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Sangam Polity

The Administration and Social Life of the Sangam Tamils

N. SUBRAHMANIAN, M.A., Ph.D.

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Foreword

THE Śaṅgam Polity introduces the student of Tamil history to the details of the governmental and social polity of the Tamils of the Śaṅgam age, and is bound to prove an invaluable guide to a correct understanding of the public and private lives of the Tamils during, what the author of this work calls, their golden age.

Dr. Subrahmanian was awarded the Doctorate in Philosophy by the Annamalai University on the basis of this piece of research, the printed version of which has been revised sufficiently to meet the needs of the scholar as well as the general reader.

Dr. Subrahmanian is the author of *The Pre-Pallavan Tamil Index* (published by the University of Madras) which provides the source material for research in Tamil history and literature. He is now engaged in writing the political history of the Tamils down to A.D. 600. These two works together with the *Śaṅgam Polity* will entitle their author to be called the historian of the Śaṅgam age. The author has drawn exhaustively on the Śaṅgam texts and utilised other sources like foreign notices.

This work is a full and definitive account of the Saṅgam Polity. It is undoubtedly a landmark in research publications relating to the Tamil country and one is happy to note that the author's efforts in this direction are both considerable and excellent.

Madras
19 October 1966

R. Sathianathaier

Preface to the Second Edition

THE *Śaṅgam Polity* first published in 1966, went out of print a few years ago and has been in considerable demand since then. It is now being issued as a revised edition, though basically the text remains the same but for two important appendixes and necessary verbal changes throughout.

The first edition of this work was widely read and critically reviewed by eminent scholars like Professors H. D. Sankalia, B. A. Saletore, J. R. Marr and others. I have greatly benefited by the scholarly reactions of these critics to whom my grateful thanks are due. There have been a few non-scholarly reactions too, which I have duly ignored. All that I have said in the preface to the First edition is still valid in my opinion and I see no reason for any retraction from any statement I have made there. I do not pretend for a moment that the *Śaṅgam Polity* contains everything that can be said about the governmental and social polity of the Śaṅgam Tamils. The data are voluminous and the picture can always be made more comprehensive and elaborate, but then any additional information is not going to alter the basic knowledge provided by the present work: and so I am content to leave the outline and the details as they now are.

It may be of interest to the students of *Śaṅgam Polity* to know that the Indian Council of Historical Research, the premier Historical-research-aiding Council in India, have sanctioned the translation of this book into twelve Indian

languages. Indian language versions of this book will soon be available to scholars in different states of India and that will evoke scholarly criticism of the contents of the book, which will be very good in its own way. Scholars interested in Tamil studies will surely laud this learned gesture on the part of the Council.

My thanks are due to the Ennes Publications who have brought out this edition.

Madurai
27—12—1980

N. SUBRAHMANIAN

Preface to the First Edition

THE purpose of this work is to give an exhaustive and authentic account of the governmental and social polity of the Tamils of the *Saṅgam* age. For this purpose the main source of information, namely, the '*Saṅgam* literature' has been utilised *in extenso*. This source material has been the most considerable and useful; but has not been so fully utilised at any time before for the reason that most of the scholars who did pioneering work in this field of historical research had little means of direct access to the source. The *Saṅgam* literature consists of abstruse texts full of obsolete terminology and governed by an ancient grammar and so is not easily understood by one who has not been initiated into a study of these texts in the traditional manner. The pandits who were no doubt properly equipped that way lacked training in modern historical research and so their attempts have progressed on lines different from those of historians. Co-ordinating these two branches of study has been a long-felt want and it is claimed now that such co-ordination has been attempted in this work.

Though this work derives its substance mainly from the ancient *Saṅgam* texts and some foreign references, a few books dealing with *Saṅgam* Polity or allied subjects already in the field have also been consulted. It was impossible to agree with all the conclusions arrived at by the earlier works but they have been helpful in a general sense. The extent to which they have been helpful and the extent to which it has been found necessary to differ from them will be indicated in the footnotes. The reason why the pioneers

in the field have been constrained to content themselves with tentative hypotheses and have not been able to proceed far towards definitive conclusions will be evident from what follows.

European scholars took the lead in drawing our attention to the importance of this subject as of many others and it became evident in Bishop Caldwell's *A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian Languages*, Dr. Grierson's *The Linguistic Survey of India*, Sir H. H. Risley's *Peoples of India* and E. Thurston's *The Tribes and Castes of Southern India*. The earliest attempt at probing into the history of ancient Tamiḻaham was made by P. Sundaram Pillai of Trivandrum. Though he made no substantial contribution towards knowledge about *Saṅgam* Tamiḻaham, he stimulated interest in such studies and it was a necessary thing for a pioneer to do. *The Madras Christian College Magazine* from 1890 to 1905 was doing yeoman's service in the cause of ancient Tamil literature and history; and scholars like M. S. Purnalingam Pillai and V. G. Suryanarayana Sastri did much to bring to the forefront information about Tamil linguistics, literature and history. But a major attempt was made only in 1904 by V. Kanakasabhai, the great pioneer in the field. His famous work, *The Tamils Eighteen hundred years ago* is one to which most later historians of South India are indebted; but it has been adversely commented upon by many but rarely improved upon by any. Parts of that book had appeared as "a series of articles in the *Madras Review* between 1895 and 1901". His idea was to bring out "all the information available in Tamil literature regarding the ancient civilization of the Tamils". It must be said he has succeeded in a large measure. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri pays a handsome tribute to Kanakasabhai and says "Kanakasabhai's work *The Tamils 1800 years ago* (1904) remains still invaluable in many respects". But many of Kanakasabhai's con-

clusions are found untenable to-day because we have access to original texts which were not available in his days and which had then not been as carefully edited as they have since been done. Most of the *Saṅgam* works have been edited with great care by Dr. U. V. Swaminatha Iyer but for whose scholary editions all the efforts of the historians in that direction would have been futile. But it is marvellous how Kanakasabhai with great insight fixed the *Saṅgam* age to the early centuries after Christ: a conclusion which seems to be incontrovertible yet. Dr. S. Krishnaswami Iyengar in his Preface to the *Beginnings of South Indian History* objected to Kanakasabhai's 'patriotic' approach to historical problems. The 'patriotic' view if supported by substantial data cannot be objected to; but the misfortune of South Indian historical research seems to be that it has been all along in the hands either of Tamil patriotic historians or historians noted for their bias against Tamil culture. It is needless to add that both these attitudes are partisan and hence of little use to a serious student of history.

K. V. Subramanya Iyer who was one of the earliest to write seriously on the early history of the Deccan produced a loose array of hypotheses in his *Historical Sketches of Ancient Dekkan* in 1917; but R. G. Bhandarkar's *Early History of the Dekkan* has nothing to say on the early history of Tamiḻaham. Little wonder that north Indian scholars like A. S. Altekar and K. P. Jayaswal conveniently ignore Tamiḻaham, for even K. V. Rangaswami Iyengar is silent on *Saṅgam* Polity. Dr. R. C. Majumdar leaned on Kanakasabhai for his information on Tamil history, while Dr. Ghoshal depended on V. R. R. Dikshitar's translation of the *Kuṟaḷ* for his conclusions.

M. Srinivasa Iyengar published in 1914 his *Tamil Studies* or *Essays on the History of the Tamil People, Language, Religion and Literature*. That work committed the faults

opposite to those of V. Kanakasabhai and looked at Tamil culture and attainments from a prejudiced angle.

Dr. S. Krishnaswami Iyengar, in his *Beginnings of South Indian History* made a good beginning trying to set right Kanakasabhai but suffering from the same handicaps he fell into equal but opposite pitfalls. His *Ancient India* (1911) has been described by V. A. Smith as "a valuable book but one that does not profess to be the desired book."

Dr. S. Krishnaswami Iyengar, feeling the need for a detailed study of The Hindu Administrative Institutions of South India, delivered the Sir William Mayer Lectures in 1929-30 (Madras University) on that subject and included within the scope of those lectures an account of the later Pallava and Cōḻa administration also. But discussing in detail for the first time the working of political institutions in Tamiḻaham, he was naturally tempted to institute a comparison with the *Artha Śāstra* of the North. In the Chapter on '*Kuṛaḷ* Polity' he was concerned with showing to what extent the *Kuṛaḷ* was indebted to Kautilya. V. R. Ramachandra Dikshitar followed it up in his *Studies in Tamil Literature and History* (1933), for he felt that "to the earnest student of Indian History and particulalry of South Indian History, a deep and critical study of ancient Tamil literature is of the utmost importance". But his work is a compendium of scattered information codified for his purposes and does not profess to give us a compact picture of Tamil government and society. It is a collection of essays on widely different topics. His *War in Ancient India* covers too vast a canvas and does not deal with Tamil *Śaṅgam* military organization in great detail.

V. A. Smith writing a short chapter in his *Early History of India* depended largely on Kanakasabhai but his field in the work was so wide that he could make no original contribution or draw a full picture; but with the intuition

of a great historian, Smith hit the nail on its head in regard to two problems: he agreed with those who assign the early centuries of the Christian era for the Tamil *Saṅgam* and broadly identified the country of the Satiyaputras.

