounding note or the central note equal to the amsa, mudivu is nyasa the ending note. Niṇai and kuṇai are a bahutva and al-

patva—notes which should be sung frequently, and those which should be avoided or rarely sung. Kijamai is the relationship between notes, valivu, melivu and saman are tāra, mandra and madhya stāyis, Varaiyaṛai is the note on which a part of the rāga or song is concluded and nirmai is observance of rules. These eleven may be said to similar to the Triṇḍasa lakshanas of the music practised outside Tamiḷnāḍu. Shādava and audava (Tiratiram & Tiram) are not mentioned because these had become types of ragas by this time.

Puṇs are also based on some subtle details like the rasas they produce, the rules regarding the time of singing and their supernatural powers. A set of twenty four puṇs are given under three heads, Pakal puṇ, Iravu puṇ and Podupuṇ. Pakal puṇs are twelve, iravu puṇs nine and potupuṇs three.

The twenty four puṇs and their modern equivalents are to be sung in the daytime.

Pakal puṇ

1. Puṇanirmai — Bhūpalam
2. Gāndhāram —
3. Piyantaigāndhāram
4. Kausikam — Bhairavi
5. Indalam — Māyāmālavagaula
6. Takkēsi — Kāmbhoji
7. Sādāri — Pantuvarāli
8. Naṭṭapāḍai — Gambhīranāṭa
9. Naṭṭarāgam — Nāṭa
10. Paḷampāñchuram — Sankarābharanam
11. Gandhārapāñcamam — Kēdaragaula
12. Pañcamam — Ahiri

Iravupuṇ — To be sung at night.

1. Takka rāgam —
2. Paḷantakkarāgam — Arabhi
3. Seekamaram — Nādanāmakriya
4. Kolli — Navaroz
5. Kollikavvānam

6. Vyāṅṅakurīñji — Sourāshtram
7. Mēgharāgākurīñji — Nilāmbari
8. Andālikurīñji — Sāma
9. Kurīñji — Kurīñji

Podupuns — suitable for singing at anytime

1. Cevvaḷi — Yadukulakāmbhōji
2. Ānturutti — Madhyamāvati
3. Tiruttāṇḍakam — This is not the name of a puṇ, but the padikams set to this are usually sung in Harikāmbhōji or khamās. Many Tēvārams are in the podupuns, as they could be sung at anytime i. e. They are Sarvakālikarāgas.

The Navasandhis are nine balipeetas in temples dedicated to the nine Gods presiding over the eight directions, and the centre. During the mahōtsavas, special pūjas were performed in these nine sandhis to ensure the successful completion of the festival and the puṇs to be sung and tālas used were prescribed for each. These puns and talas are—

- | | |
|---|---------------------|
| 1. Centre - Brahma - Pañcamam and Mēgharāgākurīñji | ... Brahmataḷa. |
| 2. East - Indra - Gāndhāram - Kamésam | ... Indra tāla. |
| 3. South-east - Agni - Kollī | ... Mattapana tāla. |
| 4. South - Yama - Kausikam | ... Bhringi tāla. |
| 5. South West - Niruti - Naṭṭapādai | ... Nairuti tāla. |
| 6. West - Varuna - Sīkāmaram | ... Nava tāla. |
| 7. North West - Vāyu - Takkēsi | ... Bali tāla. |
| 8. North - Kubēra - Takka - Takkēsi | ... Koṭṭari tāla. |
| 9. North east - Isāna - Pañcamam | ... Ṭakkiri tāla. |

It is interesting to note that reference to ālatti is made in the commentaries of *Silappadikāram*. In *Araṅgēṭṭṟukātai* Aḍiyārkunallār explains how ālatti or ālatti should be sung. Singing of ālatti should begin with the syllable 'm' and long and short syllables should be used and rendered with the letters tenna and tēna or by combining the two into tennatēna. Ālatti is of two kinds aḇḇu and pāranai, the first with tāla and the second with dance. There are three kinds of ālatti, kāttālatti, niravālatti and puṇḇālatti. Ālatti should

be sung with the short and long vowels and among the eighteen consonants (மெய்யெழுத்து), only ma, na, ṅ and ṭa should be used. This reference to the letters to be used is very useful as it shows that the art of singing ālapana also had developed beyond the preliminary stage. The account of how Śiva came in the guise of a wood cutter to the rescue of Bāṇabadrar when challenged by the northern musician, and sang the sādāripuṇ is evidence of the fact that ālāpa was sung in early time by the Tamils.

Tālas

Tāla or time is a very important aspect of music. A natural instinct for keeping time is inherent in every human being. Even the earliest man, when he sang or danced or played on his crude instruments during the festive occasions in the village he kept accurate time by the movements of his body, clapping his hands or striking bits of stone or wood together. Music without tāla is like a boat left in mid-ocean without oar or rudder to guide it. श्रुतिर्माता लयपिता । (Srutirmāta Layapita) emphasises the importance of tāla. That tāla is very subtle and cannot be understood easily, can be assessed from the following verse in the *Tāḷasamuttiran* by Vanapādasūḍāmaṇi

“ தென்றல் வடிவும் சிவனார் திருவடிவும்
மன்றல் வடிவு மதன் வடிவும் குன்றாதவேயினிசை
வடிவும் வேதவடிவும் காணி
லாயதாளம் காணலாம் ”

He says that if one can see the southern breeze, the form of Śiva, and of the Vēdas and the music of the flute then he can see the form of tāla. Sri Tyāgarāja says that the music accompanied by the tāla of mridaṅga is conducive to bliss, in the kriti ‘Sogasugammridaṅga tāḷamu’ in Srīraṅjani.

All musical aspects of gīta, vadya and nritta, are based on tāla. It gives stability and liveliness to music. It is based on the three kinds of measurement kuṟil, neḍil and alapeḍai i.e.; hrsva, dhīrga and extension of sound. A study of the metre of Tēvāram hymns shows that they would have been set only to simple tālas corresponding to ādi, rūpaka and ēka. This was

necessary because the hymns belonged to the realm of sacred music and hence complicated time-measure would spoil the spontaneity and simplicity the songs. But tāḷa was necessary for the correct recital of the hymns. The fact that Tirugānasambandar was mysteriously provided with a pair of golden cymbals to accompany his singing establishes the importance of tāḷa.

A perusal of ancient Tamil literature gives us some insight into the tāḷa system of early times. Many references to Tāḷa are seen in these works. Pāṇi and tāḷam are the two words connoting tāḷa. Someone has said. “கையாலே போடுவது பாணி, தாளாலே போடுவது தாளம்” i.e. when reckoned with the hands it is Pāṇi and when reckoned with the feet (as in dance) it is tāḷam. Tāḷa was indicated by the words, seer, pāṇi and tūḷku. The first is the rhythmical setting of the song, and is of seven kinds. According to Aḷiyārkunallār, seer and pāṇi stand for tāḷam. The lines

“சீரினிது கொண்டு நரம்பினிதியக்க
யாழோர் மருதம் பண்ண”

— (Maduraikānchi—657-658)

and

பேய்ப்பெண்டிர்

“எடுத்தெறியனந்தர் பறைசீர் தூங்க”

— (Puṇānuru—52)

make it clear that seer is tāḷa and it played an important part in yāḷ play and in dance where the paṇai indicated the tāḷa. Tūḷku is a variety of time measure having a duration of two māṭras, equal to a guru.

