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CHAPTER-IV: ARYO-DRAVIDA CULTURE AS REFLECTED  
IN SOUTH INDIAN LITERATURE

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ARYO-DRAVIDA CULTURE AS REFLECTED IN SOUTH  
INDIAN LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION: LITERATURE

Sanskrit, Tamil, Kannada, Telugu and Malayalam constitute the major languages of the people of South India from ancient times. Literature produced in these languages upto tenth century has been considered the main source of information for our purpose though the Sanskrit literature useful for the purpose has been used whenever necessary.

In the Sanskrit literature the Sutras, Bhagavata works, commentaries on the epics, belles-letters and works on rhetoric, philosophical literature like Nyaya, Purvamimansa, Advaita, Vishishtadvaita, Vaishnava and Saiva works on Dharmashastra, lexicography and grammar provide some information. Among Tamil works, which are equally valuable for our study mention may be made of the Sangam literature, didactic works, devotional literature, Saiva, Vaishnava and Jainas works of grammar, lexicography, Puranas in Tamil, Vaishnava rahasyas, secular literature, anthology, commentaries, lexicography of religious lore and ballad. As far as Kannada, Telugu and Malayalam literatures are concerned, those before Pampa, Nannayya and his contemporaries, Unnunili Sandesam, folk songs, Ramacaritam, Rama Kathapattu and Champu literature respectively help us in our study.

## LANGUAGES

Robert Caldwell in his "A Comparative Grammar of Dravidian or South Indian Family of Languages," observes that the Dravidian languages developed independent of Sanskrit.<sup>1</sup> It was held for a long time that though the Dravidian languages, differ in many respects from the North Indian languages, they were derived from Sanskrit. But Caldwell contends that there are many non-Sanskrit words and forms in Dravidian languages, that the non-Sanskrit portion is much in excess of the Sanskrit, that the pronouns and numerals and synthetic arrangement of words are radically different from Sanskrit and that the protagonists of Sanskrit origin of Dravidian languages believed that the Dravidian terms were Sanskrit derivatives. Caldwell further argues that it is wrong to think that such of the Dravidian words were never regarded by native scholars as of Dravidian origin and arranged in classes on the basis of how much they are corrupted. He finally concludes that a large number of words in the Southern vocabularies are placed by native grammarians in a different class from the Sanskrit derivatives and honoured with labels like 'national words' and 'pure words'. As such there is no difficulty in distinguishing Sanskrit derivatives from the ancient Dravidian roots. Pointing out a few exceptions to this, Caldwell gives the examples of nir, water and min, fish which form part of both the languages, though personally he believes that these words also are of Dravidian origin. Hence, though a few European linguists

like Colebrooke, Carey and Wilkins who agreed with early Sanskritists that there is no essential difference between 'Draviras' as the 'Gauras', now the theory of Sanskrit derivation of languages is given up.<sup>2</sup>

Not only Caldwell believes that the Dravidian languages were different from Sanskrit in their origin, but also upholds out of them, the high antiquity of the literary cultivation of Tamil.<sup>3</sup> His observation has been with regard to classical Tamil in particular. To cite him, "Classical Tamil which not only contains all the refinements which the Tamil has received, but also exhibits to some extent the primitive condition of language, differs more from the colloquial Tamil than the classical dialect of any other Dravidian idiom differs from its ordinary dialect". Thus, Tamil is regarded as a distinct language. Classical Tamil in particular contains less Sanskrit and not very easily intelligible. Colloquial Tamil is the product of classical Tamil, though it developed slowly. Sanskrit derivatives in Tamil were introduced by the Jainas after the ninth century or earlier as it was the case of Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam. These derivatives are classified into two tatsama (Sanskrit word) and tadbhava (derivatives), the latter is corrupt form with local influence. Another source of derivatives of an earlier date in philosophical words being the influence from Prakrit; e.g., Sanskrit 'Sri' into tiru and a recent alteration being 'Siri' and 'Sri', Tamil months like Purva ashadam into Puradam ashadam into adam and

later adi and other names of months as well. Further, the higher antiquity of the literary cultivation of Tamil is also indicated in inscriptions. While inscriptions in Karnataka and Andhra were written in Sanskrit, they were written in Tamil in the Tamil country. However, the latest inscriptions are found in Granth character. But the earlier compositions are definitely not in Sanskrit but in Classical Tamil.<sup>4</sup> It is also to be noted here that inscriptions in Cochin and Travancore show identity of ancient Malayalam with ancient Tamil. The royal families which ruled in Kerala gave their Sasanas (Royal orders) to Jews and Syrian Christians in Tamil language. Hence Caldwell concludes that the various particulars pointed above clearly indicate that the Tamil language was of all the Dravidian idioms, the earliest cultivated.

Bishop Caldwell was one of the earliest European scholars along with Sir H.H. Risley, E. Thurston and others who took the lead in pointing out the importance of Dravidian literature. Subsequently several scholars in India took up studies in Tamil literature. Among them V. Kanakasabhai was also one.

But today the views of European scholars have been much modified by patient research by Indian scholars. The opinions of V. Kanakasabhai are not tenable now. As against the purely patriotic view taken by Caldwell and Kanakasabhai, we are much indebted to K.A. Neelakant Sastri for the dispassionate and

considered opinions on Tamil literature, particularly from the point of a study on mutual impact and interaction of Tamil and Sanskrit influence in the formation of a composite culture in South India. From this view, his works like Colas, the Pandyan Kingdom, A History of South India and the Culture and History of the Tamils are valuable. Similar attempt is also made by N. Subrahmanian in Sangam polity.

#### PRIMITIVE DRAVIDIANS AND ARYANS

It is generally held that the Dravidians had already settled in India before the coming of the Aryans. They were one of the earliest cultured races of India. Unhappily the origin of the Dravidians is still a puzzle almost defying any solution. Several scholars strongly affirm that they were the descendants of the primitive inhabitants of India, who in course of time had descended up the ladder of civilization. On the contrary, others are of the opinion that they were foreign immigrants into this country from the Tibetan Plateau or from the 'Turanian home land of Central Asia'. Western Asia is, however, generally held to have been their original abode and the similarity of the Dravidian and Sumerian ethnic types undoubtedly lends some support to this view. The supporters of this view point out to Brahui, the island of Dravidian speech in Baluchistan. It is believed that it represents the tongue of those who lingered on behind, while the main body advanced towards Hindustan through the mountain parts. However a different contention is also made

by some historians that there could have been a Dravidian overflow from India into Baluchistan. Many Western scholars believe that the Dravidians belonged to the Mediterranean race.<sup>5</sup> Whoever the Dravidians happen to be, it is certain that they were an important element of population both in Northern and Southern India when war like Sanskrit speaking tribes entered Northern India. Their languages still predominate in the South, but "Dravidian characteristics have been traced alike in Vedic and classical Sanskrit in the Prakrits or early popular dialects and in the modern vernaculars derived from them".<sup>6</sup>

The Dravidians knew the use of metals and their pottery was of an improved type. They also knew agriculture and were perhaps the earliest people to build dams across rivers for irrigation purposes. "They constructed houses and fortifications and their villages were ruled by petty chiefs. Their society was 'to some extent matriarchal' and their religion was generally 'dark and repulsive'."<sup>8</sup>

They worshipped the mother goddess and a host of spirits, often with bloody human sacrifices and the emblems of generation. These features of Dravidian culture make some to believe that they were identical with the 'Dasas' or 'Dasyus' mentioned in the Rigveda. However, it is to be pointed out here that Caldwell has found it difficult to identify the Dravidians with the Sudras as they happened to have a higher rank in South India than in the

North although each Dravidian caste could be simply called as "Vellalas, Nayakkas", without attempting to classify them on the basis of the Aryan castes.

#### PRE-ARYAN CIVILIZATION OF THE DRAVIDIANS

A study of the primitive Dravidian words makes one to conclude that they were by no means a barbarous and degraded people. On the other hand they had acquired the elements of civilization even before the advent of the Aryans into the South.<sup>9</sup> They had 'Kings' who lived in 'strong houses' and ruled over small 'districts' of the country. They had 'ministrels' who recited 'songs' at 'festivals' and they seem to have had alphabetical characters written with a style on Palmyra leaves. A bundle of these leaves was called a 'book', they acknowledged the existence of God, whom they called a 'Ko' or king. They built 'temples', which they called 'Koil', or 'Gods' abode. They had 'laws' and 'customs' but no advocates or Courts. The institution of marriage existed. They knew the use of metals like 'tin', 'lead' and 'zinc'. They also had a knowledge of the planets with the exception of 'Mercury' and 'Saturn'. They had 'medicines', 'hamlets' and 'towns', 'canoes', 'boats' and 'ships'. They had no contact with oceanic people except those of Ceylon which could be trod on foot in those days. They delighted in 'war' and they used 'bows' and 'arrows', with 'spears' and 'swords'. Their occupations were 'spinning', 'weaving' and 'dyeing' though



agriculture was the main. This is a picture of the society as could be gleaned just from their vocabulary.