P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar in his *History of the Tamils* published in 1929 has put forth the most detailed endeavour in that direction but has been dogmatizing rather too freely and trying to give conjectural explanations where historical data were lacking; but for sheer mass of material collected, arranged and presented his work is still unrivalled.

K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, the historian of the *Pāṇḍyan Kingdom* (1929) and the *Cōḷas* (1955) was concerned in the early chapters of these works with drawing a picture of Tamil society during the *Saṅgam* age. His considered opinions on these matters are found in the latest and single volume edition of the *Cōḷas*; the most succinct account yet of the Tamil *Saṅgam* society and government however is contained in his *History of South India* (1966) where he summaries all the matter so far published on the subject in about thirty pages in his chapter on 'The Age of the *Saṅgam* and After'.

K. G. Sesha Iyer tried to utilize the *Padiṟṟuppattu* and the *Puṟanānūṟu* for purposes of reconstructing the history of the Chēra land, and though he succeeded in no small measure, his aim was not to correlate those findings with the political or social history of the rest of Tamiḻaham. K. N. Sivaraja Pillai's endeavour to fix the chronology of the ancient Tamils was, no doubt, laudable, but the prejudices which he could not get over were too formidable for him to arrive at reasonable historical conclusions.

Dr. T.V. Mahalingam in his *South Indian Polity* (1955) has dealt with ancient Tamil Polity in thin outline in the course of a larger theme which includes the development of

South Indian Polity up to and inclusive of Vijayanagar institutions and in which Vijayanagar gets more than the lion's share of attention.

While historians of South India wrote their books invariably in English, Tamil pandits writing on subjects bearing on Tamil culture and history wrote in Tamil; most of the pioneering work done in this field by such pandits is to be found in the rare Tamil Journal *The Śen Tamiḻ*. Dr.U.V. Swaminatha Iyer, the learned editor of many *Śaṅgam* classics has put forth in his prefaces and notes to those works immense material useful to students of *Śaṅgam* history; his *Śaṅgattamiḻum Piṟkālattamiḻum* gives a comparative account of *Śaṅgam* and later day Tamil literature. Short monographs like *Chēran Seṅguṭṭuvan*, *Vēḷir Varalāṟu*, *Āḻvārgaḷ Kālanilai*, *Tolkāppiya Poruḷadikāra Ārāichchi*. etc., by M. Raghava Iyengar, *Tamiḻ Varalāṟu* and *Vañjimānagar*, etc., by R. Raghava Iyengar have been helpful. But none of these works covers the entire field, nor is exhaustive and authoritative within the framework of its own thesis. S. Vaiyapuri Pillai's works are concerned only with Tamil language and literature and with trying to assign a late date for the *Śaṅgam* literature except the Anthologies and they are not primarily concerned with giving a full and connected picture of Tamil *Śaṅgam* Polity.

The only work which can claim to have edited and put together some source material for the benefit of the student of Tamil history is 'Foreign Notices of South India' by K.A. Nilakanta Sastri.

It became imperative, therefore, that a fresh and full attempt should be made to bring within the framework of a single book all material relating to the governmental and social polity of the *Śaṅgam* Tamils. Writing in 1929 K.A. Nilakanta Sastri said in his *Pāṇḍyan Kingdom* as follows: "Still the best sketch is that of Kanakasabhai, but it is

high time that another account which will keep more in touch with the sources of our information is attempted. There is scope for a good monograph on the subject." This observation is still not out of date. It is claimed that this need is to some extent fulfilled in this work on *Saṅgam* Polity.

I am not unaware of the severely hostile criticism which my scheme of chronology for the *Saṅgam* texts will invite. As a justification of that scheme is not part of this work, such criticism has not been anticipated and met here. I am also aware that an unmentioned and angrily suppressed criticism of many of my conclusions in this work will relate to my refusal to gild the pill But this attitude of uncommitted, non-aligned approach is, in my opinion, a fundamental prerequisite for honest historical research.

> "Truth like a bastard comes into the world
> Never without ill-fame to him who gave her birth"
> (Milton)

Practically all the statements made in this work are supported by references to original sources mentioned as footnotes. A brief bibliography of ancient classics, modern works, journals etc., consulted and used along with a list of abbreviations adopted is appended at the end. The system of diacritical marks employed is the one suitable for Tamil words and this is indicated in the 'guide to transliteration'.

My respectful thanks are due to Professor R. Satyanatha Iyer, Professor of History and Politics (now retired) of the Annamalai University for the kind foreword he has given and for the most valuable guidance given to me in the preparation of this work, which was originally submitted as a thesis for the Ph.D. degree. I am greatly indebted to Professor R. Bhaskaran, Professor of Politics and Public Administration, University of Madras (now retired), for

the many valuable suggestions he gave for improving this work. I am thankful to the Syndicate of the Annamalai University who have permitted and enabled me to conduct and publish this piece of research work.

N. SUBRAHMANIAN

Guide to Transliteration

அ: a; ஆ: ā; இ: i; ஈ: ī; உ: u; ஊ: ū; எ: e; ஏ: ē; ஐ: ai: ஒ: o; ஓ: ō; ஔ: au.

க்$_1$: k; க்$_2$: kh; க்$_3$: g; க்$_4$: gh	ங்: ṅ
ச்$_1$: ch; ச்$_2$: chh; ச்$_3$: j; ச்$_4$: jh	ஞ்: ñ
ட்$_1$: ṭ; ட்$_2$: ṭh; ட்$_3$: ḍ; ட்$_4$: ḍh	ண்: ṇ
த்$_1$: t; த்$_2$: th; த்$_3$ d; த்$_4$: dh	ந்: n or ன்
ப்$_1$: p; ப்$_2$: ph : ப்$_3$: b; ப்$_4$: bh	ம்: m
ய்: y; ர்: r; ல்: l; வ்: v; ழ்: ḷ; ள்: ḷ; ற்: ṛ	
க்ஷ்: ksh; ஷ்: sh; ஸ்: s; ஹ்: h; ஶ: ś	

No distinction is made between ந் and ன்; ṛ and ṣ are discarded and substituted by ri and sh, i.e. Krishṇa is preferred to Kṛṣṇa; the cedilla is rejected as too pedantic and Śiva stands for Civa. The Tamil alphabet compels the use of ē (ஏ), ō (ஒ), ḷ (ழ்), l (ள்) and ṛ (ற்).

The transliteration scheme adopted in this book prefers the system used by the Epigraphia Indica and rejects the system followed by the Tamil Lexicon. The Tamil Lexicon perhaps claims its method to be scientific in that every letter when transliterated carries its inherent value with it:

e.g. தந்தான் : tantān

நாலடியார் : Nālaṭiyar

In this system, when the transliterated words are pronounced by those to whom spoken Tamil is unfamiliar, the result will be atrocious; for they will read தந்தான் as த்ன்தான் and நாலடியார் as நால(ட்)டியார். This system

forgets that the very purpose of transliteration is to enable one, who is unfamiliar with the script and pronunciation of words of a language, to read words of that language *exactly as* one who belongs to that language will pronounce them. Otherwise transliteration becomes a futile academic ritual. Tamil is a specially difficult language for this purpose and necessitates therefore the adoption of what Prof. A. L. Basham would call the 'hybrid system' of transliteration. This means that letters must carry with them in the process of transliteration not their inherent or basic pronunciational value but their positional (contextual) value in the word. Then we have

மாடு: Māḍu (and not Māṭu)

மாட்டு: Māṭṭu

காது: Kādu (and not Kātu)

தாகம்: Dāham (and not Tākam)

and the Lexicon's Nālaṭiyār and Tantān will assume sensible forms: Nālaḍiyār and Tandān.

It must not be forgotten that being useful is more important than even being scientific, and after all transliteration is a utility device.

Contents

Foreword v
Preface to the II Edition vii
Preface to the I Edition ix
Guide to Transliteration xvii

PART I : INTRODUCTORY

I THE ŚAṄGAM 3

II A SURVEY OF THE SOURCES 14
Epigraphy — Numismatics — Archaeology — Literature — Legends

III THE AGE OF THE ŚAṄGAM 25

PART II : SANGAM POLITY : GOVERNMENTAL

IV GOVERNMENT AT THE CAPITAL 37
The King — Aimperuṅkuḻu and Eṇpērāyam — The Ministers — Ambassadors — The Secret Service — The Purohit — The Astrologer — The Time-Keeper — Miscellaneous Officials — Personal Attendants, Clowns and Courtiers

V MUNICIPAL AND VILLAGE GOVERNMENT 117

VI WARFARE AND MILITARY ORGANIZATION 126
The Ethics of Warfare — The Theory and practice of Warfare — Some Celebrated Battles

VII LAW AND JUSTICE 187
Introductory — The Court of Justice — Crime and Punishment — Prisons

VIII REVENUE AND FINANCE 209
Land Revenue — Other Sources of revenue — Royal Expenditure — Methods of Collection, Treasury — Mint, Coinage, Weights and measures

IX ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES 230
Introductory — Agriculture — Industry — Trade

PART III : SANGAM POLITY : SOCIAL

X SOCIAL LIFE 259
The Society — The Caste System — The Brahmins and Ascetics — Communities other than Brahmins — Slavery — Status of Women — Marriage — Sati — Widowhood — The Courtesans — Food and Drink — Dress, Cosmetics and Ornaments — Pastimes, Games and Entertainments — Funerary rites — Some Social and Domestic Customs and Habits — Special Beliefs and Superstitions

XI EDUCATION, LITERATURE AND FINE ARTS 337
Education — Literature — The Fine Arts

XII RELIGION 363

XIII THE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF THE SAṄGAM TAMILS 385

APPENDIX : A. Some Parallel Polities 407

B. Some Proto-Gods of the Saṅgam Age 413

C. The Ancient Tamil Script 416

D. Tree Worship 418

Abbreviations 420

Bibliography 422

Index 429

PART I

INTRODUCTORY

CHAPTER I

THE ŚAṄGAM

Śaṅgam is a Sanskrit word which means an 'association'; a '*Śaṅgam* of poets', therefore, is 'an association of poets'. The Tamil *Śaṅgam* was a body of Tamil scholars or poets, a literary academy, which was established by the Pāṇḍyan kings; and it flourished at Madurai, on the banks of the Vaigai and earlier at other centres.