Tāḷa consists of four elements namely, kottu, asai, tūḷku and aḷavu. Kottu has the value of half a matra, or two akshara kāḷa, equal to the modern drutam. Its symbol is the letter ‘க’. Asai has one māṭra or four akshara kāḷa, equal to the chaturasra laghu. Its symbol is ‘ஏ’. Tūḷku has two māṭras and the symbol ‘உ’. The last aḷavu corresponds to the plutam with three matras or twelve akshara kāḷa and the symbol ‘:.’ The kriya or action of kottu is a beat, that of asai, the wave after the beat, tūḷku is the beat and the wave, and aḷavu is a beat and a pause for

three matras and is equal to the plutam. These four aṅgas equal to the drutam, laghu, guru and plutam are used in the 108 tālas of ancient times.

In the Tevāram hymns only the puṅs for each paḍikam is given. The tāla is not mentioned, but the fact that Tirugāna-sambandar sang to the accompaniment of golden cymbals shows that they were sung to tāla. Sundarar in one of his hymns says that when Sambandar kept taḷam with his tender hands, Siva himself presented him with these cymbals with the panchākṣara inscribed on them, so that his hands may not be hurt. Thus the time had to be kept with the hands or, some instrument.

The hundred and eight tālas were in use during the age of Tamils and Tamil music. Aḍiyārkunallār mentions the five tālas caccarputam, cācarputam, sarpitāputtirikam, sambattuvēttam and urkattitam. These belong to the realm of sacred music, as Lord Siva is said to have performed the tāṇḍava nrittan to them. These are the first five among the hundred and eight and are known as the pañcatāla. They made use of the aṅgas laghu, guru and plutam. These did not hold the attention of the people for long, as simple tālas were more in keeping with the Tevāram and other compositions of the time and so in course of time they fell out of use. Other groups of tālas are the sixteen beginning with śkatāla, the fortyone beginning with Pārvatilōṣanam and the eleven beginning with Ontranpāṇi, but these also have become absolute.

The reference to drums with the names cacaputam and urkattitam suggests that they would have been constructed specially to play these two tālas. Drums to keep time was used for all kinds of performances, vocal, instrumental and dance. The metal cymbals gave out the basic rhythm for all music “தண்டும் தாளமும் குழலும் தண்ணுமையும்”. In a dance performance a tāla vādyā is indispensable, even if other instruments are not used. The devīl dance was performed to the accompaniment of paṇai alone. All drums were and are used primarily to emphasise the tāla for, without it music will lose its stability, liveliness and charm.

Musical instruments

Indian music includes vocal music, instrumental music and dance. While instruments can exist by themselves and give performances, vocal music and dance can be complete only with the accompaniment of musical instruments. Instrumental music is absolute music and it is of great use to society in its various spheres such as entertainment, temple music, folk music and martial music. Our country is a store-house of innumerable musical instruments of the three varieties, varying from very crude simple ones capable of producing just a few notes or the basic rhythm, to highly evolved ones, each with an individuality of its own, with elaborate construction facilities for tuning and complicated technique of play.

The instruments that have been evolved during the course of long centuries are known in Tamil music as Narambukkaruvi, Tuḷaikkaruvi, Tōlkaruvi and Kañcakkaruvi the last two being percussion instruments. In general they are called palliyam (பல்லியம்). There are hundreds of them with distinct names, shape, method of play and quality of tone. Since the materials used for making them are easily available in the country, without much cost, innumerable instruments are made all over India. The same is the case in other countries, but nowhere is such a large number and variety found. The importance of instrumental music, may be assessed from the fact, that, in addition to her training in dance, Mādhavi was expected to be proficient in playing the yāḷ, the flute and the mrdāṅgam also and hence, she was trained by experts in these instruments.

Numerous instruments belonging to the three groups were used in Tamilnāḍu and there are innumerable references to these in the earliest Tamil literature. Various kinds of yāḷ are mentioned such as Pēriyāḷ, Sakoḍayāḷ, Makarayāḷ and Ciriyaḷ with 21, 14, 19 and 7 strings respectively. The *Kallāḍam* describes the Nārada-pēriyāḷ with 1000 strings, keeḇaka pēriyāḷ with 100 strings, Tumburu yāḷ with nine and Maruttuva yāḷ with one string. The yāma yāḷ is referred to in *Rāmāyana*. The thousand stringed yāḷ could have been only in the poet's fancy, as such an instrument

would be a practical impossibility due to its size, difficulty in tuning the vast number of strings, playing on them and in carrying it from place to place.

Descriptions of the yāḷ are found in *Pattupāṭṭu*, *Jivakachintāmaṇi* and *Silappadikāram*. The parts of the yāḷ are Pattar (பத்தர்) or the boat shaped body, covered with golden coloured skin called Pōrvai (போர்வை) fixed to the sides with nails. The big half moon shaped hole on the pattar, to let out sound is known as Vaṟuvāi (வறுவாய்). On the middle of the pattar, in a line are a number of holes according to the number of strings. Into these holes are fixed the strings which are thinner than the broken grain of tinai and which shine like gold. The long curved arm of the yāḷ is known as Koḍu (கோடு). On this are the rings or Tivavu (திவவு) for fixing the strings. The strings are tied tightly to the tivavu and tuning is done by moving this up and down. The strings are known as Kōl or narambu (நரம்பு). The same kind of description is given in all the three works with apt similies.

The technique of yāḷ-play is also enumerated in many works. *Vēnirkātai* describes the manner of holding the yāḷ thus

“வலக்கைபதாகை கோட்டொடுசேர்த்தி
யிடக்கை நால்விரன்மாடகந்தழி”

II. 27-28

The right thumb stays at the bottom of the Koḍu, while the fingers, stay erect to pluck the strings in the position known as patakai (பதாகை). The left hand fingers are brought round the koḍu and bent over the strings in the position known as māṭakam (மாடகம்). The defects or kuṟram in yāḷ play are

“செம்பகை ஆர்ப்பே கூடம் அதிர்வே
வெம்பகை நீக்கும் விரகுளி அறிந்து”

(வேனிற்காதை 29-30)

Cempakai is the harsh note produced due to the bad quality of wood used, Ārppū unduly high pitched note, Kūdam is the dull tone and Atirvu the excessive vibrations or shaking of the string. The player should avoid these defects. The instrument should

be played with due attention to the use of *inai*, *kiḷai*, *pakai* and *natpu svaras* of the *rāga*. *Jeevakan* played the *yāḷ* only after testing it carefully for the defects. The tone of the *yāḷ* is known as *yēḷḷal* (ஏழ்ழல்).

The defects of the strings are *koḷumpuri*, excessive tension in fixing them, *tūmbu*, or frayed ends and, *murukku* or over-twisting of string. Before she played the *yāḷ* *Mādhavi* tested and tuned it by the actions known as *Vārttal*, *Vadittal*, *Undal*, *Uraḷtal*, *Uruḷḷal*, *Teruttal*, *Pattadai*. *Vārttal* is the action of the first finger, *vadittal* is pulling back wards and forwards with the thumb and first finger, *undal* is thrumming the strings to test them, *uraltal* is passing from one string to another, *uruḷḷal* is the quivering notes produced by the circular motion of the string, *teruttal* is rubbing the strings to test their tone and *pattadai* is to see through the *kural-iḷi bhava* whether the strings are tuned accurately.

Many types of *yāḷ* are enumerated in *Piṅgala Nigaṇḍu* and *Divākaram*. References to the *Viṇa* are also available. *Mānikka-vāsagar* mentions both the *yāḷ* and *viṇa* in *Tirupallieḷucci*. “*விணையர் ஒருபால், யாழினர் ஒருபால்*”. This means that the *Viṇa* and *yāḷ* were different instruments. *Yāḷ* is said to be that which had a curved *koḷu* and strings for each note, which were plucked by the fingers. When the *koḷu* was straightened and many notes were played by stopping the strings with the fingers it was known as *Viṇa*.