#### THE ARYANS

It is a paradox in history that a large number of Indians, Persians, the English, the Germans, the French and the Spanish style themselves as the descendants of the Aryans. As far as India is concerned, it is generally believed that her history is the history of the Aryans. Their advent to India was a significant event. They were a tall, fair-complexioned and attractive people. They were highly civilized and ahead of other races in culture. They lived in a common habitat in the beginning. Some of them called Indo-Aryans came to India and other branches went to Western countries.

By historical circumstances, the Aryans and the Dravidians contributed to the growth of a synthesis of culture in South India. "The Aryas are known to the Tamils by the general name Vadavar".<sup>10</sup>

#### BEGINNINGS OF ARYO-DRAVIDA CULTURAL FUSION

In earlier chapters, a study has been made of the land, its earliest people and cultures. A study of Aryo-Dravida Culture begins in the South of India with the advent of the Aryans in the North. The progress of Aryan advent into the South is reflected in literature and legend. North Indian literature till 550 B.C.

does not indicate awareness of the land South of the Vindhya. But gradually acquaintance of the South increased. Here an attempt is made to glean information from literature belonging to the following periods:

- a) Beginnings,
- b) Literature upto the Sangam Age,
- c) Sangam literature and after,
- d) Literature in Pallava-Chalukya period,
- e) Literature in Chola-Rashtrakuta period,
- f) Literature under the Pandyas and in Kerala.

#### A) BEGINNINGS

The probable date of Aryan civilization of the Dravidians cannot be determined with certainty. Caldwell is of the opinion that the date of Sage Agastya migrating to the South could be in the range between the Ramayana and the Mahabharata.<sup>11</sup>

Next he places the immigration of the Aryans to Ceylon headed by Vijaya on the basis of the Mahavamsa in B.C. 550.<sup>12</sup> Caldwell also quotes Dr. Barnett according to whom the Aryan impact on the South could be in a much later period as 700 A.D.<sup>13</sup> But the discovery of Brahmin records in South India will now be recognised by students of history as a proof of the Aryan influence in this part of the peninsula in at least the third century B.C. in spite of the belief entertained by some that Southern India

was entirely swayed by Dravidian thought and civilization from pre-historic times".<sup>14</sup>

The earliest instance of impact of Aryan civilization of the Dravidians according to ancient legends belongs to the Pandyan Kingdom.<sup>15</sup> The first place where they erected a city and established a state was Kolkai on the Tamraparni river near the Southern extremity of the peninsula. Though this city culture was chiefly indigenous, it had a rapid development. This was a settlement of Brahmins from Upper India. They must have settled here due to the fertility of rich alluvial plains watered by the Kaveri, the Tamraparni and other peninsular rivers. The legends evidently relate to Rama's exploits and the efficacy of Siva's emblem which Rama found out and worshipped at Rameswaram which is till now a holy land. This immigration was led by Sage Agastya. Sage Agastya was a great Vedic scholar, the holiest of hermits. He performed many sacrifices and austerities. In the South, he is respected as the earliest teacher of science and literature teaching to the early Dravidian tribes. The historicity of this Sage is doubted and he is regarded a mythical figure. But this historicity is supported by K.A. Nilakantasastri.<sup>16</sup> In the Tamil country he is called as Tamil muni or Tamilian Sage and is famous for the influence he acquired at the Court of Kulasekhara, the first Pandyan King for whom he wrote many treatises, particularly grammatical works. In mythology, he is identified with the star Canopes, the brightest star in the extreme Southern

sky in India. He is worshipped at Cape Comorin as Agastesvara. In the Mahabharata the story of Agastya with a Vatapi-Ilvala episode<sup>17</sup> is given with more details.

The Ramayana, the Aitareya Brahmana, Panini's grammar, Buddhist works, grammatical works of Katyayana, Asokan edicts etc. also throw most welcome light on aryanisation of South.

The process and results of aryanisation is also clear from a study of the growth of civilization in South India. The languages of Northern India and Maharashtra in the Deccan are clearly dialects of Sanskrit or closely related to it, formed in the process of daily use by different classes of people whose original language it was not. Nor Sanskrit words and symbols are to be found in these dialects and they were derived from the original languages of the pre-Aryan inhabitants which disappeared later due to "Masterful influence of the incoming culture".<sup>18</sup>

In the eastern coast and far South, the Aryans penetrated in adequate numbers to bring their impact on the local people. But "they were not able to incorporate them thoroughly into their own society and to root out their languages and their peculiar civilization".<sup>19</sup>

A majority of the people in these parts retained their own speech and customs and both were enriched and refined by contact with the Northern culture. On the other hand, the immigrant Aryans had to acquire the language of the local people of South India

besides their own Sanskrit and also assimilate in their culture the best of the local customs and evolve a new composite social order. They were also free to accept numerous gods and deities worshipped by the pre-Aryan people. Early Tamil works give a clue that the new influences were welcomed everywhere and accepted with delight. Thus, the beginnings of the process of aryanisation was peaceful because Tamil literature was the product of a peaceful period. No doubt if the Ramayana is to be believed, we come across instances of demons who came in the way of sacrifices in ashramas and that Rama was requested by Visvamitra to curb the excesses of the enemies of angels. This legend could provide a hint to the initial opposition to the incoming Aryans.

The aryanisation of South India was a slow process, commencing in about 1000 B.C. and spreading over several centuries. This process saw its completion by the time of Katyayana i.e., 4th century B.C. Literature of the contemporary period indicates that the immigrants from the North came crossing the Vindhya, the Narmada and the Satpuras, although some historians would not accept this and point out that they came from the Eastern coast. As Vidharba was already a settlement of the Aryans, they took another route via the sea coast in addition to the Vindhya range and Ceylon was the country aryanised by the immigrants who followed the sea route. It will not be out of place here to point out that in the long period of seven to eight centuries when South India was being progressively aryanised and a new culture was in

evolution, South India had ancient maritime contacts with the lands of the West and the East as is evident from literary sources, like those of the Periplus and the Chinese accounts and the archaeological discoveries.

#### B) LITERATURE UPTO THE SANGAM AGE

It is well known fact that the Nandas and the Mauryas ruled over South India. Jaina traditions Hathigumpha inscription of King Kharavela and Asokan edicts are the main sources. The inscriptions mention the three Tamil Kingdoms in the South. The Arthashastra of Kautilya gives some information of importance about the trade between the North and the South in the age of the early Mauryan empire. Megasthenes has given a legendary account of the rule of the Pandyan Kingdom by Pandaia a daughter of Herakles. He says further that each day one village brought its due tribute to the royal treasury. A similar statement in the Silapadikkaram (though of a later date) says that 'on a particular day, a certain cowherd family in a suburb of Madura took its turn to supply ghee to the royal palace'.<sup>20</sup>

Without going into details of epigraphical information on this period, it may be pointed out that there are short Tamil inscriptions engraved in the Southern Brahmi script in many natural caverns where man could live. Such caverns occur mainly in the Southern Tamil districts and the script belongs to the second century B.C. and later. These inscriptions show that there

were at least some in Tamil country who could read the Brahmi script. Though the script of these inscriptions is in Brahmi of the Southern variety, the language used in them is Tamil of early form. "The writing was alphabetic and already included signs for peculiarly Dravidian sounds, i, l, r, and n."<sup>21</sup> Soft consonants are not to be found and aspirated ones virtually so but for dha and tha. In the earlier records there is no long a before the unvoiced consonants as far instable, tandai for tandai. These variations must have grown over many years.

The vedic religion of sacrifice had spread <sup>to</sup> South India by the beginning of the Christian era. Apastamba, the author of a complete set of 'Srauta, grihya and dharmasutras must have flourished somewhere about 300 B.C. in the Godavari valley. His followers inhabited the land South of the Narmada. The schools of Satyashada and Hiranyakesins were influenced by Apastamba and these came into prominence in the Sahya region, i.e., Malabar and South Kanara, between the first century B.C. and the first century A.D. Similarly Grihya Sutra of the Vaikhanasas shows influence of Dravidians.