A large number of Tamil poems said to have been composed by the members of that body of poets has come down to us and is collectively known as '*Śaṅgam* Literature' The age in which these poets lived and wrote their literary works is called 'The *Śaṅgam* Age'. Different opinions have been expressed about the historicity of the Tamil *Śaṅgam*. We hear of the *Śaṅgam* from various sources. In considering them, we shall be concerned mainly with literary sources (1) which traditionally constitute *Śaṅgam* Literature, (2) which are not much separated from the age of *Śaṅgam* Literature and (3) which though belonging to a later age are reliable transmitters of a continuing tradition. There is one epigraphic reference of the tenth century A.D., in the larger Sinnamanur plates[1] which mentions the *Śaṅgam*.

We can arrange them *Seriatim*, chronologically thus:

1. The *Pāyiram* (laudatory preface) to the *Tolkāppiyam* composed by Panambāranār, a contemporary of Tolkāppiyar says[2] that the *Tolkāppiyam* was subjected to hostile criticism by Adaṅkoṭ-

1 S. I. I. III no. 206

2 *Tol: Pāyiram;*
''நிலந்தரு திருவிற் பாண்டிய னவையத்
தறங்கரை நாவி னன்மறை முற்றிய'
வதங்கோட் டாசாற் கரிறபத் தெரிந்து.''

ṭāśān, another contemporary scholar in the court or *Avaiyam* of Nilandaru Tiruviṛ Pāṇḍyan. This shows that a system of literary censorship was known to the Tamils during the very early days of their literary history. The term used in this reference is *Avaiyam* and not *Śaṅgam*.

2. The poem *Maduraikkāñchi* in the *Pattupāṭṭu*, or 'Collection of Ten poems', refers to the Pāṇḍyan king Talayālaṅgānattu cheru venṛa Neḍuñjeḻiyan as one who should emulate two great predecessors of his: (1) Nilandaru Tiruviṛ Pāṇḍyan and (2) Palyāgaśālai Mudukuḍumi Peruvaḻudi; and incidentally refers to the former as "one famous for the institution of the assembly of good scholars of reputation".[3] Here, too, the word *Śaṅgam* does not occur; on the other hand the expression *Puṇar Kūṭṭu* "the assembly of those who have come together" (a repetitive expression) is used.

3. The epic *Maṇimēkalai*, which, according to tradition and to a statement in its *Padiham* (poetical preface) was contemporaneous with *Śilappadikāram* (2nd century A.D.) no doubt, uses the expression *Śaṅgam* but in a different sense. It is used to mean "The Buddha *Śaṅgha*" or "an association of Buddhist ascetics" in more than one context.[4] Hence that epic does not mention the association of poets in such contexts. But it cannot be held that the author of *Maṇimēkalai* was not aware of the *Śaṅgam* (that would be argument from silence) but only that the word *Śaṅgam* has not been used in the earlier Tamil works in the sense of an association of poets.

3 *Madurai*: 761 to 763;
"தொல்லாணை நல்லாசிரியர்
புணர் கூட்டுண்ட புகழ்சால் சிறப்பின்
நிலந்தரு திருவின் நெடியோன்."
Nachchinārkkiniyar the commentator, however, interprets these lines in a different way and equates *Nilandaru Tiruvin Neḍiyōn* with *Tirumāl*, because of the peculiar system of prose-order — *Koṇḍu Kūṭṭu* he adopts in explaining the *Pattuppāṭṭu* poems.

4 *Maṇi*: XXX: 3; VII: 113, 114.

4. The next reference to such an association of poets is to be found in *Kalittogai*;[5] in a reference to the Pāṇḍyan King, he is described as "one whose ears (the fields) are watered by the sweet words (the channel waters) and ploughed by the learned and ever fresh tongues of poets".[6] In another context, the spring season is described as a "period when the sweet and fresh verses of the poets of Madurai of tall turrets are recited and learned by all the world".[7] Here too the word *Saṅgam* is not used.

5. The next reference to this association is made by Tirunāvukkaraśu Nāyanār (Appar), the Saiva saint, who belonged to the early seventh century. Praising Lord Śiva, he refers to a famous *Tiruviḷaiyāḍal* one of Śiva's sacred or divine diversions and sings of "Him that entered the *Saṅgam* as a learned poet and secured for Dharmi the purse of gold offered by the king"[8]. Here, for the first time, so far as is known now, the expression *Saṅgam* is used to mean the traditional 'association of poets'. So, the first usage of this expression in this sense goes back to the early seventh century A. D. Since then, the term *Saṅgam* becomes the accepted word for the institution.

6. Then we come across the most elaborate and the most discussed reference to the *Saṅgam*. That is in the commentary to

5 One of the references in *Kalittogai* is from Madurai Marudaniḷa Nāganār who was a contemporary of Nakkīrar according to the *Iṟaiyanār Ahapporuḷ*; his poems find place in *Ahanānūṟu*, *Kuṟuntogai* and *Naṟṟiṇai*. The other is from Pālai Pāḍiya Peruṅkaḍuṅgō whose poems are included in *Puṟanānūṟu*, *Ahanānūṟu* and *Kuṟuntogai*. So it is evident that these poets belonged to the *Saṅgam* Age

6 *Kali* : 68;
"புலனு வுழவர் புதுமொழி கூட்டுண்ணும்
புரிசைசூழ் புனலூர."

7 *Kali* : 35;
"நிலனுவிற் றிரிதருநு நீண்மாடக் கூடலார்
புலனுவிற் பிறந்தசொல் புதிதுண்ணும் .."

8 *Tēvāram* : Appar : *Tiruppuṭṭūr Tiruttāṇḍaham* : 3.
"நன்பாட்டுப் புலவனுய்ச் சங்க மேறி
நற்கனகக் கிழிதருமிக் கருளி னேன்காண்"

the *Iṟaiyanār Ahapporuḷ*.[9] The final and the present form of that commentary did not perhaps materialize before the end of the seventh century A. D. during or immediately after the reign of Kūn Paṇḍyan. Scholarly opinion on that matter is that the *Iṟaiyanār Ahapporuḷ* text was composed during the early centuries of the Christian era as tradition has it, that the nucleus of the present commentary was composed by Nakkīrar soon after the composition of the text, and that the commentary was passed on from generation to generation of Tamil scholars, till it reached one Nīlakaṇṭan of Muśiṟi of the tenth generation who probably gave it its present form together with whatever embellishments he wished to give it. In this commentary the gloss on the first *Sūtra* gives an elaborate account of the Tamil *Saṅgams*, which by the commentator's account, were not contemporaneous but were constituted one after another and so were chronologically successive; and they were called the First *Saṅgam* or *Talai Saṅgam*, the Middle *Saṅgam* or *Iḍai Saṅgam* and the Last *Saṅgam* or *Kaḍai Saṅgam*. Tradition has it that the Middle *Saṅgam* succeeded the first when the Pāṇḍyan king, whose early capital city called *Ten*-Madurai on the shores of the Indian Ocean was destroyed by a deluge, shifted his capital and the *Saṅgam* to Kapāṭapuram probably situated on the east coast. Kapāṭapuram too was engulfed by the sea, and the capital and the *Saṅgam* were again shifted, now, to Madurai an inland city. Thus modern Madurai on the banks of the Vaigai became the third capital and the seat of the third *Saṅgam* of Tamil poets. There are references in the *Silappadikāram*[10] and in the *Kalittogai*[11] to this 'loss of territory by deluge'.

9 *Iṟai, Ahap*: *Sūtram* 1. Com.

10 *Silap*: XI: 19, 20;
"பஃறுளி யாற்றுடன் பன்மலை யடுக்கத்துக்
குமரிக் கோடுங் கொடுங்கடல் கொள்ள"

11 *Kali*: 104: 1, 2;
"மலிதிரை யூர்ந்துதன் மண்கடல் வௌவலின்,
மெலிவின்றி மேற்சென்று மேவார்நா டிடம்படச்"

Many scholars[12] have argued and differed over the numerous improbabilities and inaccuracies in this commentary. It is not necessary for our purpose here to enter into those controversies. Even if the story of the three *Saṅgams* narrated in the commentary to *Sutra I* of the *Iṟaiyanār Ahapporuḷ* frequently appears improbable and absurd, it is also clear that there is a solid core of reliable historical truth around which much legend has grown. A sober historian should be neither too credulous nor too sceptical especially when a very vast and persistent tradition is pitted against certain improbabilities in a particular commentary to a particular text. Even if the commentary on *Iṟaiyanār Ahapporuḷ* was not extant, still the tradition about the Tamil *Saṅgams* is so persistent that no serious historian can reject it offhand. It is a counsel of despair which prompts one to conclude that 'nothing can be made of this account',[13] At least that there were *Saṅgams* can surely be made out of it.