Great care was taken preserve the fine tone of the *yāḷ* as seen from *Periapurāṇam* *Sekkiḷar* where he says that when *Tirunilakaṇṭha Nāyanār* was about to play the *yāḷ* in the temple at *Alavai*, a voice was heard to say

“ அன்பிற் பாணர்பாடும்

சந்தயாழ் தரையின் சீதந்தாக்கின் வீக்கழியும் ”

(*Tirunilakaṇṭhanāyanār Purāṇam* V. 6)

that a plank or platform should be placed for the musician to stand and play, as tuned strings would lose their tension due to the cold, if it were placed on the ground. Thus is the reason why the *pāṇar* usually kept their *vādyas* in a bag made of skin.

A large variety of wind instruments were also used in Tamil-nādu, for worship, as accompaniments for vocal and dance and as part of palliyam or Orchestra. The conch, also known as valampuri, nandu, koḍu, saṅku and kokkarai, kuḷal (flute), kōdu (trumpet) iralai, āmbal kuḷal, mullaiku,al, kontraikuḷal, Veelai-kuḷal, kalam, siruḥinnam, tiruḥinnam, Vāṅgiyam, peruvaṅgiyam, tumbu and tārai, were used in various walks of life. The kuḷal or flute is the most important among these.

Wind instruments came to be constructed as a result of man's observance of nature as is seen from these lines in *Aganānūru*.

“ தும்பி குயின்ற
வகலா வந்துளை கோடைமுகத்தலின்
நீர்க்கியங்கின நிறைப் பின்றை வார்கோ
லாய குறற்பாணியினது வந்திசைக்கும்.”

The tones of shepherd's flute are said to be like those emanating from the holes made by beetles on bamboo canes when wind passes through them, Similar references are seen in Sanskrit works also.

Though flutes may be made of silver, gold, copper, wood and bamboo, yet the bamboo is considered to be best for this purpose, as it gives fine mellow tones. In the *Ślappadikāram* and *Jeevakāchintāmaṇi* we have the detailed description of how the flute is made. In the *Acciyar kuravai*, the shepherdesses perform what is known as Kuṟavaikūttu to entertain Kannagi. The song which they sing is an invocation to Krishna who plays on the ambarkuḷal, mullaikuḷal and kontraikuḷal. These flutes are so called because their bells or open ends have the shape of the waterlily, jasmine and the fruit of the konrai tree.

The beauty and enchantment of the music of Krishna's flute and the effect it had on nature—animals, birds and human beings—has been described in lavish terms, by great poets and devotees from very early times. As he drew out divine music from his flute, the Gopis flew to his side leaving their work and children, cows, deer and bulls, forgot to eat what was in their mouths, natural enemies like the peacock and the snake stood side

by side forgetting their enmity, rivers stopped flowing, trees put forth blossoms and birds listened in silence. Periaḷvar says,

“ மருண்டுமான் கணங்கள் மேய்கைமறந்து
மேய்ந்த புல்லும் கடவாய்வழி சேர
இரண்டுபாடும் துலுங்காப் படைபெயரா
எழுதுசித்திரங்கள் போல நின்றனவே”

that, at the sound of Krishna's flute, all nature was still like a painted picture. His pipe possessed such irresistible charms that whoever heard it had to forsake everything and listen in rapt attention. Apart from Lord Krishna, Ānāyanāyanār is the first person to have used the flute as a solo instrument.

Ānāyanāyanār was humble, shepherd, but his flute had the same charm and power. Before playing he tested the flute by various way to see whether the tones were pure. He placed his lips on the blowing hole or muttirai and played the ārosai and amarosai on the six holes to get the correct notes in all the pups. This process is known as Vakkaranai (வக்கரண) i.e. manipulating the holes for producing all the svarastanas with the six holes. As he played, he followed the rules such as niṣṣal (நிற்றல்) or pausing, muralutal (முரலுதல்) or soft humming sound, eḷal (எழல்) or rising in pitch, and suḷal (சுழல்) or whirling circular movement. After this testing the flute and its voice, he played the Kuṟiṅgi pup, changed to Mullaijun and Pālaijun and finally the Kodippālai in the mandra, madhya and tara registers, going up and down or staying in the middle as was suitable. All these details given in Sēkkiḷārs *Periapurāṇam* shows that flute play had developed into a highly technical art.

The yāḷ muḷavu and the voice, followed the tone of the flute. The words “ குழலனந்துறிப்ப ” indicates that the voice and the yāḷ were measured by the flute. “ நரம்பின் நிங்குரணிறுக் குங்கோல் ” shows that the yāḷ was tuned to the pitch of the flute. The same idea we see in *Bharata's Nāṭya Sāstra* and *Sārāṅgadēvas Saṅgitaratnākara* also, where the accompaniments for dance were tuned to the tone of the flute. This was because the flute had a constant tone colour and itself did not need tuning as its pitch was fixed at the time of its construction.

A large number and variety of percussion instruments were also used for various purposes. In general drums were called taṅṅumai (தண்ணுமை) and were of two kinds tolkaruvi or skin covered ones and kancakkaruvi or weighty cymbals of wood or metal which keep the basic rhythm. Aḍiyārkunaliār mentions about thirty drums under five heads. agamuḷavu or superior drums agappuramuḷavu, those of medium grade, puramuḷavu or inferior ones, purappura muḷavu, paṅṅamaimuḷavu, the war drums, nānmuḷavu which indicates the hours of the day and kalai muḷavu, played in the morning to wake up kings from sleep.

Among drums, the murasu is the most important. It is three kinds, Pōrmurasu (போர்முரசு) or war drum, tyāgamurasu (தியாக முரசு) or sacrificial drum and nyāya murasu (நியாயமுரசு) or judgement drum. It is said that the kings of Tamiḷnāḍu ruled with the aid of these three drums

“ முரசுமூன்றுடனும்
தமிழ்கெழுகூடற்றன் கோல் வேந்தே.”

The por murasu is the most important and respected among these as it led the armies to battle. The capture of this drum indicated the defeat of the army and hence it was guarded with great care. It was carefully tied with leather straps and tuned, When not in use it was covered, so that the changing weather may not affect its tone. It had a sound like a clap of thunder.

The fact that it was held in great-fear and respect may be assessed from the fact that special pūjas were performed and even blood offered to it everyday. *Puranānūru* tells us of how the great poet Mōsikkeeranār one day lay down on the murasukaṭṭil, ignorant that it was the seat of the murasu and escaped the wrath of the king only because he was a great poet. It is said that the king fanned him while he lay asleep, thus expressing his great veneration for poets also.

The muḷavu or Kuḍamuḷa is a rare instrument having five faces. The five faces are equated with the five faces of Siva, Isānam, Aghōram, Tatpurusham, Vāmadēvam and Sadyōjātam. This drum consists of a huge metal pot opening out on top into

five projecting faces which are covered with skin and is played with the hands. Apart from its use in temples, it was used for dance also. Now we call it the Pañcamukhavādyam, and we have just two or three instances of this drum in the South today, in the Madras museum, in Tiruvārūr temple and in Taraṅgambādi temple. Special drums were used in the five tracts of Tamil Nāḍu such as Vēdartolpaṛai in Pālai, Kuriñji paṛai for Kuriñji, Meenkōtpaṛai, for Neital, Kiṇai for Marudam and Erankōtpaṛaḥ for Mullai.

Drums with single face and double faces are common. *Piṅgaḷa Nigaṇḍu* and *Divākaram* mention a large number of drums. Some have Onomatophonic names (காரணப் பெயர்) such as Karaḍikai with sound like the growling of the bear, Sallari with jingling sound (சல் என்ற ஓசை) Tuḍi, which is small in the middle and broad at the ends, Edakkai which is played with the left hand, Mattalam which sounds "math" (மத்தென்ற ஓசை). Mattalam is so called because it is the basis for all instruments "இசையிடனாகிய கருவிகட்கெல்லாம் தளமாதலால் மத்தளம் என்று பெயராயிற்று".