The first work Sattasai or Gathasaptasati by the Satavahana king, Hala is an anthology in Maharastri-Prakrit consisting of about 700 verses. Another notable work of the Satavahana period is Brihatkatha of Gunadhya, composed in the Paisachi dialect. This work is not available in its original form

but in later Sanskrit recensions. The widespread influence of this work even on Southern literature is admitted by one and all. The stories of this work had their hero Naravahanadatta a son of Udayana and borrowed episode from the Ramayana and Buddhist sources. The work survived till 8th or 9th century and won the admiration of Bana and Dandin.

It is significant to note that similar work in Tamil, known as Perungadai was composed by Kanguvelir.

#### C) SANGAM LITERATURE AND AFTER

Sangam literature is the earliest written work in Tamil and as such it has invaluable importance for our purpose. The literature consists of eight groups classified schematically viz., Narrinai, Kurundogai, Ainguranuru, Padirrupattu, Paripadal, Kalittogai, Ahananuru, and Purananuru. The ninth group is Pattupattu. The entire collection includes 2,279 poems of lengths ranging from three lines to over eight hundred. The author's name is given at the end of each poem along with the occasion of its composition. Another grammatical work is Tolakappiyam of the same age. What has survived today is a part of the much vaster literature.

Tenth century epigraph of the Pandyas mentions the establishment of Sangam at Madura and also the translation of Mahabharata into Tamil. That a college of Tamil poets known as



Sangam belongs to three Sangamas lasting for 9,900 years and includes, 8,598 poets referred to in Iraiyanar Agapporul (A.D. 750). The period covered would be 120 to 150 generations.

The land was divided among the three crowned kings of the Chera, Chola and Pandya lines (i.e., the first three or four century A.D.) in the earliest stratum of Tamil literature now available.<sup>22</sup> Without making a study of political condition on the basis of this literature as it is beyond the scope of this dissertation an attempt is made in the foregoing pages to glean information on Aryo-Dravidian culture.

The Sangam literature is of great value to glean cultural ideas and ideals accepted and cherished by the people and their institutions and activities. K.A. Nilakant Sastri rightly says that 'the most striking feature in the picture is its composite character; it is the unmistakable result of the blend of two originally distinct cultures, best described as Tamilian and Aryan; but it is by no means easy how to distinguish the original elements in their purity.

**RELIGION:** A marked aspect of Aryo-Dravida Culture may be found in the field of religion which is dealt with in detail in a separate chapter. Some of the main features are summarised here.

The vedic religion had struck root in the South as is evident from the references to the costly sacrifices performed

by the kings of this period. That Brahmins specialised in Vedic studies and as such held in great honour is evident from a song of Avur Mulam Kilan describing the life of Vinnandayan, a Brahmin of the Kaundinya-gotra who lived in Punjarur in the Chola country. The Vedic scholars participated in verbal disputations with voteries of rival sects (i.e., Jainism and Buddhism). This feature reminds one of the North Indian schools like Vasishta, Visvamisra and a host of others. Hinduism was gaining predominance as is clear from the prevalent worship of Subrahmanya (Murugan in Tamil country) in whose honour, an ecstatic dance named and other members of the pantheon like Siva, Vishnu, Krishna, Ardhanarisvara and Ananta Sayi. The Padirupattu gives a detail description of the worship of Vishnu with Tulasi (Basil) and this custom was followed by devotees to overcome hunger and starvation. Women visited the temple with their children, in the evenings. Ascetic order was honoured and tridandi or triple-staff-ascetics are mentioned.

In Aryan god like Indra was worshipped in a special manner on the occasion of his annual festival held in Puhar. The epic poems of the post-Sangam period indicate that music and dancing were mixed up with religious rites from early times. Krishna worship by the shephardesses, Murugan by Kuruvas and Korravai by the hunters are examples of this. The Manimekalai makes reference to a temple of Sarasvatti and an ascetic class like the Kapalikas. Other common beliefs like reincarnation, the effects of Karma in

later births and the power of fate were also accepted in the Tamil country. We find a difference between the early poems of the Sangam age at the later, namely the former animates with joyous faith in good living while the latter reflects a note of pessimism in attitude to life. Manimekalai gives expression to the importance of meditation and scorns at those who had a life of pleasure.

Still other customs in the South having their inspiration from the North are the practice of walking some distance to escort a departing guest, observed by Karikala who went on foot for a distance of 'Seven steps' (Saptapadi) before requesting him to mount a chariot drawn by four white horses, slaughter of cow, destruction of a foetus and killing of a Brahmin.

Disposal of the dead was by cremation and in some cases inhumation with or without urns. A widow performed worship of the dead husband by offering rice-ball on darbha (bed of grass) and Pulaiyan guided this rite. Sati was in practice. It was more voluntary than imposed.

A system of marriage of the Sangam times - a kind of ritualistic form continues even today. Silappadikaram gives a graphic account of the marriage between Kovalan and Kannagi. The system of wearing Tali or the sacred thread worn by the bride is a peculiarly non-Aryan (Tamil) practice which was incorporated by the Brahmins into their ritualistic pattern.<sup>23</sup>

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## SOCIAL LIFE

Ancient Tamil society like that of the Aryans, was essentially a tribal organisation. The stories of Mahabharata and the Ramayana were well known to the Tamil poets of Sangam age and episodes from them are frequently cited. The three Tamil kings are said to have fed the opposing forces on the eve of the Great Battle. Other allusions by authors relate to the destruction of the three metallic forts of the Asuras (Tripura) by Siva, king Sibi giving away the flesh of his body to save a dove that was pursued by a vulture and the struggle between the Krishna and the Asuras for the possession of the sun. Similarly, quite a good number of Aryan ideas like, the practice of a great fire underneath the ocean, Uttarkum (the Northern country) as a land of perpetual enjoyment, Arundhati as the ideal of chastity, the conception of the three fold debt (rina traya) with which every one is born, the beliefs that the Chakora bird feeds only on rain drops turn into pearls in particular circumstances, were taken over to the Sangam literature. Again the Tolakappiyam is said to have been modelled on the Sanskrit grammar of the Aindra school.

That the institutions of the marriage as a sacrament attended with ritual was established in the South by the Aryans, is evident in the Tolakappiyam. The Aryas had eight forms of marriage - Brahma, Daiva, Arsha, Prajapatya, Asura, Gandharva, Rakshasa, and Paisacha.<sup>24</sup> These kinds of marriage were the

product of a blend between Aryan and pre-Aryan forms that prevailed in North India. The Tolakappiyam also mentions these eight forms and tries to make them suit the Tamil forms. The Tamil forms were five known as tinais, i.e., a simple conception of marriage as coming together of man and woman. Other names current in Tamil country were Kaikkilai (unilateral love) and Perundinai (improper love). Into this Dravida fold an effort was made to bring in the Aryan eight forms which was not a successful one. However, one result followed and that is the rise of a beautiful literature (the Sangam literature) which combines classic grace with regional energy and strength.

Several occupations modelled on the Aryan are described in the Sangam poems, e.g., cultivation of ragi, sugarcane, making of sugar, harvesting and drying of grain and growing of fruits. The land was fertile in the South, watered by the Kaveri and its streams which helped agriculture.

Into these occupations, the people were grouped accepting differences in status and economic conditions. Reference to illiterate Malavar or robbers in the North of the Tamil country, hunters (eyinar), shepherds and the learned Brahmins engaged in Vedic studies are found vividly described by Tamil poets. A poem in the Purananuru mentions only four castes (Kudi) viz., tudiyar, Panam, Pavaiyan and Kadamban. It also refers to one God worthy of being worshipped i.e., the hero stone. These ideas are survivals of pre-Aryan days.

CASTES: Srinivasa Iyengar classifies the distribution of Tamil castes<sup>25</sup> as follows: (1) Aryan, (2) Dravidian, and (3) Naga. He assumes that the Brahmins are Aryans, the Vellalas are Dravidians and that Valayer, Paller, Shanar, Idayer, Maravar, Agambadiyar, Paraiyar, Kaikkolar, Kammatar, Vanaiyar (Palli), Kaller, Ambkorar are mixed Nagas and that the Koravas are pure Nagas. But Subrahmanian observes that the above classification looks forceful and that the Aryan-Dravidian classification is linguistic and not ethnic.<sup>26</sup> Though people speaking particular languages tend to develop particular cultures to say that those who speak Dravidian tongues like Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam or Tulu are Dravidians and those that speak of the Indo-Aryan tongues are Aryans in an ethnic sense will be to overlook the racial mingling that has been going on through centuries in spite of the inbreeding characteristic of caste based society. Those that followed the Aryan Brahmanical way of life accepting the sanctity of the Vedas and allied Sastras and acquiring the competence to perform the sacrifices and assuming the status of teachers and priests are Brahmins. Whether this was based on profession any time in South India is not known.