The next group of references to the *Saṅgam* occurs in medieval commentators like Pērāśiriyar and Nachchinārkkiniyar who were very responsible persons and who passed on tradition very faithfully and rarely twisted evidence to suit their own conclusions. Pērāśiriyar mentions, "the men of integrity and scholarship belonging to the four Varṇas and members of the three *Saṅgams*,"[14] in two places in his commentary on the *Tolkāppiyam*.

12 P. T. S. : *The Tamils* : Chap. XVI. V.R.R. Dikshitar : *Studies*: Chap. I.

13 K. A. N. Sastri : *P. K.* p. 17. Having made that remark, the professor however goes on to say : "Some of the names of the Pāṇḍyan Kings and the poets mentioned in this account are found in epigraphs and other authentic records; such names are Kaḍuṅgōn, Ugrapperu Vaḻudi and others...; the existence of an association for the promotion of Tamil Literature can be easily understood". Further, he fails to see that the Kaḍuṅgōn of epigraphy is not the same as the Kaḍuṅgōn of the *Iṟaiyanār Ahapporuḷ* commentary.

14 *Tol. Poruḷ* : 649;
"மூன்று வகைச் சங்கத்து நான்கு
வருணத்தோடு பட்ட சான்றோர்."
Pērā. com.

Nachchinārkkiniyar in his commentary on *Malaipaḍukaḍām* says that grammatical taboos like *Ānandakuṛṛam* were not known or recognized in the days when the poet composed this poem, for If that were so, the poets of the *Śaṅgam* would never have included this poem in their compilation.[15] Later references to this association of poets are not necessary for our present purpose.

If a *Śaṅgam* existed before the seventh century A. D. and if it was not referred to as *Śaṅgam* in the pre-seventh century literature, naturally the question arises as to what its name was. The *Śaṅgam* when it was called into existence was known either as *Avaiyam* or *Kūḍal* or its variant *Kūṭṭu*.

In *Puṛanānūṛu* the expression *kūḍal* is used in the context of bestowing praise on Pāṅḍyan Veḷḷi Ambalattu tuñjiya peru Vaḻudi. It is: "Oh! Monarch of the merciful sceptre who is renowned for the *kūḍal* of Tamil."[16] Here the expression *kūḍal* is naturally interpreted as *Madurai* by the commentator. But it seems that *kūḍal* which is Tamil for *Śaṅgam* did really mean an 'association of Tamil poets'. While praising a Pāṇḍyan king, no formula can be more appropriate than "*Tamiḻ Keḻu Kūḍal Thaṇ Kōl Vēndu*: The patron of the Tamil Śaṅgam". In the *Maduraikkāñchi* reference given above,[17] the expression '*Puṇarkūṭṭu*' is also another form for *kūḍal* and must stand for the *Śaṅgam*. In the stanza subjoined to *Maduraikkāñchi* the expression *Kūḍal Tamiḻ* is used in exactly the same way in which at a later date *Śaṅgat-tamiḻ mūṇṛumtā*[18] was used. It can be objected that even in the early centuries of the Christian era, the term *kūḍal* is used

15 *Malaipaḍu*: 145;
"இவர் செய்த செய்யுளை நல்லிசைப் புலவர்
செய்த ஏனைச் செய்யுட்களுடன் சங்கத்தார்
கோவாமல் நீக்குவர்."
Nach. com.

16 *Puṛam*: 58: 13.

17 *Vide Supra*: footnote 2.

18 "நாம்வேண்ட நன்னெஞ்சே நாடுதிபோய் நாலிலத்தோர்,
தாம்வேண்டும் கூடற்றமிழ்."
Nalvaḻi: the invocatory verse.

as if it indicates *Madurai*, the capital city of the *Pāṇḍyas*; this is true but it only means that the *Saṅgam* had become so much associated with the headquarters that soon the city and the most important cultural institution in it became inseparable in the minds of the people.[19] Ingenious explanations of the word *kūḍal* like making it *Nānmāḍakkūḍal* etc. are part of the legend concocted by religious enthusiasts of a later age. This has also influenced Nachchinārkkiniyar who explains *Nānmāḍakkūḍal* in *Kalittogai* in the traditional way. In the earlier days, no doubt, *Avai* or *Avaiyam* was an expression used to indicate the *Saṅgam* as Panambāranār makes it clear in the *Pāyiram* to the *Tolkāppiyam*.

Historians of South India seem to be unanimous in holding that the term *Saṅgam* was popularized in Tamiḻaham by Buddhist and Jain ascetics.[20] But while there is no evidence that the term *Saṅgam* was popularized by the Buddhists or the Jains, it is patent that the expression *Saṅgam* is not used in the earlier texts but is used only after the sixth century A.D. Further the Sanskrit language and Sanskrit traditions were not unfamiliar to the Tamils even before the Christian era. The term *Saṅgha* if used earlier could have been taken over directly from Sanskrit vocabulary instead of being passed on to the Tamils by the ascetics from the North. *Saṅgam* is found used as a synonym for the older *Kūḍal* or *Avaiyam*, only after the use of Sanskrit words had become very frequent and common.

While Appar in his *Tēvāram* used the word *Saṅgam*, his contemporary Sambandar used the word *Togai* (a collection — a

19 This is analogous to the use of the words *Comitatus* and *Wapentake* in Anglo Saxon history; these words described a geographical district as well as the court or the asssembly therein. The names Vañjimuṟṟam and Kañchimuṟṟam stand for Vañchi and Kāñchi respectively, probably because Muṟṟam is the courtyard in the palace where the king's court was held, and the town was named after the court.

20 P. T. S *The Tamils*, p. 246. K. A. N. Sastri: *P. K.*, p. 17; V. R. R. Dikshitar: *Studies*, 22 to quote only a few.

Tamil equivalent of *Śaṅgam).*[21] This would show that during the *Śaṅgam* period itself, the institution was known by a Tamil expression like *Kūḍal* or *Togai*.

It seems the main function of the *Śaṅgam* was to bring together the leading poets, scholars and thinkers of Tamiḻaham for literary work both creative and critical. The Pāṇḍya kings supported the scholars and honoured them and took part in their activities. Some of the kings were themselves poets and they contributed to the literature of the *Śaṅgam*. The poets met in a debating hall called *Paṭṭimaṇḍapam* [2] which had four entrances to it.

The number of poets who constituted the *Śaṅgam* could not have been constant throughout. The *Śaṅgam* was the most respected literary institution then and so poets strove to obtain the seal of approval at the *Śaṅgam* for their literary works. Many poets in the Chēra and the Chōḻa countries and even some in the Pāṇḍyan Kingdom were perhaps not members of the *Śaṅgam*. The many poets whose names we come across in the anthologies need not have been all of them members of the *Śaṅgam*.

There are some scholars who deny the existence of the kind of *Śaṅgam* described in the commentary on the *Iṟaiyanār Ahapporuḷ*. The main argument advanced in support of such a view is that this account of the *Śaṅgam* is in many respects unreliable. It has already been stated that this argument is beside the point, for the commentary on the *Iṟaiyanār Ahapporuḷ* has only mixed up certain facts with some fiction and the existence of the *Śaṅgams* which is the core of this account must belong to the factual part of the narrative. The argument that "the idea of an organized academy is a very modern one and it is surely a violent anachronism to transfer it to many hundreds of years ago"[23] seems to be met by the very existence of the Tamil *Śaṅgam* which disproves that hypothesis.

21 *Tēvāram* : Sambandar : *Tiru Ālavoy Padiham* :
"...அந்தண் மதுரைத் தொகை யாக்கினானும்..."
22 *Śilap* : V : 102. P.T.S. *The Tamils*, p. 233.
23 P.T.S : *The Tamils*, p. 233; *vide* Plato's Academy.

An attempt is also made to give a later date to the academy (i.e. 5th century A.D.) and indirectly to destroy the theory of earlier *Śaṅgams* organized by the Pāṇḍyan kings. It is stated that 'Vajranandi', the pupil of Sri Pūjyapāda founded the *Drāviḍa Śaṅgha* in Madurai of the Deccan in the year 525 (i.e. A.D. 470) after the death of (Sri) Vikrama. But it must be remembered that this *Drāviḍa Śaṅgha* was not a Tamil *Śaṅgam* as we understand it, but an organization of the Jainas of the Tamil country for teaching the Jaina *Dharma* to lay disciples.[24]

The origin of the *Śaṅgam* is a moot point. It is too much mixed up with the legend of Agastya which takes us into the regions of the supernatural and the divine. Historical speculation tends to stand still when legends are the only alternative to myths; but it is also quite probable that there were three *Śaṅgams* successively; so the earliest *Śaṅgam* could go back to the fourth or the fifth century B.C. This may be treated as just a hypothesis.