The varieties of drums were innumerable. From the superior Mattalam and Kuḍamuḷa to those used in villages, from those used in times of war to those used in temples, for worship, and those used to accompany vocal, instrumental, and dance performances there were drums for all occasions. Performances could take place without the yāl or the flute but the drum was indispensable.

Composers

Life to many of us is a mystery and life after death is still more a mystery. The quest after the highest reality, which should be the end and aim of life, is very often neglected by many of us. But from this life of struggle, it is a relief to turn to the pages of our ancient literature and poetry, to find that our ancients were willing to sacrifice everything and take up the quest of truth. We cannot afford to neglect our ancient heritage, left behind by our great mystics and bhaktas who enriched our music and literature with their sacred songs and lyrics. Tamil literature contains unfathomable treasures, born of the great and deep spiritual experience of saintly men and women.

Among the composers of hymns there have been two sects, the Śaivite and the Vaiṣṇavite. There seems to have been much ill feeling and rivalry between the two sects as is seen even in the hymns they created. Among the great Śaivite saints were the Trimūrtis of Tamil music, Tirujñānasambandar, Tirunāvukkarasar or Appar and Sundaramūrti, and Māṅikkavāsagar. The hymns of the first three were called *Tēvāram* or *Dē-vāram* meaning songs in praise of God. All these hymns are great favourites and contain most striking and beautiful thoughts. It is nearly impossible to give an adequate idea of their beauty and meaning in the English language. Much of their charm depends upon assonance, play upon words, knitting of word with word, and on the intricacy of metre and rhyme. In some of the *Tēvārams* we see the technical beauty known as *Koṇḍukūtti*, where a word or syllable from the previous line is prefixed to the next and sung. Ex : “அடுத்தானை” of Appar, sung in *yadukulakāmbhoji rāga*. This results in what is known as *srōtvāhayati*.

The account of the discovery of the *Tēvāram* is known to all. Nambīāṇḍār Nambi who was instrumental in discovering them, divided them into seven sections, three of Tirujñānasambandar, three of Appar and one of Sundarar. These form part of the Pannirutirumuṟai of Vēdam of the Tamils.

The lives of these three great saints are known to all, and so it is needless to go into it. Tirujñānasambandar and Appar were contemporaries and lived in the seventh century. Sundarar belongs to the 9th century. Sambandar was the son of Siva-pādahirudayār and Bhagavatiyār of Sirkāḷi. He is the youngest composer in world music, as he started composing in his third year. The first hymn which he sang was “தோடுகடய செவியன்” after having had a *darśan* of Lord Siva and Pārvati and after being fed by her with the milk of wisdom. This is a song with perfect rhyme, rhythm and metre and brimful of beauty and devotion. Ādi Śaṅkara affectionately calls him the *Draviḷa Śisu*. Tirujñānasambandar lived for a short span of sixteen years, but the great miracles he performed, the sixteen thousand hymns he sang and the great truths he taught could not have been accomplished by an

ordinary human being in so short a time. Many of his hymns chant the praises of Chidambaram.

Tirunāvukkarasu was the son of Puḡalanār and Mātiniyār and was born in Tiruvāmūr. After the death of his parents he was brought up by his elder sister. Later in life he became a Jain and this caused much misery to his sister, but due to her prayers, he returned to the Śaivite faith, after enduring the tortures inflicted by the king. Emerging unharmed from it all, he sang the well known hymn

‘ மாசில் வீணையும் மாலை மதியழும் ’

He composed forty-nine thousand hymns in all, but only three hundred and twelve escaped the ravages of white ants. Many of them express his unworthiness and utter dependence on God. In one hymn he says

“ என்ன மாதவம் செய்தாய் நீ நெஞ்சமே
மீன்னு வார்சடை வேதவிழுப் பொருள்
செந்நெலார் வயற் செய்யும் செந்நெறி
மன்னு சோதி நம்பால் வந்து வைகவே ”

To him God was everything – father, mother, wife and family, as is seen in the hymn “ அப்பநீ, அம்மைநீ, ஐயனூநீ ”. Some of his hymns express his great joy and wonder in the knowledge of God’s goodness. They all tremble with feeling.

The third of the trio, Sundaramūrti was the son of Chaḡayanār and Esaijñāniyār. He lived for eighteen years. That he lived after Sambandar and Appar is seen in his padikam in which he says,

“ நல்லிசை ஞானசம்பந்தனும் நாவீனூக்
கரையனும் பாடிய நற்றமிழ் மாலை
சொல்லியவே சொல்லியேத்துகப்பாளை ”

(that he studied the padikams of his predecessors and sang them in the presence of God and obtained His grace). His first marriage was stopped by Śiva in the garb of an old man, who claimed him to be his slave according to a document executed by his grandfather. Losing his temper he called the old man “ பித்தா ” (Lunatic) and refused to go with him. Later realising that the old man was

none other than Śiva himself he sang his first padikarm beginning with the words “பித்தா பிறைதழி பெருமானே அருளாளா.” In the wake of this, came many *Tēvārams* praising God and expressing his gratitude for favours received. On the whole compared with the other two *Tēvārakāras*, his hymns are on a lower plane, though there are some which bear marks of real spiritual experience.

The *Tēvāram* hymns are often referred to as having so many “கட்டளை” This is worthy of note. *Kaṭṭalai* is a general term denoting the musical and prosodical structure of a puṇ. As far as the *Tēvāram* padikams are concerned, the mention of a certain number of *Kaṭṭalai* for each refers to the number of tunes to which each hymns may be sung. There is ample evidence in inscriptions of the Pallava and *Coḷa* period, of the endowments made by the kings for appointing *Ōduvārs* in various temples and for paying for their services with money and lands or paddy for their sustenance. In one of these inscriptions (S. 1. 1.-11-65) we are told that during the time of *Rāja Rāja Coḷa*, forty eight *Ōduvār* or *Pidarar*, and two to play *udukkai* and *maddalam* with them, were appointed to sing *Tirupadikams* in the big temple at *Tañjore*. There are many such inscriptions in various temples bearing witness to the patronage extended to *Ōduvār* by the kings.

The *Tēvāram* hymns belong to the class of songs entitled ‘*Vārappādal*’, which has excellence both from point of view of music as well as that of *Sahitya*. Each song is known as *padikam* and consists of ten verses. In some there are eleven verses. The names of the temples where they were sung are also incorporated in the songs. The last verse known as “*திருக்கடைக்காப்பு*” contains the *mudra* of the composer and also enumerates the benefits acquired by the singing the hymn. To quote an example on *Tiruvānmiyur* “*கரையுலாங்கடலிற்*” in puṇ *Indaḷam* the last verse is as follows :—

“மாதொர் கூறுடை நற்றவ னைத் திருவான்மியூர்
ஆதியெம்பெருமானருள் செய்ய வினாவுரை
ஓதி அன்றே காழியுள் ஞான சம்பந்தன் சொல்
பிதியானினை வார் நெடுவானுலாகாள்வாரே”

Thirujñānasambandar is the first composer to introduce his *mudra* in his Tēvārams.

Among the Tamil Śaivite saints, none make a stronger devotional appeal than Mānikkavāsagar. His life bears much resemblance to that of St. Paul, St. Augustine and St. Francis of Assisi. It is difficult to assign a definite date to him. Some say that he preceded the Tēvāram trio while others say that he lived after them. But we may reasonably assign him to the 7th century A.D. or before that. *Tiruvāsagam* is even now only recited. That is why we believe that he comes before the Tēvāram composers. If he had come later, his poems would have been set to pūps. The *Tiruvāsagam* is usually sung to the Mohana-rāga, a very old rāga, whose five svaras are equated with the five syllables of the mantra *Namaśivaya*, and has the first five svaras derived by the kural-iḷi-bhāva. The *Tēvāram* composers did not use this rāga, perhaps due to the great respect they had for Mānikkavāsagar. The fact that Mānikkavāsagar refers to the yāl, also shows that he belonged to earlier times, as the yāl, became obsolete by the 9th or 10th century.