Dr. V.A. Smith takes altogether a different view. According to him the Villavar or bowmen or the Bhills and the M<sup>i</sup>navar, the fisherman or the Minas were the most ancient while the Tamils were later immigrants.

Literature mentions the following indigenous tribes

Vedar and Eyinar - hunters and robbers -

Paratavar or Minavar - fisherman.

Parar -people of lower rung/Wanderers.

Tudian and Paraiyar - drum beaters.

Kadambas - another group of robbers.

Kollar - same as Eyinar.

Maravar - fighters.

The Sangam literature speaks of many tribes and refers to traditional castes. They were Minavar/Valaivar/Valaioparadavar fisherman.

Panar - bands who wandered about singing popular songs or praises of the kings carrying a quaint musical instruments.

Kalaikkuttar - dancers who balanced on the bamboo.

Arya Kuttar - Aryan dancers.

Vedars - robbers.

Marakudi - warrior class. Reference to Marakudi in Purananuru and Silappadikaram shows that they were a separate section of society.

Arakkudi - docile class.

Kuravur - hill tribes.

Ulavar - people in plains.

"The caste system which is an integral feature of Aryan

Hindu society is heard of even in the earliest stratum of extant Tamil literature.<sup>27</sup> But along the castes the pre-Aryan tribes also flourished. These tribes observed certain totems like the tiger, the 'carp' or the 'bow' or particular trees or flowers. Attachment to these symbols continued even after the caste system entered Tamil society.

N. Subrahmanian comments, 'undoubtedly there was also a migration from the North into the South of a large body of men but not at a single point of time; this migration too must have been spread over a long period of time.'<sup>28</sup> He further says that aborigines of North India who were either associated with the Indus valley culture or who were inheritors of that culture and who perhaps found it too hot in the North after the Aryans had fanned out over the entire trans-Vindhya area, left the North for the South and peopled the extreme South but a thousand years after the fall of Harappa and Mohenjodaro, that these refugees reached the Northern <sup>f</sup>inges of the Tamil country. Some of these were the Velirs of whom we hear so much in Tamil literature; their men or followers were the Velalars. Their patronage strongly supported by the generosity of the kings, laid the foundation for Tamil literature, social life, arts and crafts which had reached a kind of perfection at the period of the Sangam. This portion that the Velirs and Velalars were non-Aryan North Indian immigrants into Tamilaham seems to gain support from the legend of Agastya and the Velins narrated by Nachchinarkkiniyar.



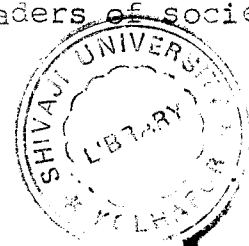
As far as the Brahmins are concerned, Subrahmanian is of the opinion that certain people in South India became Brahmins. The Brahminical system was introduced but not the Brahmin as such. When the caste systems became petrified into a vertical system perpetuated by birth, the castes i.e., the Varna-jati complex - Brahmins and others - assumed an hereditary character.<sup>29</sup>

Another aspect of caste to be discussed is its development in South India. The development of caste in the North historically, was on different lines than what it was in Tamilaham.

In this connection N. Subrahmanian notes that though the earliest literary evidence in Tamil sources e.g., Tolkaappiyam unmistakably indicates Sanskritic or Aryan influence, it may not be correct to suppose that cultured and organised life commenced in Tamilaham only after or entirely due to Aryan infiltration there. If that were so Tamil culture would have been identical with Aryan culture.<sup>30</sup> V.A. Smith is also of the opinion that the Tamils had developed an advanced civilization of their own. On this statement, Subrahmanian concludes that the Tamil civilization was wholly independent of North India.<sup>31</sup> He differs from others who contend that all that is worthwhile in the Sangam Tamil culture was the product of Aryan contact. It is held by scholars like V. Kanakasabhai that the caste system in Tamilaham differed from the Aryan four fold system. He speaks of Ulavar (cultivators), Arivar (Sages), Ayar (artisans like goldsmiths), Padai - Atchis

(armed men), Volaiyar (fishermen) Pulaiyar<sup>32</sup> (official slaughterers or hangmen).

The Brahmin is the most distinctive feature of Tamil caste system because others like the Arasar (the king), Vanigar (merchants) and the Velalas (peasants) do not clearly correspond to the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas and the Sudras of the Aryan caste system.<sup>33</sup> The Brahmins of Tamilaham were not imported aliens, but were natives of Tamilaham identical with the community of seers, ascetics, priests, philosophers and scholars, who were attracted by the fascinating metaphysics of the Aryan Brahmins and so converted themselves to Brahmanism and became the sponsors and custodians of Aryan culture and Vedic rituals. But it is also true that a few North Indian Brahmins also came from the North who were called Vadamar (Northerner) and that was in hands of these Tamil Brahmins that "Unadulterated Vedic culture and Sanskritic traditions have been preserved for posterity".<sup>34</sup> Though the caste system did not bring about a revolution in the Tamil country, it should be noted that professions were organised on a hereditary basis and that learning and character were considered to be decisive factors in determining the social status of a man. It was also recognised that the learned man or the man of character and integrity to whatever stratum of society he belonged was superior to the unlettered and characterless ones to whatever stratum they might belong.<sup>35</sup> The rigours of caste system based on birth were mitigated by the leaders of society



and the rest continued as of old in their tribal ways. Aryan cultural influence in Tamil society remains negligible barring the few high castes. However, untouchability including approachability was practised as is indicated in Silappadikaram which refers to distance being kept between a goldsmith and a Vaishya. Ideas of high and low caste also took deep root in society in later years.

The Tamil Brahmins of the Sangama age were a respectable and learned community living apart in their cheri maintaining the most desirable environment, performing their caste, duties scrupulously i.e., Vedic chanting and sacrifices, serving the king, occasionally as judicial advisers and always as Purohita and astrologers, performing ambassadorial duties to the kings giving and receiving patronage preferring the ascetic life and receiving patronage.

When a review of the castes, classes and tribes living in the Sangama Age, one may conclude that -

- (1) A large sub-stratum of indigenous hill, forest and coastal tribes distinguished by their own religious practices, social behaviour, dietic and sartorial habits stood at the lower rung of the ladder.
- (2) The villages had another stratum. They were the poorer workmen, casual labourers, the agriculturists.

(3) Towns and cities had another stratum. The ascetics, the Brahmins, the kings, the chieftains, the local boards, the merchants, traders, manufacturers, the rich landowners - these constituted the more sophisticated, the more cultured and the more advanced sections of society. So, in the Sangam age, the primitive culture, the later Tamilians indigenous culture and the exotic Aryan culture, all co-existed.<sup>36</sup>

Although a study of economic conditions and trade in the period does not yield direct inferences on Aryo-Dravida culture, they give an insight into social life of people. Foreigners (Yavanas) who came to the sea-coast in large numbers at Tondi, Musiri and Puhar or Kaveripattinam could not speak Tamil but many of them were employed as palace guards in Madura and on Police duty in the streets. They brought into Tamil ports curious articles like lamps and wine in bottles. The great port-cities were the emporiums of foreign trade. Poetry of Sangam age describes the rich merchandise poured into these ports, the extensive bazar of the great city of Puhar, the family life of the rich merchants who lived in upper floors setting apart the lower for business, ports like Saliyar in the Pandya country and the rich trade in gold etc. with the Cheras.

From the internal trade, we may infer the occupations of the people like agriculture, caravans on pack-animals, trade in honey, toddy, fish etc. The bulk of the land was owned by Velladar

the agriculturists who commanded a high social rank. Women followed spinning, weaving of many kinds of silk is mentioned by the poets. Dress making is also mentioned.

The habit of chewing betel-leaves with lime and areca-nut came into use after the Sangam age. Women gave up eating green and bathing in cold water when their husbands died in battlefield. The condition of widows was a hard one. Some wives observed Sati. The tonsure of widows, like the tying of the tali at the marriage ceremony was a pre-Aryan Tamil custom taken over to later times.