The end of the third *Śaṅgam* period is equally shrouded in darkness. Hence the *Śaṅgam* period has both ends deeply steeped in darkness and the period itself, therefore, appears dim. But some rough estimate of the latter date is possible.

For example, Pērāśiriyar and Nachchinārkkiniyar refer to the *Śaṅgam* as a thing of the past. The way in which Nāvukkaraśar refers to it in his *Tiruttāṇḍaham* also suggests that he refers to a thing of the past. So it can be presumed that by the commencement of the seventh century the *Śaṅgam* had become a memory. Certain historical circumstances must have been responsible for the collapse of the *Śaṅgam*. In the general confusion that followed the conquest of the Tamil country by the Kaḷabhras, the *Śaṅgam* must have begun to decay. This decay was perhaps not all too sudden : the *Śaṅgam* seems to have been subjected to a few handicaps even earlier. It may be remembered that *Iṟaiyanār*

24 S Vaiyapuri Pillai, however, feels that Vajranandi organized the *Śaṅgam* for educational and academic purposes of the kind usually associated with the Tamil *Śaṅgam*, but there seems to be no evidence for such a conclusion. *Vide* his *History of Tamil Language and Literature*, p. 12.

Ahapporuḷ mentions an occasion on which the poets of the *Śaṅgam* left for other places due to continuous famine in the Pāṇḍya land for twelve years.[25] The already weakened *Śaṅgam* when it lost its royal patrons must have scattered. The story of the Jain authors of *Nālaḍiyār* leaving Madurai for other places was but an echo of a forgotten event.

By the time the pre-Kaḷabhra Pāṇḍyan rule in Madurai came to an end, anthologies like *Aiṅguṟunūṟu*, and *Ahanānūṟu* at least had been compiled; for *Aiṅguṟunūṟu* and *Ahanānūṟu* were compiled at the instance of the Chēra King Yānaikkat Śēy Māndaran Chēral Irumpoṟai and the Pāṇḍyan King Ugraperu Vaḻudi respectively; these two kings were clearly pre-Kaḷabhra rulers. Further, these two anthologies relate to *Aham* poems which, the *Iṟaiyanār Ahapporuḷ* commentary relates, the kings and the poets of hose days were anxious to preserve. *Padiṟṟuppattu*, *Paripāḍal*, *Puṟanānūṟu*, *Naṟṟiṇai*, *Kalittogai* and *Pattupāṭṭu* together with *Nālaḍiyār* came to be compiled, probably by the fourth century A.D. The incentive for the compilations was the Kaḷabhra interregnum. The upstart rulers whom the *Vēḷvikkuḍi* grant very properly styles *Kali Araśar* had destroyed the *Śaṅgam*.

The *Śaṅgam* age came to an end involving a considerable change in the way of life of the people. The body of *Śaṅgam* literature in which we include *Tolkāppiyam*, the eight anthologies, the ten poems, the eighteen *Kīḻkaṇakku* works, other relics of works like the *Tagaḍūr Yāttirai*, and the two epics *Śilappadikāram* and *Maṇimēkalai* is of a nature clean different in the kind of information given and the diction and idiom employed from literary works commencing with the *Tēvāra* hymns of Sambandar and Appar. A careful study of the literature we have now considered *Śaṅgam* and also a study of all the later works of Tamil literature will show

25 As a result of a long period of drought in the Pāṇḍyan land, the poets of the *Śaṅgam* left Madurai for the Chōḻa land and were patronized quite liberally by Maindan of Ālañjēri; after the period of famine had drawn to a close, the poets came back to Madurai (*Tol. Poruḷ:* 30. Nach. com.).

that they reflect vastly different stages in the evolution of Tamil society

The era of the *Śaṅgam* poets yielded place to the age of religious devotion. The golden age of Tamil Literature which was almost contemporaneous with the Augustan age in Rome had perished by the 4th century A.D. Roughly, therefore, the *Śaṅgam* and all that it stood for had drawn to a close before the days of Kaḍuṅgōn (C.A.D. 590-620) in Madurai or Simhavishṇu (C.A.D. 575-600) in Kāñchi.

For the purpose of this work which examines the entire '*Śaṅgam* Literature' in order to set forth the political and social conditions reflected therein, it is perhaps sufficient to have enough evidence to establish that there is *Śaṅgam* literature and that has never been disputed. That there were *Śaṅgams* or *Academies* of poets and scholars too, also seems to be beyond doubt. We shall turn in a succeeding chapter[26] to the probable dates of writing of those poems.

26 *Vide* Chapter IV *infra.*

CHAPTER II

A SURVEY OF THE SOURCES

THE SOURCES which yield material for a thesis on the Tamil *Śaṅgam* polity are clearly marked and easy to list. They are: (1) Epigraphical data, (2) Numismatics, (3) Archaeology, (4) Literary sources and (5) Legends. Of these, the epigraphical data which help us to formulate the *Śaṅgam* polity are very limited and whatever can be used are mostly beyond the borders of Tamiḻaham, but still on Indian soil (like the Aśokan edicts and Khāravela's inscription). Numismatics, too, helps us only to a very limited extent but practically all coins relevant to the *Śaṅgam* period are of foreign origin like the Roman imperial coins. The local coins of the *Śaṅgam* age belong either to the Pāṇḍyas or to the Chōḻas, but since neither variety bears any legend helping us to know any biographical data or directly enabling us to date the coins, they can be dated only indirectly with reference to the other datable relics with which they are found. Literary sources are partly foreign and partly local, though Tamil literature of the *Śaṅgam* period, is the most considerable single source of information for this thesis. The foreign, that is, non-Indian sources are the records left by Greek and Roman writers like Megasthenes, Strabo and Pliny, and the *Periplus* and Chinese records like those of Pan Kou, Fa-hien and Hiuen Tsang. The Ceylon chronicles like the *Mahāvaṁśa* supply us in a sense the most crucial dating viz., the Gajabāhu-Seṅguṭṭuvan synchronism in *Śaṅgam* chronology. There are also the Indian non-Tamil sources; they are practically all of them Sanskrit and while some of them like the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* supply only legendary information, some later texts like the *Artha Śāstra* of Kautilya make at least some reference to Tamiḻaham. So the Tamil *Śaṇgam* literature beyond doubt, is the

main source of historical material for our purpose here. One might take note of the warning that while "literature is in other countries, the bed rock of history, in India it is often a snare".[1] But it is strange irony that any history of the *Saṅgam* period has to depend to a large extent on the contemporary Tamil literature. But the confirmation which the information contained in *Saṅgam* literature finds in epigraphical data and in foreign sources indicates that the historical material in the indigenous literature of that period at least is no mere snare. The Tamil *Saṅgam* literature like any other is capable of exaggerating; but still it contains a large fund of correctly recorded material of considerable assistance to a historian. Legends of course, are not scientifically useful. But when they corroborate evidence adduced by other sources or suggest useful hypotheses, they must be treated as tolerable evidence.

Taking the sources of evidence one by one, we shall see to what extent they help us to present an account of the Tamil *Saṅgam* polity.

I. *Epigraphy*

It is true that inscriptions "are the most copious and authentic source of Indian History, particularly of South Indian History".[2] But that source does not yield much material for a study of the history of the *Saṅgam* age; for we have practically no contemporary local epigraphical evidence to corroborate the information obtained from other sources.

The inscriptions which can be considered to throw some light on *Saṅgam* history are the following in the chronological order:

A. The earliest inscriptions in Tamiḻaham of any interest to us are "*the short inscriptions found in natural caves* in the Tamil Districts which seem to record the names of the carvers of the rock-cut beds they contain or their occupants".[3] In this connection it may be remembered that the *Tolkāppiyam* mentions a class of wandering

1 K. A. N.: *Cōḷas*, p. 11.
2 K. A. N.: *H.S.I.*, p. 13.
3 *Ibid.*, p. 14.

recluses called *Aṟivar* (men of knowledge); it is quite possible that these *Aṟivar* (the Tamil recluses) used these caves. The language used in these inscriptions is Tamil written in the Brāhmi script. The view that the script adopted was a primitive Tamil alphabetic script is also held by some scholars. About 80 such inscriptions are found. From the 'enigmatic' statements found in the inscriptions, it will be difficult to posit any conclusion.

B. *The Aśokan inscriptions* were found in Siddhāpura and Brahmagiri in the Mysore area, Māski (Hyderabad) and Yerragudi (Kurnool District). These inscriptions of Asoka being practically in the Deccan and not strictly speaking in South India need not be considered here. But even the Mysore inscriptions do not say much about conditions in Tamiḻaham. The only information which the Aśokan rock edict II (middle of the 3rd century B. C.) supplies is its knowledge of the five independent states of 1) the Chōḍas (Chōḻas), 2) the Pāṇḍyas, 3) the Satiyaputras (whom we identify with the Kōśars of Tuḷunāḍu), 4) the Kēraḻaputras (the Chēras) and 5) the Tāmraparni (Ceylon) as neighbouring but independent states beyond the southern pale of the Aśokan Empire. Rock Edict XIII mentions the Chōḻas, the Pāṇḍyas and the Tāmraparni. These references point to the existence of independent Tamil States during Aśoka's reign period.