Mānikkavāsagar was born in Tiruvādavūr, during the reign of Arimartana Pāṇḍya. He grew up to be a wise and promising young man and was made minister to the king. The incident of how he spent the money intended for buying horses on renovating a Śiva temple and how with the help of the Lord, he converted jackals into horses and brought them to the king is well known in “நரி பரியாகிய படலம்”. Later on, not relishing the life in the court, he went to Chidambaram and spent his life there, pouring out his soul through his rapturous melodies which flowed from his heart.

Among devotional works, his *Tiruvāsagam* is an autobiographical tale of his spiritual life and experience which ultimately enabled him to attain ineffable and eternal joy. His *Tirukōvai* to the superficial reader may seem to be an ordinary text of love poetry. But this only a thin veil covering beautiful religious truths. In this work we find the madhura bhāva predominating.

Madhura bhāva is that type of bhakti or devotion, where the devotion of a human being to God is treated of as that of a woman to the nāyaka of her choice. The joys and sorrows and sufferings a devotee experiences in his search for God is represented as that experienced by a woman longing for her nāyaka (Lord). This concept is seen developed in Tamil music, much earlier than in the music of the rest of India, where we see compositions of this type only in Jayadēvas Ashtapadis in the 12th century and after that. The hymns of Mānikkavāsagar became the eighth Tirumurai.

Through the long centuries which followed, the devotional appeal of Mānikkavāsagar has not diminished in the least. There is a common Tamil saying

“ திருவாசகத்திற்கு உருகாதார் ஒரு வாசகத்திற்கும் உருகார் ”

i.e. one who is not moved by the *Tiruvāsagam* will not be influenced by any words. Apart from these two works, he has also composed songs which maidens could sing during work and play, such as those for grinding and, for games like ball play and shoulder play. The priceless legacy of songs which he has left behind, has contributed largely towards the enrichment of Tamil sacred music.

Contemporary with the Śaivite saints are the Vaishnavite Samayāchāryas or Ālvār, the authors of the voluminous collection of songs known as *Nālāyiraprabandam* or *Divyaprabandam*. These stand on the same footing as the *Tēvāram* of the Śaiva Samayāchāryas. The Ālvār provided the soil from which Ramānuja's teachings sprang up later on. It is not Ramānuja, but the Ālvār, who should be called the 'morning star' of the Bhakti movement. Bhakti to the Ālvār, was the only path to salvation and all the twelve emphasised bhakti as the mutual relationship of love and trust between the human soul and the over-soul. Vishnu is depicted as the Supreme being, loving, pitying and protecting His devotees. In the hymns of the Ālvār there are all types of religious thought and it is impossible to appreciate them without remembering the conflict in the midst of which they were produced.

The first three among the twelve are Peyālvār, Bhūtattālvār and Poikālvār. These three met one rainy night under a tree and found God Himself standing with them. They all burst forth into ecstatic song, the result being the first, second and third *Tiruvandādi* of the whole *Prabandam*, each having hundred stanzas. The next is Tirumāḷisai Ālvār. He composed two poems, *Nānmugaṅ-Tiruvandādi* and *Tiruchandaviruttam* containing 96 and 120 stanzas respectively. He praises Vishnu to the skies, but heaps his anger on Śiva. Nammālvār whose songs are the most voluminous, is the greatest of the ālvārs. Till his sixteenth year he spent his time in yogic meditation and later became a great teacher. His sacred utterances are four in number, *Tiruviruttam*, *Tiruvāsiriyam*, *Tirūvandādi* and *Tiruvāimoḷi*. Madurakavi, his disciple is the sixth Ālvār. Nothing much is known about him. He has left ten stanzas in praise of his guru and is an example of a devoted sishya.

Kulasēkara Ālvār, a king of Travaṅcore is the seventh among the twelve. He was a great ruler as well as a religious and moral teacher. He is believed to have lived in the 9th century and composed *Perumāḷ Tirumoḷi* in Tamil and *Mahēndramāla* in Sanskrit. The next among the Vaishnavite singers was Perīālvār, also known as Vishnuchittar. He belonged to Srivilliputtūr and lived some time about the middle of the 9th century. He was given the title 'Pāttarpirān', for having expounded Vēdānta to the king of Madurai. His *Tiruppallāṅḍu* is an ecstatic song praising and expressing his devotion to Vishnu. Many of his songs give exquisite descriptions of Krishna as a babe, child and boy. They make the readers feel that Perīālvār had actually been with the Lord from his babyhood.

Closely bound with him is the life of Āṇḍāḷ, who is the ninth Ālvār. Perīālvār found her as a babe under some basil plants, brought her home as God's gift and nurtured and trained her with great love and care. While yet a girl she resolved to marry Sri Krishna and none other. Every day she wore the garland woven by her father for pūja. One day he found a hair in it and on enquiry found that Āṇḍāḷ had beautified herself with them. He

threw the garland away as polluted by her. He made a fresh garland and decorated the Lord with it, on going to the temple the next day, he found the flowers in a corner of the temple. The same night Lord Vishnu appeared to him and told him that only the flowers worn by Āṇḍāḷ would be acceptable to Him. The greatness of his daughter was revealed to him through this incident. In course of time, her desire to be wedded to Lord Krishna was fulfilled at Sriraṅgam. Āṇḍāḷ has composed two works, the '*Tiruppāvai*' in thirty stanzas and the '*Nāṇṇiar Tirumōḷi*' in 143 verses. In the first, she celebrates what is known as 'Pāvainonbu' and in the second which means "sacred speech of the queen", she regards Vishnu as the lover and herself as the object of His love. Here again is a work based on Nāyaka-Nāyaki theme, which became the basis for the Ashtapadis, Taraṅgams, Sriṅgāra Saṅkīrtans and Padams of later tunes. It is also a matter for pride that Āṇḍāḷ is the first woman composer in the history of World Music.

The tenth Āḷṅṅar Toṇḍaraḍippoḍi belonged to Mannārguḍi. His original name was Vipranārayana but in great humility he called himself 'Toṇḍaraḍippoḍi' or the dust under the feet of God's servants. The height of his religious experiences is seen in two poems "*Tirumāla*" or 'sacred garland', and *Tiruppaḷḷiḷucci* (திருப்பள்ளியெழுச்சி) He lived in the middle of the 9th century.

The next Āḷṅṅar is Tiruppāṇāḷṅṅar. He was found in a paddy field and brought up by a childless Pāṇṅar. Being low born he did not dare to enter the temple but satisfied himself by staying near and singing the praises of God. By the direct grace of God he entered the temple and it was such an ecstatic experience that it drew from him the song "Amalan-adi-piran". The last of the Āḷṅṅars is Tirumaṅgai Āḷṅṅar also known as "கள்ளராழ்வார்". He was born in Tiruvāḷṅṅar near Sirkāḷi. His father was a general in the Coḷa army and he himself became the head of a small province. He used all his earnings for succouring those in want and when his funds were exhausted, he resorted to unscrupulous means to satisfy his desire to help or feed the poor. This earned for him the name "கள்ளராழ்வார்". He composed

six poems of a highly philosophical nature, compared to the six Vēdāṅgas.