Valuable information on popular belief and customs are scattered in the poems. People had great belief in omens and astrology. One poem mentions the portents which preceded the death of 'Sey of the elephant eye'. A woman with a shaven head was a bad omen. Fortune tellers had a busy trade. Children wore amulets to ward off evil. Rites were practised to avert the mischief of damons, to bring about rain, and produce other desired results. The Banyan tree was regarded to be the abode of gods. Eclipses were held to be the result of snakes eating up the sun and the Moon. Crows were believed to announce the coming of guests. Particularly the home coming of husbands and were fed in front of palaces and household. Mass feeding the poor was common.

Upper classes cultivated poetry, music and dancing as cultured amusements. Musical instruments of various types are

described. They included many kinds of Yal (a stringed instrument like the lute) and varieties of drums. Karikala is described as the master of the seven notes of music. Various poses of dance as in the Natyasastra of Bharata have been described. Viralis (torch-light dance by night) and mixed dances in which men and women took part find a description. It may be inferred that a systematic attempt was made to bring together and synthesise indigenous pre-Aryan modes (desi) as these that came from the North (marga) an evidence of which is to be found in the Silappadikaram belonging to the succeeding period.

Among other sports and pastimes, the hunting of dogs and hares, wrestling and boxing competitions among warriors are referred to. Dice play by the old, playing with balls and molucca-beans on terraces of houses by girls were common. Mixed bathing, picnic parties, children playing in the Manram with toys and arrows and dance by girls were other pastimes. The story of Manimekalai a Sangam work is replete with instances of Vatsayana's Kamasutra. The work indicates that hetacrae underwent a regular course of instructive extending over many years and including Court dances, popular dances, singing, playing on the lute and flute, cookery, perfumery, painting, flower work and other fine arts. Houses of the rich were built of brick and mortar. Walls were painted with divine figures and pictures of animal life. Houses and palaces were built according to the norms laid down in the Sastra and care was taken to start at an auspicious

hour carefully calculated.

The Nadunalvadai, one of the 'Ten Idylls' gives a detailed description of the women's apartments in the palace of Nedunserian well furnished with furniture. The common folk lived in humble structures in the towns and villages while out castes and forest tribes lived in huts which are described in the poems. The making of the rope charpoys by Pulaiyans and the use of animal skins as mates deserve to be noted. The Pattinapalai gives a good account of the life of the fishermen of Puhar, the Paradavar including some of their holiday pastimes.

#### POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

**KINGSHIP:** The institution of hereditary monarchy was the prevailing form of government. There were occasions of disputed successions and civil wars. Though the king was an autocrat, his authority was tempored by the maxims of the wise and the occasional intervention of a minister, a poet or a friend. Even custom was a check on royal authority. The king had to set an example to his subjects by practising a high moral standard by his personal conduct. Sangam poetry mentions that the king was to keep a strict control over his passions in order to rule successfully. He was to be liberal in his patronage of religion, arts and letters. He was to show paternal care for his subjects and to be impartial among different sections of them. He held a daily durbar (nalavai) at which he listened to

all complaints and redressed grievances of people. The Tamil king carried on the onerous duties attached to kingship like a strong bull which drags a car laden with salt from the plains to the uplands. Another saying affirms that the king was much more than rice or water, in the life of the people. The Brahmins were the foremost and the king took their assistance in his daily work. The king was not to do anything that pained the Brahmins. Agriculture was the mainstay of polity and the basis of war. A good king was supposed to be able to command the course of seasons. The ideal of conquest by the Vijigishu was accepted and followed. The king who won digvijaya over seven kings indicated his victory by wearing the crowns of the defeated kings. The ambitious monarch adhered to the ancient idea of Chakravartin or king of kings. One of the poems in the Sangam literature gives a clue to the prevalence of a companion of a king sacrificing his life for the king/kingdom which anticipates the later practice of Velaikkaran, garudas, Sahavasis, apattuḍavical etc. Kings' duties were well known and organised. He ruled, reigned, governed and protected the people, was an unquestioned potentate who indulged in love and war and delighted in the excitements of the chase and the pleasures of the table.

**JUDICIARY:** The highest Court of justice was the Sabha or Manram. Instances of the Sabha acting as a Court of justice, e.g., the sons of Malaiyaman sentenced and later released are mentioned in the poems of the age. The poems also allude to the



fact that the Sabha assisted the king in general deliberation also. In later years as is evidenced from the Kural, a post-Sangam work, the Sabha had become a general assembly dealing with all affairs. The Sabha actively participated in the social and religious life in the village. Every village had a common place of meeting, generally under the shade of a big tree where men, women and children met for all the common affairs of rural life including sports and pastimes. Thus, it may be inferred that highly organised village administration by the Mahasabha under the Imperial cholas had its origin in the manram. In the capital cities, watchmen bearing torches did the police work of patrolling. Prisons were maintained and formed part of the judicial system.

**SOURCE OF REVENUE:** The main sources of royal revenue were from land and trade. The ma and Veli were land measures. However, the share of the king in the produce is not mentioned in the early literature. But the Pattinappalai gives a detailed account of customs duties arising from foreign trade and activities of officials at Puhar. Revenue was also procured from internal transit duties on merchandise. The roads were guarded night and day by soldiers to check smuggling. Taxes were moderate as a result of the advice of poets. Their sayings indicate that plunder from war becomes a large part of revenue. In the Sangam age the Cholas maintained a guarded treasury at Kumbakonam.

**MILITARY:** King maintained an army of well equipped

professional soldiers. Captains of the army were honoured by the title of enadi conferred at a formal ceremony of investiture where the king presented the chosen Commander with a ring and other insignia of high military rank. Some scholars consider enadi as a corruption of Senadhipati and it is not impossible.<sup>37</sup>

The army consisted of traditional four arms - chariots drawn by oxes, elephants, cavalry and infantry. Weapons used were swords, bows and arrows, armour made of tiger skins, javelians, spears and shields and protective cover for the forearm. The drum and the Conch were also used on the battlefield for signalling and the former to summon soldiers to arms. Each king and chieftain had a war drum among his insignia. The war-drum was given a sacred bath periodically and worshipped with mantras. Wars were frequent. There is no credence in the assertion of poets of the age that wars were often caused by refusal of one king to give his daughter in marriage to another. A campaign could be commenced by the capture of the enemy's cattle or a Brahmin messenger might be sent with a formal declaration before hostilities started. The military camp was often an elaborate affair. The king had adequate security and women guards. In the camps the hours of day and night were announced by watchers of water-clocks. Early morning and mid-day were indicated by gnomon. Camp fires prevented cold. Watch<sup>er</sup> over possible surprise attack by enemies was kept from the towers. Death on the battle field was regarded as rewarding. A soldier who had a peaceful death was viewed with

contempt. In the families of chieftains and kings the body of a soldier who died otherwise than in war was cut with the sword and laid on darbha grass and mantrams were chanted to secure him a place in heaven(Virasvarga). Hero stones were erected to commemorate the death of a soldier on the battlefield. Necessary medical help was provided to wounded soldiers.

Kings often took leadership in war. He also delighted with common soldiers at times of victory. If the King was wounded or killed in battle, the army would accept defeat. The victorious king put the defeated into humiliation by which the vanquished was put to further suffering. "The crowns of defeated kings furnished gold for the anklets of the victor, while a woman's anklet and a garment of leaves were forced on the defeated party who was compelled to wear them, his guardian tree was destroyed and its trunk converted into a war drum for the victor. The conquered country was at times ruthlessly laid in waste, even cornfields not being spared."

A detailed description of the battlefield in the Tamil country is given in Kalayali. The poem describes that "the soldiers, infantry and cavalry alike, wore leather sandals for the protection of their feet. The nobles and princes rode on elephants and the commanders drove in pennoned chariots. The poet says that women whose husbands were killed bewailed their loss on the field of Kalumalam. Unless this is a mere rhetoric,

we must suppose that women, at least of the higher orders, sometimes accompanied their husbands to the field."<sup>38</sup>

THE ROYAL COURT: Kings patronised literature and arts, "War and women were, in fact, the universal preoccupations of the leisured classes, besides wine and song and the dance."<sup>39</sup> The king and the enadis formed a delightful succession and were at the top of society with a boundless capacity for enjoying pleasures. Banquets were arranged to which the poets were invited. One poet addresses his patron and says, 'I came to see you that we might eat succulent chops of meat, cooled after boiling and soft like the corded cotton of the spinning - women, and drink large photo or toddy together'. The description of the feast by the poets gives information on the food and drinks. Another speaks of wine poured into golden goblets by smiling women decked with jewels in the Court of Karikala.