C. *The Hāthigumpha inscription* of Khāravela (first half of the 2nd century B.C.) mentions a league of Tamil states strong enough to constitute a threat to the safety of Kaliṅga and says that the league had been in existence for 113 years before then. When this is studied with the reference in Tamil literature[4] to a Mauryan invasion of the south and Mōhūr's defeat at the hands of the Kōśars who helped the invading Mauryas, the motive behind the formation of the league of Tamil states is clear. 113 years before the Hāthigumphā inscription takes us to the early part of Bindušārā's reign and it is known that the southern extension of the Mauryan empire was achieved in the reign period of that king. So Māmūlar's reference must be to an invasion of the south by the Mauryan

4 *Aham* 251.

armies of Bindusārā; but the force of the invasion was spent out when it reached the northern boundary of Tamiḻaham. The danger, however, was clear to the Tamil states who formed a defensive league against northern invasion, and it is this league that Khāravela refers to; that the Kaliṅga king was worried by this league of Tamil States proves the political foresight of the Tamil powers which came together to resist a common foe and explains the independent state in which the southern kingdoms were found for many centuries more.

D. *The Vēḷvikkuḍi grant* of Parāntaka Neḍuñjaḍayan (765-815) is helpful for it mentions that Neḍuñjaḍayan regranted the village of Vēḷvikkuḍi to the descendants of the Brahmin grantees who got the village from the Pāṇḍya Palyāgaśālai Mudukuḍumi Peruvaḻudi who was a famous *Saṅgam* king.

The larger Sinnamanūr plates refer to Neḍuñjeḻiyan of Talayālaṅgānam fame in a similar manner and so mention a *Saṅgam* king.

E. Another important inscription which like the Vēḷvikkuḍi grant, though belonging to a later age, refers to the *Saṅgam* life is the *Kuḍumiyāmalai 'music inscription'* ascribed to Pallava Mahēndra Varman I (C. A. D. 600-630) or to the contemporary Pāṇḍyas. This inscription consists of some exercises to be practised on certain stringed instruments and can be seen to continue the tradition of the *Silappadikāram* days.

F. *In the Tirukkōvalūr inscription* edited by T. A. Gopinatha Rao,[5] there is a reference to 'the self-immolation of Kapilar, the *Saṅgam* poet, after his giving away Pāri's daughters in marriage to Malaiyamān (the ruler of Kōvalūr)'.

G The large number of *hero-stones* we come across in the Tamil and Kannada countries as late as the 10th century A.D. corroborate the account of such stones we get in *Saṅgam* literature.

Though for the sake of fullness of discussion we have mentioned the above inscriptional evidences, it can be at once stated that these are considerably less helpful to a student of Tamil *Saṅgam* polity than the contemporary literary evidence.

5 *Sen Tamiḻ* : Vol. IV, p. 232, etc.

II. Numismatics

Numismatics, which is considered next in importance to inscriptions, is again of limited use to us. The legends on coins usually help us to fix the reign periods etc. of particular kings; but in the *Saṅgam* age we do not come across any local coins;the use of coins was limited to foreign trade and was very rarely in vogue in inland trade. We know neither the size nor the weight of the coins called *pon* or *kāṇam* and *kāśu* though some 'lotus shaped' coins are mentioned. Really ancient coins are rare and contain no dates and few intelligible legends; also the devices upon them are often crude and indistinct. The *pon* becoming the *hun* of the Kannaḍas came to be equated with a *varāl·an* and weighed about 50 or 60 grains (i. e. 1 *kaḷañju* or a molucca bean). The relationship between *paṇam* and *kāṇam* is not clear but *paṇam* is generally taken to be 1/10 of a *varāhan* or 5 or 6 grains or a *mañjāḍi* (the fruit of a tree called *tilakam*).

But during the days of Augustus and Tiberius, Roman Imperial coins of gold and silver were imported in large quantities in the course of trade; the coins circulated freely in *damirike* (Tamiḻaham). Large hoards of coins found near Madurai are generally supposed to have been minted in a local mint at Madurai by the foreign merchant-settlers. The gold and silver coins of the days of Augustus and his immediate successors found in such large quantities in Tamiḻaham, not only prove the existence of a brisk trade between the Roman empire and Tamiḻaham, but corroborate in a large measure the numerous references to such trade in the *Saṅgam* literature. The bulk of that literature can therefore be said to belong to the first 2 or 3 centuries of the Christian era. The discovery of a Chinese coin of about the 2nd century B.C., in Mysore at Chandravalli is interesting and shows probably the trade between South India and China in those days.

III. Archaeology

Archaeology confirms the evidence of literature and the evidence of the presence of a 'Roman factory' at Arikkamedu in the neighbourhood of Pondicherry in the 1st century A.D. is very

helpful in corroborating the commercial contacts between Rome and Tamiḻaham, and in fixing a date for the *Śaṅgam* literature and in assigning the conditions and events mentioned in that literature to that period.

Architecture and painting had no doubt reached a high level of excellence in the *Śaṅgam* age; but in fact we have absolutely no concrete evidence in the shape of structures, works of sculpture or paintings of the pre-Pallavan age. The destruction that Madurai has often suffered and the complete destruction that Puhār suffered meant the destruction practically of all the art of Tamiḻaham of the *Śaṅgam* age, for all the art in that age must have been concentrated in the capital cities. Nothing of the plastic arts remains to tell a tale; only the literature which speaks about them has survived. But the arts themselves have survived in the hereditary genius of the people who have generally continued the cultural traditions of the land.

IV. Literature

Literature is the most considerable and fruitful source of historical data and it can be classified as *(a)* foreign, i. e. Greek, Roman, Chinese and Ceylonese and *(b)* Indian. Indian literature again, can be subdivided into the non-Tamil literature of the north and the indigenous Tamil *Śaṅgam* literature. There is no doubt that the *Śaṅgam* literature far outweighs the non-Tamil sources in importance and utility for our purposes here and so constitutes the major source of information for us.

It is known that during the early centuries of the Christian era, the Roman empire briskly traded with South India and the benefits flowing from such a trade were mutual and considerable. Among the Greeks and the Romans who have left some account of their knowledge of Tamiḻaham are:

1. Megasthenes, who is known to have resided in the court of Chandragupta Maurya, has left an account of the India that he saw and heard of; this account is included in the *Indica* of Arrian; Megasthenes makes certain remarks about the Pāṇḍyas of whom he must have dimly heard. He gives a quaint account of the Pāṇḍyan

Kingdom "ruled over by Paṇḍaiya a daughter of Herakles, to whom he assigned that portion of India which lies southward and extends to the sea". In his characteristic anxiety to note down his information, he had left a record of what he knew. He was the earliest non-Indian to make any mention of Tamiḻaham and especially the Pāṇḍyan Kingdom. The existence of the Pāṇḍyan Kingdom, in a condition fit enough to deserve the Greek ambassador's mention (i. e. in the 4th century B.C.) is proved.

2. Strabo was a Roman who makes references to the Pāṇḍyan embassies to Augustus and gives a description of those ambassadors. The political and commercial relations between the Tamil Kingdoms and the Roman Empire of the days of Augustus (later half of the first century B.C. and early half of the first century A.D.) is pointed out by Strabo. He records the increase in the knowledge of India among the Romans of his days, and the success of the expedition under Gallus sent by Augustus (25 B.C.) to secure for the Empire the command of Aden; and the Red Sea Port route to India was becoming increasingly popular among the merchants of the Empire; he also refers to the change of capital from Koṛkai to Madurai showing thereby that the Pāṇḍyan kingdom enjoyed an alternative capital in Koṛkai.

3. Pliny the elder deriving his information from earlier writers, wrote his *The Natural History* (C. A. D. 77) and he mentions many Tamil ports on the west coast.

4. *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, by an anonymous author (C. A. D. 80) gives the most elaborate information about the Tamil country, which the author calls *damirike*. The author evidently had personal knowledge of the details he gives in his work.

5. Ptolemy, the Alexandrian geographer, in his *Map of the World* gives indication of his knowledge of South India.

6. *The Peutingerian tables*, which speak of a temple of Augustus on the west coast of Tamiḻaham were composed in A.D. 222.

The essence of the information we gather from the classical writers of the west is that Tamiḻaham of the first few centuries before and after Christ was engaged in lucrative trade with

southeast Europe and that some Greek and Roman merchants knew enough of Tamiḻaham to enable them to exhaustively describe Tamil maritime habits and centres of trade.

The Chinese writer Pan Kou (who lived not later than the end of the first century A.D.) mentions in his '*Ts'ien han chou*' the kingdom of Houangtche (Kāñchi); and the later Chinese authorities like Fa-hien (A.D. 401-410), Ma-twan-liu (C A.D. 550-600) and Hiuen Tsang (A.D. 640) give us interesting but meagre information on South India.

The Ceylon Chronicles are the nearest foreign source, and much valuable historical material can be gathered from that source. It is the Ceylonese *Mahāvamśa* studied with the '*Urai peṛu kaṭṭurai*' of *Śilappadikāram* that gives us the clue to a crucial datum in *Śaṅgam* history, viz., the Śēṅguṭṭuvan-Gajabāhu synchronism (2nd half of the 2nd century A.D.).