The songs of the Ālvār command a wide field, from the simple plaintive songs of Toṇḍaraṣippoḷi to the thought laden odes of Nammālvār, from the poems of Kulasekhara Ālvār to the musical love lyrics of Āṇḍāḷ. The *Nāḷayira Divya Prabandam* contains songs for all occasions—worship, marriage, death and even cremation. They need little explanation to be intelligible. They are all, the simple appeal to God for deliverance, or the loving description of Krishna as child and man or of the other *avatāras* (incarnations) of Viṣṇu. In all of them, we see the yearning after divine fellowship. Some of them express the love of mother to child—*Vātsalya bhāva*, which perhaps is the purest form of devotion that man can know.

After the Śaivite Nāyanmār and the Vaishnavite Ālvār, there was a lull in the output of Tamil compositions as no composer appeared, to take up the thread from where they left it. The next few centuries can be said to be the dark period in the history of Tamil music. Then came Paṭṭinattār “the darling of the city”, Villiputtūrār, Tāyumanavar and Aruṇagirinādar. But these are not taken for study here as the subject of the Seminar is Ancient Tamil music only.

There are those who believe that Tamil music is an offshoot of the music practised outside the Tamil country. Others think that Tamil music is the mother of the other system. This does not seem to be correct to me, as I feel that both systems developed and grew side by side, with the same principles but different terminology. As we have seen earlier, there are equivalent terms in Tamil music for all the Sanskrit technical terms. But it can be said that there was contact between them and naturally they borrowed ideas and terms suitable to their system. The fact that Hēmanāthān, the Northern musician came down to the South to challenge the musicians there to compete with his singing shows that the South was not completely cut off from the North. (கீதகு விற்ற படலம்—திருவினையாடல் புராணம்). We find Sanskrit names of rāgas in Tamil music such as Pañcamam, Gāndhāram,

Gāndhārapañcamam. The term 'rāga' also is found, though puṇ stands for rāga in Tamiḷ music. Nāṭa is mentioned as Nāṭṭa-rāgam and not as Nāṭṭapuṇ or merely as Nāṭṭa. So also we have Takkarāgam and Paḷantakkarāgam. Sarāḡadēva mentions the types of rāgas called Tēvāravardhani, showing that the Tēvāras were well known during his time and that the songs sung in Tamiḷnāḡu were Tēvāras. So the people practising the two systems were not averse to borrowing from each other, what was useful and suitable for the enrichment of their music.

Though Tamiḷ music had developed far beyond the elementary stage, it could not grow into an art, with emphasis on the musical aspect, as its importance lay in its religious character. The Tēvāram hymns were sung by the authors during moments of deep spiritual experience and hence the music or dhātu was very simple and easily singable conforming to the principles of puṇ and tāḷa. The hymns come from the composers as a continuous dhātumātu stream. They did not have a set musical form, as in the kirtans and kritis of later times. They did not have aṅgas like pallavi, anupallavi and charaṇa, or at least pallavi and charaṇas. The Tēvāram hymns and other songs of the time consisted of many verses set to the same dhātu and as such they could not be sung in concerts, nor do they lend themselves to the singing a niraval and Kalpana svaras. A concert of purely Tēvāram hymns or other Tamiḷ compositions of early times is not feasible.

The same was the fact of Vēdic music, which also stayed within the temples as, here also music was of very little importance and was merely a vehicle to intone the verses. It belonged to the sphere of pure sacred music and as such could be used only for worship and for singing the praises of God. When Ḍeṣi music emerged, with all its entrancing features, Vēdic music was forced to the back ground and found sanctuary in temples and other religious institutions. The Tēvāram and other forms of Tamiḷ music suffered the same fate and took refuge in temples and with the Ōḡuvārs, who preserved their purity and sanctity.

By the ninth or tenth centuries Tamil music with its *Tēvāram* and other compositions, which gave more prominence to the words had to recede to the back ground and give place the more artistic forms which were being developed. Of course true to the saying “ஏழிசையாய் இசைப்பயனாய்” the *Tēvāram* hymns had music set to the seven notes, but they did not have the lyrical sweetness and the elaborate music of later times. The many verses were sung to the same dhatu, but this did not tend to make them tedious as the emphasis was on the meaning conveyed by the words. This had to be so because, they were primarily meant to speak to the common man and to help him to worship God, without being disturbed or distracted by elaborate music with saṅgatis and difficult sañcharas and gamakas which could not be sung by the common man.

In the *Tēvāram* hymns we come across fully fledged bhāṣaṅga rāgas like Kausikam (Bhairavi), Takkēsi (Kambhoji), Mēgarāga-kuriñji (Nīlambari) and Vyājakuriñji (Saurāṣtram). Though Mataṅga mentions Suddha, Cāyalaga and Sañkirna rāgas, which later led to the development of the Rāgāṅga, Upāṅga and Bhāṣaṅga rāgas, yet, it is in the music of the *Tēvāram* hymns that we find bhāṣaṅga rāgas practically used. Sāraṅgadeva who lived in the 13th century, in the North and wrote the *Saṅgitaratnākara*, a Sanskrit work dealing with the music of his time, refers to some of these puṅs in the songs of the *Tēvārakāras* as *Tēvāravardhani*. This name he gives to bhāṣaṅga rāgas. Hence the origin of bhāṣaṅga rāgas may be traced back to the heyday of Tamil music. There are *Tēvārams* in nishadāntya and pañcāmāntya rāgas like Nādanāmakriya and Navarōz also.

The development of lyrical music, with emphasis on the musical aspect, can be traced from the advent of the ashtapadis set to rāgas and tālas. Even though they consisted of eight verses alone, sung to the same dhātu, yet a part of the first verse was sung usually as a sort of pallavi or refrain, thus returning after each verse to this. The ashtapadis are dvīdhātu prabandhas and the singing of this refrain after every verse,

made the composition more attractive and complete. The full development of lyrical music can be first seen in the Sankīrtans of the Tallapākam composers, in which we find fully fledged kīrtanas with the divisions pallavi, anupallavi and charaṇa, thus giving them variety and perfection of form. Tyāgarāja's compositions also are devotional, prayers to and praises of God, but his approach was through nāda, music, because he was a nāda-pāsaka, Hence he visualised God as music and expressed his thoughts and feelings through music. So when the compositions of the Trinity and their contemporaries and successors flooded the country, and manōdharma saṅgita was developed in all its varied aspects, Vēdic music and Tamiḷ compositions like the *Tēvāram* found refuge in temples, where they are even now preserved in their original form by the priests and the Ōduvārs.

The disuse of the Yāḷ also may be attributed to the coming of more sophisticated instruments like the Viṇa with frets and the phenomenal development of rāgas with their exquisite and varied gamakas, which could not be produced on an instrument without frets. The incident relating to Tirujñānasambandar and Tiruneelakaṇṭha Yāḷpāṇar illustrates this fact very well. Tiruneelakaṇṭha Yāḷpāṇar had a great devotion to the child prodigy and used to accompany him on the yāḷ, which he was an expert in playing. One day when a padikam 'மடத்தர் மடப்பிடி' in Mēgarāgakuriñji our modern Nilāmbari was sung, he found that he could not reproduce the song exactly as it was sung, due to the peculiar manner in which the note 'ma' was sung at different times, as the strings were merely plucked and could not be manipulated in anyway to produce these gamakas. In his disappointment, he was on the point of breaking the yāḷ, when Tirujñānasambandar stopped him saying that it was not possible for the yāḷ to produce all the music (puṇs) which were created by the Almighty, thus convincing the Yāḷpāṇar that the instruments had its own limitations. This illustrated the fact that neither the yāḷ nor the harp, Viṇa which was a similar Vādyā, could produce music with all its gamakas and subtle nuances. Naturally these two instruments fell out of use giving place to the fretted Viṇa capable of producing every kind of music.