The flesh of animals cooked whole, such as pork from a pig which had been kept away from its female mate for many days and fattened for the occasion, appam (Pudding) soaked in milk, the flesh of tortoises and particular kinds of fish are mentioned as delicacies served at such feasts. Among drinks particular mention is made of foreign liquor in green bottles, of munnir (triple water) a mixture of milk from unripe coconut, palm fruit juice and the juice of sugarcane, and of toddy well matured by being burried underground for a long time in bamboo barrels.<sup>40</sup>

The upper classes indulged in poetry, music and dancing. Poets were drawn from man and women. They wrote poems suited to the occasions and were rewarded generously. Karikala is said to have given the author of Pattinappalai 16,00,000 gold pieces.<sup>41</sup> Their poems are full of colour and true to life. They are rich in fine phrases giving compact and eloquent expression to the physical and spiritual experiences of the poet. Poets composed short lyrics, Odes and religious hymns which show variety. They employed simple and flexible metre and not yet fully aware of lengthy Sanskrit forms.

Some poets were specially chosen to be the companion to the King and chieftains and advisers too as for instance, the friendship between Kapilar and Pari, between Pisir Andaiyar and Kopperunjolan and between Auvaiyar and Adigaiman Anji. These examples show the lifelong attachment between poet and patron. There were also occasions when poets not duly rewarded by kings sang their stingy attitude in poems. One poet refused to accept a present sent to him by a prince who had not granted them the usual interview. Besides the rich present given by Karikala, referred to above, golden lotuses and lilies, land, chariots, horses, money and one instance of elephant being given, were the gifts presented to poets.

Royal Courts were also made colourful by roving band of singers and women who danced to the accompaniment of music, the

panar and Viraliyar who moved about with quaint instruments. They were mostly primitive tribes, singing folk songs and dances. They were mostly poor. "A humerous account is given in the poems. The Chola king showered on us great quantities of wealth in fine and costly jewels not suited to our condition, on seeing this, some among the large group of my kinsfolk used <sup>to</sup> abject poverty, put on their ears, ornaments meant for the forefingers. Some wore on their fingers things meant for the ear. Others put on their necks jewells meant for the waist, others again adorned their waists with ornaments properly worn on the neck; in this wise, like the great group of red-faced monkeys which shone in the fine jewels (of Sita) that they discovered on the ground, on the day when the mighty rakshasa carried off Sita, the wife of Rama of the swift chariot, we became the cause of endless laughter".

Literary forms grew into a class of poem called arruppadai (sitting on the path) in which a poet, Panam or Virali told of the gifts he had received from a <sup>a</sup> patron and suggested his friends to visit the king.

**THE MINISTERS:** Among individual officials who assisted the king, the minister was a very important official. He was called Amaichchan. 'The word has been derived from Amatya, a Sanskrit word'. Mantri is again a Sanskrit word.<sup>42</sup> It was the business of the minister to guide the king. The Kural gives a special chapter on Amaicha (ministership) (Kural chapter 64). The chapter describes the qualifications expected of ministers and their functions.

**DUTAS:** The Kural gives an entire chapter on the Dutas or ambassadors (Chapter-69). They were of three types known to Sanskritists - Uttama, Madhyama and Adhama.<sup>43</sup>

**POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY IN THE SANGAM LITERATURE:** Sanskrit literature of ancient Tamil works does not provide systematic political theory like that of the Western political thinkers. The Sukranitisara and the Arthasastra contain some chapters only on political theory. However, the Tamils have a branch of literature called Porul or Porutpal which means a science of wealth. It is a political treatise. In the Kural, a slightly late Sangam work, all the aspects of government, war, finance, trade, and public relationship are treated as in the Porutpal. This is similar to the Dharmasastras of Sanskrit literature. But the Porutpal or the Kural may be regarded as works giving an account of the contemporary polity and political philosophy. The main features of Sangam polity are: hereditary monarchy, keeping the dignity of the king's Office, duties of kings to cater to welfare of subjects, conquest of other rulers, king to punish evil and reward virtue, factors on which king's greatness depended, king could become a tyrant, attributing divine qualities to the king, king worshipped as God, consequence of mis-rule, political behaviour etc. The concept of sovereignty could be expressed only as Inaimai (or the essential characteristic of the King, Oli was the divinity in the king and Ali represented the king's power to order, direct, promote etc.

"The Sangam society was a pluralistic society which recognised many claimants to the individual's loyalty".<sup>44</sup>

Aram (Dharma) was to be the basis for human action whether in the field of public relationship or social activities or conjugal love (Inbam).

In this background of political philosophy of the Sangam literature, we may examine the thematic impact as indicated in the Kural. N. Subrahmanian rightly notes that the very first Kural stanza of the Porutpal has been suggested as reproduction of the 'Saptanga theory of the Sanskritists'.<sup>45</sup>

The Saptanga theory says that "(1) the king (2) the ministers, (3) territory, (4) fort, (5) treasury, (6) army, and (7) friends" constitute the elements of a state. So, the king and his six associates of the king but only as 'aids' or 'auxiliaries'. The Kural mentions 'Six angas' of the King as elements of a State, while the Arthasastra mentions seven angas. The two ideas are similar in political philosophy except in the Tamil literature, the king is above the 'Angas' according to Valluvar. 'The Arthasastra treats the king as 1/7th of the State while the Kural treats the king as a compound of six parts. Though this is regarded as a vital difference by some scholars.<sup>46</sup> The mutual impact and interaction of the Tamil and Sanskrit literatures cannot be ignored. Cultural contacts or exchange of ideas are beyond the horizon of regions or borders of political entities.



The Kural insists an individual to adhere to Aram (Dharma) at all stages. This idea is the very basis of Sanskrit literature. Again, excepting the Varnashrama dharma which is open to intense condemnation in recent years, the essence of all the other Dharmasastras of the Sanskritists collectively constitute an order or way of life. According to Kural, the king was the upholder of Dharma and Sastric injunctions.

EDUCATION: The Tamil society of the Sangam Age was an advanced and civilized society. It had reached great heights in education and fine arts besides literature.

A survey of the pattern of education, Valluvar's ideas on education (Kural, 391) scope and purpose of secular education accessible without discrimination/class or caste and teacher-student relationship clearly indicates Aryan influence. The Brahmins preserved the traditional Vedic studies. Kings were given a slightly varied curriculum which included target practice, horse-riding, wrestling etc. Merchants and royal servants were interested in arithmetic while Brahmins learnt and practised astronomy and astrology. The teacher was a Kanakkayar i.e., he who collects a group of students and teaches them, the nedunkanakku i.e., literature and grammar based on the alphabet.<sup>47</sup> Teachers who collected a large number of students were called Kulapatis, and a poet in this age was known as Kidangil Kulapati Nakkannar.

The school was a Palli i.e., a part of the teacher's house. Students, wrote on dried and cut palm-leaf bits, 1'x2". They were punched at one or both ends and held together by strings. The leaves were called Olai and the bundle of leaves was a Suvadi. The pen was something like a thick needle (Usi i.e., a stylus). Calligraphy was, therefore, cultivated. The teacher was paid in cash or kind.

Nearly 500 poets flourished in this age. The Madurai Tamil Sangam patronised by Pandyan kings was not merely a teaching institution but an assembly of scholars and literary critics. As there were several Brahmin poets it may be inferred that they did not confine themselves to Vedic studies. Although this system of education had admitted nomenclature it had the basis of the 'Gurukula' pattern of the North.

LITERATURE: The Sangam literature was the Augustan Age of Tamil literature.<sup>48</sup> Although the entire chapter is on literature of South India and its structure and form is beyond the scope of the chapter, we may point out the cultural inferences here. The language itself was called 'Tamil' or sweet and pleasant. Who can deny that similarly the language Sanskrit is equally not sweet and pleasant (Madhura)?

The author of Kural was quite aware of Sanskrit works of Manu, Kautilya and Vatsayana. Some didactic works like Naladiyar shows Jain influence. Works on music, dance and drama like

Manimekalai indicate Sanskrit influence. Ilango Adigal and Sittalai Sattanar were authors of the Silappadikaram and Manimekalai respectively. The latter was a Buddhist (Ilango was a Jain). The fact that is to be admitted is that a large number of Tamil scholars were erudite in Sanskrit while the Sanskritists generally were not.

The knowledge of the planets, week days and the use of a lunar month of 30 days is similar to such beliefs and practices of the North.