Early Sanskrit literature mentions Tamil Kingdoms but even those references are neither very helpful nor very copious. The Vēdic references are scanty and mention no place names etc. 'Dakshināpatha' was just 'South' and need not have been 'extreme south'. In the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmiki, Sugrīva addressing his simian regiments described to them 'the Kavāṭa of the Pāṇḍyas famous for pearls and gems',;[6] this quite possibly refers to Kapāṭapura, the second capital of the Pāṇḍyas mentioned in the *Iṛaiyanār Ahapporuḷ*. But some would consider this reference to a Kavāṭa as a reference to a mere 'gate'. In the *Mahābhārata* of Vyāsa there is a reference to a 'Sāgaradvaja Pāṇḍya'.[7] It is possible to doubt the value of these references and with some reason.[8] But Kautilya's *Artha Śāstra* makes unmistakable references[9] to Madurai and the

6 *Rāmāyaṇa* : *Krishkindākāṇḍa*, 42 : 13.

7 *Mahābhārata* : *Droṇa Parva*, *Samsattakavata Sargha*—Chap. 23.

8 K.A.N. : *Cōḷas*, p. 11. "The *Rāmāyāṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* were frequently revised; the time, the authorship and the extent of such revisions are so obscure that it is hopeless to make an intelligent use of data drawn from these works".

9 Kautilya : The *Artha Śāstra* — Bk. II, Chap. 76.

special variety of pearls 'Pāṇḍya Kavāṭa'; Kautilya's acquaintance with the Tamil land was surely superior to that of Megasthenes.

On the other hand the Tamil literature known as *Saṅgam* literature' is the most copious and valuable source for our present purpose. We consider (1) the *Tolkāppiyam*; (2) the eight anthologies — *Naṟṟiṇai, Kuṟuntogai, Aiṅguṟunūṟu, Padiṟṟuppattu, Paripāḍal, Kalittogai, Ahanānūṟu* and *Puṟanānūṟu*; (3) the ten poems — *Tirumurugāṟṟuppaḍai, Porunarāṟṟuppaḍai, Siṟupāṇāṟṟuppaḍai, Perumpāṇāṟṟuppaḍai, Mullaippāṭṭu, Maduraikkāñchi, Neḍunalvāḍai, Kuriñjippāṭṭu, Paṭṭinappālai, Malaipaḍukaḍām*; (4) the eighteen *Kiḻkkaṇakku* works — *Nālaḍiyār, Nānmaṇikkaḍigai, Innā Nāṟpadu, Iniya Nāṟpadu, Kār Nāṟpadu, Kaḷavaḻi Nāṟpadu, Aintiṇai Aimpadu, Aintiṇai Eḻupadu, Tiṇaimoḻi Aimpadu, Tiṇaimālai Nūṟṟaimpadu, Kainnilai* (or *Innilai*), *Kuṟaḷ, Tirikaḍugam, Āchārakkōvai, Paḻamoḻi, Siṟupañchamūlam, Mudumoḻikkāñchi, Ēlādi*; (5) *Silappadikāram*; (6) *Maṇimēkalai*; and (7) remnants of poems like *Tagaḍūr Yāttirai* and *Bhāratam* of Perundēvanār as constituting *Saṅgam* literature. Though these works are traditionally accepted as *Saṅgam* works, recent attempts by some scholars to differently date these works compels a discussion of the age to which these works belong. Such a discussion will be undertaken though cursorily in the chapter on 'The Age of the *Saṅgam*'. But there can be no doubt that the historical data contained in these works clearly relate to a compact and well-defined period in the history of Tamiḻaham, and it will not be wrong to call that period the '*Saṅgam* period', for the authors of some of the works were members of the *Saṅgam* and some of the anthologies of *Saṅgam* poems were made by *Saṅgam* poets at the instance of certain *Saṅgam* kings.

The contemporary Tamil literature contains no professedly historical work, and it is this fact which makes a satisfactory account of the political history of Tamiḻaham of that age extremely difficult and makes P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar say "if chronology is the eye of history, Ancient Indian history will have always to be blind".[10] But we get a considerable quantity of incidental

10 P.T.S. : *The Tamils;* Introduction, p. 16.

information. As most of the anthologies like *Puṟanānūṟu*, *Padiṟṟuppattu*, and the epics *Śilappadikāram* and *Maṇimēkalai* contain elaborate praises bestowed on kings, they naturally contain considerable historical material. The *Śaṅgam* literature is largely free from misleading exaggeration, and is a very dependable body of literature.

Though the original texts of these anthologies and epics alone are of primary importance and authenticity to us, it will not be wrong to use the material contained in the commentaries (to these ancient texts) written by standard commentators like Nachinārkkiniyar, Iḷampūraṇar, Aḍiyārkkunallār, Parimēlaḻagar and some anonymous commentators, in as much as it is certain that these able commentators are recording only what they learned by way of reliable tradition. Certain later texts which belong to the next stage in the evolution of Tamil literature, like the *Tēvāram* hymns, *Iṟaiyanār Ahapporuḷurai* and *Peruṅgadai* of Koṅgu Vēḷ have been treated as useful sources of history for our purpose.

V. *Legends*

Legends, of course, cannot be given the same status as other sources of information. "Though legend is not history, the historian can never afford altogether to neglect the memory of races".[11] But the legends like the legend of Agastya, Viśvāmitra and Paraśurāma do not help us much in setting forth an account of Tamil *Śaṅgam* polity. The whole Arjuna myth of marriage with a Pāṇḍya princess must have been a forgery to ascribe all-India conquest and alliance to that hero. The legendary accounts of the Vēḷirs being introduced to Tamiḻaham by Agastya are also Proto-Dravidian information and are details of little use to us.

Apart from plainly mentioned details in the *Śaṅgam* texts, some researchers have tried to utilize certain astronomical data supplied by works like *Puṟanānūṟu*, *Paripāḍal* and *Śilappadikāram* and arrive at the age of these works. That these data cannot

11 K.A.N.: *H.S.I.*, p. 22.

be satisfactorily exploited for historical purposes is clear because scholars like L. D. Swamikkannu Pillai and V. R Ramachandra Dikshitar, using the same data arrive at very different conclusions; the former suggests the 8th century A.D. as a possible date for *Śilappadikāram* while the latter accepts the 2nd century A.D.

The sources of information listed above are all ancient and belong to the early centuries of the Christian era; with the help of these materials or some of them, a few attempts have so far been made to describe the nature of Tamil *Śaṅgam* government and social polity. The attempts made in this direction by V. Kanakasabhai in his *The Tamils — Eighteen hundred years ago* (1904); S. Krishnaswami Iyengar in his *'Beginnings of South Indian History*;and *Hindu Administrative institutions of South India* (1931); P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar in his *History of the Tamils* (1929); V. R. Ramachandra Dikshitar in his *Studies in Tamil literature and History* (1936); T. V. Mahalingam in his *South Indian Polity* (1955) and K. A Nilakanta Sastri in some chapters of his *The Cōḷas* (1958) and *History of South India* (1955) have given the subject shape and substance and serve as pioneering efforts. While Kanakasabhai's work remains still invaluable in many respects and the later works have been attempting either to support him or controvert him in some details here and there, no comprehensive account of *Śaṅgam* government and social polity has yet been attempted. The purpose of this work (Parts II and III) is to make such an attempt.

CHAPTER III

THE AGE OF THE ŚAṄGAM

THE AGE of the *Śaṅgam* is the age to which the *Śaṅgam* literature belonged; and the *Śaṅgam* literature is that body of writings which reflect conditions of social and political life which existed when the Pāṇḍyan kings patronized the *Śaṅgam* and which were composed by poets who belonged to that *Śaṅgam* or who were contemporaries of such poets. It is difficult to give an exact and delimited estimate of the period when the *Śaṅgam* existed. But it is not impossible to suggest a wide period within which such literature was produced and the political and social life depicted in that literature prevailed.

V. Kanakasabhai says,[1] "It is the general opinion of western scholars that there was no Tamil literature before the 9th century A. D.[2] But the fact appears to be that all that was original and excellent in the literature of the Tamils was written before the ninth century... some of the earliest works were undoubtedly composed more than two thousand years ago".

V. A. Smith says[3] "The scholars who maintain the early date of the best Tamil poems are right, and the 'Augustan Age' of Tamil literature may be placed in the first three centuries of the Christian era"

K. A. Nilakanta Sastri says,[4] "We are bound to assume that the Śaṅgam age lies in the early centuries of the Christian era",

1 V. K.: *The Tamils*, 1800; pp. 2 and 3.

2 He notes in a footnote as follows: "Dr. Burnell in his *South Indian Palaeography* and Dr. Caldwell in his *Introduction to the comparative Grammar of Dravidian languages*, have expressed this view."

3 Smith: *E. H. I.* p. 445.

4 K. A. N.: *P. K.*, p. 24.

and again says[5] "this literature belongs to the early centuries of the Christian era", and again,[6] "the first well-lighted epoch in the history of the Tamil land is that reflected in the literature of the *Śaṅgam* (i. e. the first three or four centuries A. D.) the earliest stratum of Tamil literature now available".