Thiru V. Balakrishnan, (Lecturer in Musicology, Tamil Nāḍu Government College of Karnatic Music, Madras).

There is evidence in ancient musical classics of India that there were two main divisions viz. *Mārgam* and *Dēsiyam*. *Mārgam* generally refers to *shadja grāmam*, the *svara* of which is found in *Sāma Vēda Gānam* (modern *Karaharapīrya*). *Dēsiyam* refers to popular tunes, developed and cherished by the people and sung by musicians and scholars. Tamil music was the best in *Dēsiyam* which displayed and displays good artistry and attribute. This has been very well explained in various ways in *Silappadikāram*. The most exemplifying feature of this is that even to this day the Tamil Puṇs as in the music of *Tēvāram* continues the same without change.

This musical methods of Tamil Nāḍu which embraced both Dance and Puṇs though later called by the Sanskritic term Rāgas and underwent many changes, still continues to be sung to the great liking of the Tamils.

As there were contradictions in explaining the various *lakṣhanas* of the Rāgas in Sanskritic music literature, the 72 *Mēlakartha* classification of Veṅkatamakhi has been brought into practice. But there are no differences of opinion so far as the Puṇs of Tamil music is concerned. The music of the South is called Karnātic music as after the suppression of Vijayanagar by the Moghuls, Purandaradāsa who sang various songs in Kannaḍa at various places belonging to Karnātika. But there is no evidence to prove that the title of *Pitha Maha* of Karnātic Music was conferred on him by the then experts or patrons of the music. This title should have been conferred on him by later day Vidvāns on account of his being a great man.

Some people contend that in the music of the *Yāḷ Gamakas* and subtle *Srutis* cannot be played and, that only after the advent of the *Veena Gamakas* they came into use. This is incorrect because with a wooden chip in the hand, doing *Grahabhēdas* and playing new Rāgas proper *svaras* could be evoked beautifully. *Yāḷ* disappeared from use as the voice has to be cultured to each of

its strings and when great men like Thirujñānasambanda sang, the player of the accompanying Yāl has to adjust the *sruti* of its various strings as, for each Puṇ there are variations in *Svaras-thānas* and intricacies in *Sruti*. In those days Yāls existed only for certain prescribed Puṇs and great men should have sung in myriads of Puṇs and for such a big number, it is impossible to manufacture Yāls. Hence with the incident relating to his singing *Yāl Mūrippuṇ* (when his Puṇ could not be played on the Yāl) we need not rush to the conclusion that Yāl is not capable of playing intricacies in music; because, our forefathers were fully acquainted with such intricacies (alagus).

After the fall of Vijayanagar kingdom, our musicians were taken to Persia (where apparently musical systems do not appear to have existed) and there made to evolve the Hindustāni musical system by the Moghul dynasty. So it is not an exaggeration to say that Hindustani music is not a system imported from Persia but evolved out of the genius of Dravidian culture.

So, we should now wholeheartedly research into the old Dravidian Puṇs. We need not discord the Rāgas now in use but they can be improved by the beautiful Puṇs. We should renew the music of the Yāl.

Rāja Sairīndra Mohan Tāgore in his 'Universal history of music' observes: "The mere recurrence of sounds at regular intervals does not represent all the properties of Musical sound. Accent is necessary to add beauty and grace to the time such as rhythm and ear will approve. The ear takes no pleasure in listening to a series of monotonous sounds. It tires and grows weary with the uniformity. The different degrees of loud and soft constitute one of its greatest pleasures. An accented sound invariably deprives the following one of its energy for after the weight of the voice has been thrown upon the accented note, the next one is uttered under some degree of exhaustion and is rendered weaker in consequence."

It does not appear that there is any reference to the greatness of vocal and instrumental music of Āryan culture. Saraśvathi liked Veena, Krishna Paramātma, the flute, Nandikēśvara, the Mri-

daṅgam, Natarāja, the Dance and, Śiva, the Sāma Veda. But who liked vocal music? The wonderful creations of vocal music should have been made only by Tamiḷian music which grew to a surprising extent from the time of Sambandar.

I do not say that singing should be only in Tamiḷ. But in singing the meaning should be joined to the beauty of the voice. Kannaḍa, Malayālam, Telugu are all Dravidian languages. But in singing, the meaning of the song should come out clearly to be understood by all. *Rāga Bhāva* should be united with *Sāhitya Bhāva*. But mostly we do not pay attention to *Sāhitya Bhāva*. To rectify this bad situation in Tamiḷ Nāḍu, only Tamiḷ songs should be sung and then, and only then, when we turn attention to songs in other languages shall we realise that we will get pitiable feeling that without understanding the meaning, we are singing. When once we get this feeling the reformation will be automatic. "For one without voice the finger (serves) (குரலில்லாதவனுக்கு விரல்). The first word pronounced vocally is *Anma* (mother) and hence what else can please God than this first word affectionately pronounced by a child to its mother. So there is no other way to make our country's life divine, than following this way of vocal development in music. Vocal Music should be learnt perfectly so as to sing to audiences with sweetness, with pure *srutis* to enable the audience to appreciate it fully. All mental concepts and creations inconsistent with the meaning of the song should be eschewed. *Silappadikāram* gives ample evidence to illustrate these truths (1) *Araṅgētram* (Debut) was made only after the abilities were tested by Vocal singing, then with *Yāḷ*, then with drum, then with flute and only after all these tests a girl was allowed to make debut. (2) Songs inconsistent with the Paṇ and culture, were not allowed to be sung. (3) The drummer should be fully acquainted with the art of Dance and should be able to bring out the niceties of the performance. (4) The flutist should be an expert in the art சித்திரப் புணர்ப்பு and வஞ்சலைப் புணர்ப்பு in playing on it.

Leader's Concluding remarks. One word more regarding the *Yāḷ*. The incident related above is not the result of the fertile imagination of anyone as mentioned by Mr. Balakrishnan, Lecturer

in Tamilnēḍu Araśu Isai Kallōri as we find it related in *Periapurāṇam* of Sekkiḷār where Tirujñānasambandar says¹

“ஐயர் நீர் யாழ் இதனை முரிக்குமதென் ஆளுடையாளுடனே கூடச் செய் சடையாரளித்த திருவருளின் பெருமை யெல்லாந் தெரிய நம்பால் எய்திய இக்கருவியினில் அளவுபடுமோ நந்தம் இயல்புக்கேற்ப, வையகத்தோர் அறிவுற இக்கருவி அளவையின் இயற்றல் வழக்கே”

“Do not break the yāḷ as it is impossible to express this immense gift of Śiva through this instrument in our possession. Hence let us, as far as it lies in our power, play it, in order that the world may benefit through it.” What the saint meant was that the beauty of the puṇs could not be exactly played and the shakes produced on it, as it had only plucking technique.

It was also said that a small stick கட்டை or கோணு was used to touch the strings and produce the gamakas. It as an accepted fact that as soon as a vibrating string is touched, the vibrations would stop. True, the pitch of the note may be slightly altered by this method. The strings of the yāḷ were made of gut or strands of particular kind of grass twisted together. When they were tied on the yāḷ and plucked, the vibration would continue for a long time and would not die out before the next string is plucked and thus a confused medley of sound would result. It was to stop the vibrations of the string after the proper duration that the stick or koṇa was used. This gave clarity to the music.

*Dr. Alamelu Govindarajan who presided, stated:—*The paper on “Ancient Tamil Music” read by Dr. Light Isaac at the Seminar is very interesting and informative. The innumerable references to music—their forms, scales and instruments—in ancient Tamil literature, throw a lot of light on the practice and progress of music during the various periods in Indian history. *Silappadikāram* as we all know, gives us an encyclopaedic knowledge of the music that was in vogue as early as 2nd century A.D. and is recognised as an authentic work of scholarship and knowledge.