Out of the entire mass of literature "the Paripadal is specially suited for devotional songs or treatment of metaphysical themes and generally set to munis like the vedic humns."<sup>49</sup> The Nurpa is the Sutra style. Works on grammar and rhetoric are similar to Sanskrit works e.g., the Dandi Alankaram, Urumal Iyal by Tokappiyar.

FINE ARTS: Painting, sculpture, music and dance were highly advanced. Looking at the high pitch of development, scholars would attribute it to have been borrowed or due to adoption of Sanskrit traditions. Dr. N. Subrahmanian would not accept these views.<sup>50</sup> However, a host of Tamil works of the age retain their individual features.

"Though suffused with the ideas and ideals of Northern Sanskritic culture", says K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, "the literature of the Sangam age command an exceptional vigour and directness

of the language unknown in later literature.<sup>51</sup> It was the result of the meeting and fusion of two originally separate cultures, the Tamil and the Aryans.

#### (D) LITERATURE IN PALLAVA-CHALUKYA PERIOD

The next era of Tamil literature extends upto A.D. 850 covering the Pallava-Chalukya, Chola-Rashtrakuta and Pandyan periods. In these epochs literature was marked by an 'increasing inflow of Sanskrit influences'<sup>52</sup> and the ascendancy of Jainism in the literary field as in the life of the country, followed by a strong reaction. In addition to continuity of cultural impact and influences reviewed so far, this reaction found expression in the popular Bhakti movements led by Saiva Nayanars and <sup>a</sup>Vishnav Alvars and popular literature. Most of these were didactical works grouped under the description padinenkilkanakku or 18 treatises in short metres. Of these the earliest and the most celebrated is the Kural of Tiruvalluvar, details of which are reviewed in the foregoing pages.

In Sanskrit, mention has to be made of two farces (Prahasanas) composed by the curious minded Pallava ruler Mahendravarman I namely, Mattavilasa and Bhagavadajjuka. These works were directed against the Kapalikas and Buddhist Bhiksus and give a pleasing contrast to the growing intensity of sectarian feeling in his day. The authorship of Bhagavadajjuka is attributed to Baudhayana. A work on prosody Chandoviciti - Janasraya was

composed by Madhavavarman-II of the Vishnu Kunda line who bore the title Janasraya. If tradition prevailed in Avanti Sundarikatha of Damodara, friend of Bharavi and adorned the Pallava Court of Narasimhavarman-I (630-68 A.D.). The Dasakumara Charita is a part of this work and is available<sup>1</sup>. The excellent rhetoric Kavyadarsha of Dandin in Vaidarbhi style is best known. It also formed the basis of Dandiyalangaram in Tamil. Bhavabhuti flourished at the end of the 7th and beginning of the 8th century. Two of his dramas Mahaviracarita and Uttara-Rama Carita are based on parts of the Ramasaga and the third Malati-Madhava are famous.

The Chalukya kings of Vatapi were great patrons of literature. It may not be out of place here to mention the Mahakuta and the Aihole Prasastis (of Pulikesi II) which form superb historical literature in inscriptions. Vijaya Bhattarika, the wife of king Chandraditya, son of Pulikesi II has been identified with the poetess Vijjika who describes herself as a dark Sarasvati<sup>53</sup> (the Goddess of learning, Sarasvati, described as white) and whom the great Rajasekhara placed next only to Kalidas for style. The verses composed by this poetess preserved justifies this high place.

In Tamil, the Kural (450-550) of Tiruvalluvar, a comprehensive manual of ethics, polity and love, belongs to this age. It has 1,330 distichs divided into 133 sections of 10 distich the first 38 on ethics (aram), the following 70 on political and economic topics (Porul) and the rest on love

(Kamam). We have already referred to the author's awareness of Sanskrit works of Manu, Vatsayana and Kautilya.

To the same period may be assigned the Kalavvali of Poygaiyar and the Mudumolikkanji, a short work of 100 stanzas by Kudalukilar of Madura. Other works assigned to period between 550-650 are Kanarpadu a love poem, Iniyar-narpadu, a catalogue of pleasant and unpleasant things and deeds, Naladi, a Jaina anthology Nanmanikka digai by a Vaishnava poet, Vailambi Naganar, the Palamoli a Jaina work, Tirikadukam, by a Vishnu worshipper and Asarakkovai. The last work is a veritable Tamil Smriti work by a Saiva devotee based on Sanskrit originals. The Agama compilations of the North (5th century) had their influence also. The period also witnessed Hindu revival for which several Saiva nayanars and Vaishnava Alvars worked together. Devotional literature based on bhakti reached its climax. The earliest of nayanars was Karikkal Ammai, the woman of Karaikkal. She was the contemporary of Pudam Alvar. The Ammai sang the praises of 'Siva of Turvalangadu whom she is said to have seen. She also wrote two poems in Prabhandha literature. Other Saiva saints who followed were Aiyadigal Vadavarkou, Manikkavasagar (Turuvasagam), Appar, Siruttondar, Tirumular and Sundaramurti. Along with these Saiva saints, Vaishnava Alvars - Poyvai, Pey, Tirumalisi ( a contemporary of Mahendravarman-I ), Periyalvar and his daughter Andal, Tiruppa and Tondaradippodi, Kulasekhara and Nammalvar. Kulasekhara was the author of a notable poem in

Sanskrit, Mukundamala. Among the Alvars, Andal composed about 650 poems in praise of Lord of Srirangam who was her lover and her 'dream marriage' with Vishnu.<sup>54</sup> The poems are sung even to this day.

Reference has been made already to Silappadikaram, Manimekalai and Brihatkatha. The last work based on Sanskrit one was written by Kongu Velin in Tamil under the title Perungadai (The Western Ganga king Durvanita composed a Sanskrit version of this work in the 6th century). Two Kavyas in Tamil not extant, were Valaiyapati and Kundalakesi commentaries on Jaina grammar (Yapparungalam). Buddhist grammar (Virasoliyam) belong to this period. Finally the period of Nandivarman-III (Pallava) saw the works - the anonymous Nandikkalambakam, quasi-historical work of the reign of Nandivarman-III and Bharatam of Perundevanar.

In Telugu, the beginnings of language can be traced from stone inscriptions of the 5th and 6th centuries A.D. Its basic elements have unmistakable affinities with Tamil and Kannada. But from the beginning, the literary idiom depended largely on Sanskrit. Janasrayachandas, an early work on prosody pieces of which are available now, has been written throughout in Sanskrit. The author was most probably Vishnukundin monarch Madhavavarman-II who had the title Janasraya.

In the beginning Telugu had much in common with Kannada.

This affirmities continued in the later stages also. Pampa and Ponna came from the Telugu country. There also existed desi compositions like Lalipatalu (song of the cradle), Mangalaharatulu (songs of festivity) Kirtanalu (devotional songs) etc.

Higher literature was influenced strongly by Sanskrit in the marga style. Works in this style begin from the 11th century.

Malayalam was the last of the South Indian languages to develop an independent status and a literature of its own. The present Malayalam area was a land of Tamil speech through grammarians. The Sangam literature contains many words and expressions that survive in Malayalam today though they have gone out of use in Tamil. Efforts were made to derive Malayalam from Sanskrit and Tamil but failed because it had a natural growth from Kodum-Tamil that prevailed in Kerala at the beginning of the Christian era. But the literary idiom was borrowed from Sanskrit as in the case of Kannada and Tamil. Therefore, Malayalam had to give up the Vatteluttu script and develop with a script based on Tamil-granth.<sup>55</sup> Literature grew in later years.

The Pallavas were natives to South India. They were in close association with the ruling family of the Satavahanas. So they became the patrons of Northern culture. Dr. S.K. Aiyangar observes, "Although we find evidence of the prevalence both of the cults of 'Siva and Vishnu in the Tamil country already,



the patronage of this Northern culture generally seems to have been associated with the Pallavas."<sup>56</sup> Pallava inscriptions for a long time were issued in Sanskrit or Prakrit. They were not great patrons of Tamil literature. But a large number of Tamil works came up in which the authors have not mentioned the Pallava kings as patrons. Appar, a Jain first and Saiva later was a contemporary of Mahendravarman-I Pallava. Sambandar lived in the age of Narasimhavaram-I. They have devoted their books to bhakti themes. Only one work - Nandikkalambakam - a late Pallava composition (8-9 century) is said to be the result of Pallava patronage. Hence, the Pallavas were not special patrons of Tamil literature.