1. Sekkiḷār—*Tirujñānasambanda Swami Purāṇam*, V. 451.

The tunes and the melodic structure of the *Tēvāram* hymns belonging to a later period provide more clues for further study on the subject.

India is a vast country and our pride is in a certain continuity of her civilization from the earliest times to the present day. Indian culture owes a lot not only the Vēdas, the epics—*Rāmāyana* and *Mahābhārata* written in Sanskrit—but to many other early works in other vernaculars as well. It will not be a deviation to say that the Tamiḷ language was the oldest of them all. The information we gather from the *Tolkāppiyam*, the earliest work on Tamiḷ grammar is authoritative. Tamiḷ classics of the Saṅgam periods like the *Paripāḍal*, are a rich mine for research and will help us to compile facts regarding the origin and growth of ancient Indian music.

Archeologists have discovered that some relics of Moheñjodāro and Hārappa—of the Indus valley civilisation—are similar to a few, found from excavations of Arikamēḍu in South India. From all these we note in general, that the indebtedness of Indian culture is as much to Dravidian origins as to the Vēdic. Roman coins found in plenty in South India reveal a trade relationship with Western countries, even earlier than the first century A.D. Hence we cannot rule out the possibility of the import of some musical instruments into India from outside. That the “Zaggal”, the Greek harp, is the same as the variety of Yaḷ (Yazh) described in *Silappadikāram* is a general surmise. We have listened to the descriptions of a large variety of “Yaḷ” in this seminar and it will be interesting and useful to study and examine the necessary material to find out if the two words (Zaggal and Yaḷ) refer to the same instrument.

Art can never be stationary and Indian art was no exception. It sprawled all over and spread itself into every nook and corner of the country and while doing so, also managed a region-wise development of its own. That was, perhaps, necessary to stabilise and consolidate itself in every region. Music, the finest of arts, also underwent this experience. Very soon each region

could boast of a music of its own mould. But it could never break away from the common heritage. Indian music with spiritual backing is evolved round religious practices and notions, no doubt, but remember, its secular side was never neglected even from its beginnings. It is interesting to follow the Indian musical scale growing out of simple Vedic chanting of three and four notes. The Grāmagāna and the Āranyagāna have existed side by side. It is equally fascinating to study the many punns and thirams of Tamil *isai* stepping out of scales of limited range.

The regional development in Indian music introduced new varieties and increased its stock. Though born of the same notes, and with an emotional impact in common, variant presentations of the art came into existence, depending on the conditions of the place and the tastes of the people concerned. In fact some places became important seats of particular forms of music as art music, folk, music, dance music etc.

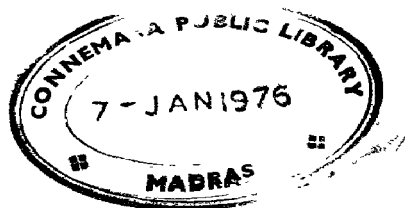
Again, a mutual attraction and a certain reciprocal attitude towards one another led to a happy commingling of the art, no matter whether the fusion was from within the country or from outside. Indian music though regarded as somewhat complacent, was never hesitant to draw from other sources to enrich or enhance its own quality but at no time has its original individuality been veiled. A rich variety in its stock is the glory and splendour of Indian music and its contribution to the music of the world like the Indian rāga, is praiseworthy.

Folk music has a vital role in the history of Indian music. A study of the different varieties of it may be recommended to interested scholars for further research. After all, it is from the music of the common man that the art has taken strides towards its classical growth. Even from the early periods in our history, the temples have been not only places of worship, but have served as educational institutions and as recreation ground as well. Here the people gathered, prayed, sang and danced, listened to musical discourses that preached morals, enacted stories that emphasised the power and victory of the good over

the evil. The Tamil language and the South Indian temples are rich store-houses for the study of folk music and to study it in all its pristine glory, will be only adding to the annals of Indian music.

In Indian music, we notice parallel developments in its progress in various parts of the land registered at the same period in history. This simultaneous occurrence of a musical feature raises a doubt, if one region was influenced by the other. We have to admit that there is no super-imposition of the one on the other, but the question, which is the original and which the copy, often poses a point for argument. It would do well for scholars to delve more deeply into the matter, examine the similarities and differences presented during the different periods in the history of music, to help towards further discussion on the subject. It demands intensive study and research.

Indian music is not only the finest of fine arts but a comprehensive one too. It can qualify to be the window of Indian culture in which capacity all the Indian arts mingle and merge to present a wholesome picture.





BOOK REVIEW

Folk songs of South Gujarat by Madhubai Patel—with a foreward by R. C. Mehta, Indian Musicological Society, Bombay and Baroda, 1974, 121 pp.—Price Rs. 25.

In the cultural heritage of a country, folk music, dance and drama have an important place. The characteristic features of the folk songs are simple rhythm and easy melody. The language may not be of high order and the compass of the songs is always limited.

This book is a distinct addition to the studies of Indian folklore. It is an eminently scholarly work and the author has not only given theoretical information about the folk songs of Gujarat but also given notation for twenty four songs which will be very helpful for the practical singing of these beautiful folk songs.

Shri Madhubai Patel, the author of this book is well-known throughout India for his enormous collection of folk songs. His present work is a very valuable contribution to the music world. Prof. R. C. Mehta has written a foreward introducing Shri Madhubai Patel and giving a short summary of the contents of the book.

This work consists of Eighteen chapters apart from foreward, Preface and, three Appendices, viz. (1) Addenda incomplete Texts of songs in staff notation, (2) Index of English text of folk songs and (3) word-list.

In the Introductory chapter, the author gives sociological and historical information about Gujarat, describes the special features of its folk songs and dance, the author's village, houses, castes, occupation of the people, festivals and the varieties of folk songs sung by them.

Then follow the other chapters in which are given the English translation of the folk songs on the themes "craving for a

child", cradle songs, nursery rhymes, 'Khayana' the folk song sung by unmarried girls, love songs, marriage songs, songs of farewell, 'Fatana' or songs of humour, work songs, songs of separation, 'Abavani' or songs of the sea, songs that are used in the folk dances of 'Garba', 'Garbi' [the latter being exclusively performed by men as opposed to that of 'Garba' which is performed by women folk alone] as also the songs sung at the popular and the famous folk dance of Gujarat—the Rasa. The author also has written about the different varieties of 'Rasa' dance and of the 'Gheraiya' which is popular only in South Gujarat, and the 'Goph' which is the May-Pole of Gujarat. Songs of rain, shepherd's songs and the songs used at Tribal dances such as Hali, Dangi, Dholak, Dobrur, Dev—Dobri, Chh-dhari and Chheliya of Gujarat also finds a place. The book ends with songs of death.

The texts of twenty-four songs of different varieties—cradle song, Khayana, marriage song, brother's love, song of farewell, work song, song of separation, song of the sea, folk dance songs—Garba, Rasa, song of rain, shepherd's song, Tribal dance—songs, song of Death and song of worship are given with Western staff notation.

The author in his preface has stated that "Shri Natvarlal was helpful in writing down in the Indian Solfa system Shri Vijay Ghosh putting these into staff notation." But in present work, the Indian Solfa notation is not found. As most of the Indian singers are not able to follow Western staff notation, it will be of great help for the Indian folklorists and lovers of folk music, if the songs are also given in Indian solfa notation along with the Western staff notation in a future edition. But so far, nobody has published the folk songs with notations, in India. No doubt this book forms an important contribution to the study of folk songs and folk literature. Folklorists and lovers of folk songs will be undoubtedly indebted to Shri Madhubai Patel for this immortal contribution of his in the field of Folk Songs.

S. A. DURGA, M.A., M.Litt.