Prof. K.A. Nilakant Sastry refers to the literary merit in music in the Kudumiyamalai (Pudukkottai) inscription.<sup>57</sup> It speaks of exercises to be practised on stringed instruments. K.A. Nilakant Sastry does not believe that the epigraph belongs to the reign of Pallava Mahendravarman-I<sup>58</sup> but to a Saiva king, the pupil of Rudracharya, a music master (7th-8th century).

#### (E) LITERATURE IN CHOLA-RASHTRAKUTA PERIOD

The foundation of the Chola empire was marked by significant efforts to elucidate the Vedas. In the reign of Chola Parantaka-I Venkata Madhava, who lived in a village on the banks of the Kaveri, wrote the Rigārtha dipika.

Philosophical literature grew in large numbers.

Vatsayana (C. 350-400) the author of the commentary on the Nyaya Sutras of Gautam belonged to South India. Works on logic and Nyaya were also composed. Studies on Purva-Mimamsa in the South became popular from the days of Prabhakara, the pupil of Kumarila, the founder of these studies in the South. Kumarila was an elder contemporary of Sankaracharya (8th century). In addition to his three famous works like Seokavartika, a host of bhashyas on Sanskrit texts were also composed by Southerners.

It is relevant to note here that in the domain of Vedanta, all the three major schools had their origin in the South. The first and greatest name here is that of Sankara, the founder of Advaita Vedanta, Kaladi being his birth place and his great mission during his life time between 788-820 are too well known. His principal works are the great Bhasyas on the Brahma-Sutras, the principal Upanishads and the Bhagavadgita in addition to independent treatise. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri says that "the literary force and philosophic depth of Sankara's works entitle him to a very high place among the master minds of the world"<sup>59</sup>. His pupils - Suresvara, Padmapada, Mandanamisra, and a large number of scholars composed important works. The literature of visishtadvaita (qualified monism) began with the Yogarahasya and the Nyayatattva by Nathamuni or Ranganathamuni (824-924), the first of the great acharyas of Vaishnavism who followed the alvars. Yamuna Arya, the grand son of Nathamuni systematised Vedanta in his works Siddhitraya, Gitanth Sangrah and Agamparamanaya. The

true founder of the system in its entirety was Sri Ramanuja whose Sribhasya on the Brahma Sutras is its great classic. Subsequently, a galaxy of Sanskrit scholars in the South produced everlasting works on Upanishads. Of course, dvaita literature grew after the 11th century.

Much better known as a work of great value is Bharavi's Kiratarjuniya. It describes in 18 cantos, the conflict between 'Siva and Arjuna ending in the latter's attainment of the Pasupata astra. Tradition connects him with Vishnuvardhana, the founder of Eastern Chalukyas and with Simhavishnu of Kanchi. It also affirms that the Ganga Durvanita wrote the paraphrase of the 15th Canto of this poem. But these details are not certain.

The Bhagavata Purana was composed in South India in the 10th century. That there was a conflict between Hinduism and the non-vedic creeds - Jainism and Buddhism - which gave rise to a new outlook of the neo-bhakti cult<sup>60</sup> is reflected in this Purana. The Purana combines a simple surging emotional bhakti to Krishna with the Advaita philosophy of Sankara.

In the 12th century, commentaries on Vishnu Purana (by Vishnu Chitta), Ramayana Mahabharata were composed which showed the interest of Tamil scholars in Sanskrit works.

Trivikrambhatta (9th century) was the author of Nalacampu or Damayantikatha the earliest extant Campu in Sanskrit. The great

Jaina writer Somadeva Suri (950 A.D.) flourished in the Court of Arikesari-II of Vemulavada (Andhradesa), a subordinate of Krishna-III, where the illustrious Kannada poet Pampa also lived. Somadeva was the author of Yasastilaka Campu and Nitivkyamrita. The latter reviews the theme of Arthasastra from the point of Jain morals. Halayudda, a contemporary of Krishna-III wrote Kavirahasya. Vadiraja, a pupil of Somadeva-Suri wrote Yasodharacarita.

In Tamil, the age of Imperial Colas (850-1200 A.D.) was the golden age of the Tamil culture.<sup>61</sup> The kings gave widespread patronage to Tamil literature. The prabhandha form became dominant and the systematic treatment of Saivasiddhanta in philosophical treatise began. Large Siva temples were built and celebrated in hymns by devoted scholars like Sekkilar. Vaishnava devotional literature also grew in quantum.

In general literature, the Jivikacintamani of the Jain ascetic and poet Turukkadevar was composed early in the 10th century. Jivika was the perfect saint no less than the charming lover and his early adventures and later renunciation is the main theme of the works.

The age of the later cholas saw among others the composition of Tamil Ramayana by the celebrated poet Kamban and also the Periyapuranam by Sekkilar.

Kannada, among the South Indian languages, next to Tamil has the oldest literature.<sup>62</sup> Its beginnings had great quantum of literature in prose and poetry. Nripatunga's Kavirajamarga (850 A.D.) though recent researches attribute the authorship to poet Srivijaya in the earliest extent work on rhetoric in Kannada. The name of Ganga Durvanita finds mention in this work. Kavirajamarga is based in part on Dandin's Kavyadarsa and must have received inspiration from Rashtrakuta Nripatunga Amoghavarsha-I. Another great work was the Vaddaradhane by Sivakoti (900 A.D.), a prose work on the earlier Jaina saints written in Purva-halagannada. Next comes Pampa (941 A.D.) who flourished in the Court of Arikeshari-II, a feudatory of Rashtrakuta Krishna-III. His two great works - the Adipurana and the Vikramarjuna Vijaya are most celebrated ones. Ponna, another famous of the three poets from Pampa wrote the Santinathapurana. However, Ranna belongs to the period of the later Chalukyas.

In Telugu, the translation of the Mahabharata by Nannaya is assigned to the 11th century reign of Raja Narendra (1019-61).

In Malayalam, the Unnunilisandisam the earliest extent work is assigned to the 14th century.

#### (F) LITERATURE UNDER PANDYAS AND IN KERALA

A work, named Nitidvishashtika by Sundara Pandya in Sanskrit is earlier to 6th century. The author's identity remains a mystery but the work is a merited one on niti or policy. Another

Kumaradasa, identified with a king of Ceylon (Ibid., p. 344) (6th century) composed a long poem in 20 cantos. Janakiharana handles the familiar story of Rama and the author was not only aware of Kalidasa but his admirer too. The original has been recently found in Malabar. Kalasekhara, one of the later alvars and a ruler of Kerala (9th century) composed a famous devotional lyric in the Mukundamala which is even to this day popular. He is also said to be the patron of Vasudeva the author of 4 Yamakakavyas. He also wrote the Vasudeva Vijay, a Kavya in 5 cantos on the model of Bhattikavya illustrating the rules of Sanskrit grammar laid down by Panini. The story of Rama was composed in a drama form in Ascaryacudamani of Saktibhadra. Poetry and of this period is popular among the actors of Malabar. He is also the author of Unmadavasavadatta which is not extant. He is believed to be the pupil of Sankara and may be assigned to 9th century.

Kerala was prolific in Sandesakavyas which began to flow after A.D. 1100. But a family of Nambudris in Kerala specialised for generations in architecture (Vastuvidya) as is known from works like Silparatha and others. Eight families practised in medicine (Aryaveda). In the field of astronomy and astrology, Kerala made very significant contributions. Vararuchi of Kerala invented the Katapayadi system of numerals. He is the author of the Chandvavakyas for calculating the position of the Moon or any day of the year. Bhaskara-I expounded the astronomical system of

Aryabhata in his Mahabhaskariya 500 years before the better known Bhaskaracharya. Govindaswami wrote a commentary on it and his pupil Sankara Sayana wrote in A.D. 869 a commentary on Laghubhaskariya, another work of Bhaskar-I. His patron, Ravivarma was a great astronomer and set up an observatory and is said to have inaugurated the Kaollam era. Haridatta (700 A.D.) wrote Grahacaranibandhana. This work was a basic one on Parahita system of computation employed for many years in Kerala. Several other works came out after 10th century.

In composing works on grammar, Kerala made a name. The Vararuchasangraha concise treatise in 25 verses (Karikas) on the major topics of Vyakarana. It is said to be of equal merit as of Panini by the commentator, Narayana Namburi of illam near Cochin. Narayana has also composed other Kavyas in Sanskrit. Compositions on worship forms (agamic) were composed in Kerala and mention may be made of Prayogamanjari of Ravi in 29 chapters and the Paddhati of Isana Sivaguru an encyclopaedic work in 18,000 verses which are the best examples in this line.

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