V.R. Ramachandra Dikshitar assigned the fifth century B.C. to the origin of the *Śaṅgam*[7] and the end of the fifth century A.D. to the extinction of the *Śaṅgam* studies.[8]

K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar evidently repeating Dikshitar says, "It seems to be reasonable to assume that the three academies comprised a period of about one thousand years ... and we shall not be wrong if we fix 500 B.C. and A.D. 500 as the extreme limits of the *Śaṅgam* age".[9]

Hence it is clear that historians of South India agree that the *Śaṅgam* age is the period of a few centuries immediately preceding or succeeding the Christian era; and that some of the earliest extant Tamil works belong to the first two or three centuries A.D.; a few works belong to the age B.C. Though it is easy to say this why we fix this period for this age and what works, according to us, constitute the *Śaṅgam* literature must be seen in greater detail.

The main reasons which compel us to accept the early centuries of the Chiristian era as the *Śaṅgam* age are clear; many of the poems constituting the *Śaṅgam* anthologies as also the twin epics of *Śilappadikāram* or *Maṇimēkalai* describe a society the general features of which are borne out by references we get from the Greek and Roman classical writers of the early centuries of the Christian era, like Ptolemy, Pliny the elder, Strabo and the author of the *Periplus*. Megasthenes, writing more than three centuries before them, also refers to the Pāṇḍyan Kingdom and to a certain practice of taxes being paid to the Pāṇḍyan

5 K. A. N. : *Cōlas*, p. 3.
6 K. A. N. : *H. S. I.*, p. 110.
7 V. R. R. Dikshitar : *Studies*, p. 21.
8 *Ibid*, p. 4.
9 K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar : *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 293.

'queen' in kind by rotation fixed by custom, which in a way is corroborated by the *Śilappadikāram*.[10] So at least the centuries from the beginning of the Mauryan dynasty (4th century B.C.) to the beginning of the Pallava age (6th century A.D.) witnessed a continuous culture which underwent no violent changes during that period. The interest which the Roman writers of the early centuries of the Christian era had in Tamiḻaham (which they called *Damirike*) was roused by the growing maritime commercial activity which bound the Roman empire to Tamiḻaham, i.e., the manufacturing centres of Tamiḻaham to the marts of Rome and *vice versa*. This brisk trade and the ancillary features of a commercial civilization, namely, ports, ships, lighthouses, ware houses, busy markets, manufacturing centres and a flourishing merchant community and the consequent Roman-Tamil commercial contacts are clearly and often mentioned in the literature which is traditionally considered to be *Śaṅgam* literature i.e., the literature produced by the literary *Śaṅgam* of Madurai promoted by the Pāṇḍyan kings.

A difficulty arises in defining what one means by the *Śaṅgam* literature; traditionally the *Eṭṭuttogai* (the eight anthologies), the *Pattuppāṭṭu* (the ten poems) and 'the *Padineṇ kiḻ Kaṇakku* (the eighteen 'minor' works) the two epics *Śilappadikāram* and *Maṇimēkalai* and the great grammatical work *Tolkāppiyam* have been treated as *Śaṅgam* literature. The tradition starts with the commentary to the *Iṟaiyanār Ahapporuḷ*;[11] the total acceptance of this tradition by later generations of poets, commentators and critics, is itself some proof of that fact.

The *Śilappadikāram* (the epic which relates to the tragic story of Kōvalan and Kaṇṇagi) says that Gajabāhu, king of Ceylon, attended the worship of Kaṇṇagi — the Goddess of chastity — instituted by the Chēra king *Śeṅguṭṭuvan*. The Ceylon chronicles speak of two Gajabāhus, one belonging to the 2nd century A.D. and the other to the 12th century A.D. As it is very clear that a

10 *Śilap*: XVII: 7.
11 *Irai. Ahap*: *Sūtram* 1, com.

work of the nature and style of *Śilappadikāram* could not have been written in the 12th century A.D. and that no great Chēra king like Śeṅguṭṭuvan lived in the 12th century A.D. the earlier Gajabāhu is the inescapable alternative and Śeṅguṭṭuvan is rightly placed in the 2nd century A.D. V. A. Smith holds that "Geiger's dating of the reign of Gajabāhu I between A.D. 173 and 191 may be accepted as a close approximation to the truth".[12] If that is so, Śeṅguṭṭuvan, belonged to the later part of the 2nd century A.D. So *Śilappadikāram* written by Śeṅguṭṭuvan's brother Iḷaṅgō belonged to the 2nd century A.D. and *Maṇimēkalai* written by Sāttanār, a poet mentioned as a contemporary in the *Śilappadikāram*,[13] also belonged to that period. The Gajabāhu–Senguṭṭuvan synchronism, therefore, is the sheet-anchor of the chronology of Tamil history.

Though the synchronism is based on internal evidence in a standard epic, there are critics who deny that the *Śilappadikāram* and the *Maṇimēkalai* belong to the *Śaṅgam* age. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri says, "the longer epics the *Śilappadikāram* and the *Maṇimēkalai* by common consent are taken to belong to a time later than the Saṅgam age".[14] *Maṇimēkalai* is assigned a later age (later than the 6th century A.D.) on the ground that the systems of philosophy propounded in Dinnaga's *Nyāyapravēśa* are also to be found in canto XXIX of *Maṇimēkalai*.[15] But as Nilakanta Sastri admits, "A careful examination of the other systems of philosophy propounded in that canto shows that there are many truly ancient doctrines in it which would not be easy to explain on the basis of a late date such as the 6th century A.D." But it is surprising to see that it does not occur to these scholars that the author of the

12 Smith: *E. H. I.*, p. 452.

13 *Śilap*: *Padiham*: 88, 89

14 K.A.N.: *Cōḷas*, p. 3.

15 *Ibid*, p. 15. F.N. 3. "Relatively late date for the Maṇimēkalai, later than A.D. 400, seems to be forced on us by the trend of the discussion of the relation between Canto XXIX of this poem and the *Nyāyapravēśa*, unless indeed this canto is treated as having suffered a later revision."

Maṇimēkalai in an earlier period propounded a system of philosophy (which perhaps he did not invent but only popularized) which was later dealt with by Dinnaga. So such a late date on this particular ground cannot be assigned to *Maṇimēkalai*. Nilakanta Sastri actually concedes an earlier date for the *Maṇimēkalai* by suggesting that canto XXIX bears signs of a remodelling.[16] With regard to the *Śilappadikāram*, it is said that "Iḷaṅgō was a later day author who wrote a romantic poem under the pen-name Iḷaṅgō Aḍigaḷ and that Karikālan, Neḍuñjeḻiyan and Śeṅguṭṭuvan were not contemporaries."[17] We do not know that these kings were not contemporaries and we do not see why Iḷaṅgo Aḍigaḷ should be treated as a pseudonym. The astronomical data in the *Śilappadikāram* which have been used to reach very different conclusions by L. D. Swamikkannu Pillai and V. R. Ramachandra Dikshitar are very unreliable because the data are not full and so can yield different dates. The other argument is that Śeṅguṭṭuvan's favourite poet Paraṇar in his panegyrics on that king[18] makes no mention of his 'Himalayan exploit', 'defeat of the Āryans', or the 'Kaṇṇagi legend'. True; but the *Padiham* to the *Padiṟṟuppattu*—V Ten—does explicitly mention "the worship of the Goddess of chastity instituted by Śeṅguṭṭuvan".[19] The poems by Paraṇar in the V Ten of *Padiṟṟuppattu*, in all probability, were composed before the North Indian adventure of Śeṅguṭṭuvan. A reference in the *Naṟṟiṇai* makes[20] it clear that the 'sufferings of Kaṇṇagi' were a matter of common knowledge to the *Śaṅgam* poets.

But the most important considerations which compel us to accept the first three centuries of the Christian era for the anthologies as

16 K.A.N.: *Cōḷas*, p. 28: F. N. 31.

17 K.A.N.: *P.K.*, pp. 20, 21; quoting L.D. Swamikkannu Pillai's views.

18 *Padiṟṟu*: V Ten.

19 *Ibid*, "கடவுட் பத்தினிக் கற்கோள் வேண்டிக் கானவில் கானங் கடுஞ்சிலைக் போகி யாரிய வண்ணல் விட்டிப் பேரிசை யின்ப வருவிக் கங்கை மல்லி".

20 *Naṟṟiṇai*: 216; "ஏதிலாளன் கவலுங்கவற்ற வொரு முலையறுத்த திருமாவுண்ணிக் கேட்டோர்."

well as for *Śilappadikāram* and *Maṇimēkalai* are: (1) we are concerned with a mass of literature which covers a period of 3 or 4 generations or about 200 years at least. (2) The reference made by Roman and Greek geographers and historians of the early years of the Christian era are in detail borne out by the numerous references in that literature. (3) There is a close resemblance in the style and diction among all these works usually classified as *Śaṅgam* literature. (4) The *Śilappadikāram* and the *Maṇimēkalai* in their style, diction and descriptive details too much resemble the anthologies to permit us to assign the epics a later date. (5) The spirit of religious toleration and the total lack of fanatic devotion to particular religious sects noticeable in the anthologies and in the epics is clearly different from the deep and pervading religious spirit of the *Tēvāram* and *Tiruvāymoḻi* age (i. e. the Pallava age — 6th to 9th century A. D.). (6) The Pallavas had become important in South India even by the 6th century A.D. and the complete absence of any reference to the Pallavas in the *Śaṅgam* works is an additional proof that the anthologies and the epics belong to the pre-Paḷḷava period. (7) It is also known that the Kaḷabhras had upset the traditional Tamil monarchies a century or two before Simhavishṇu (C.A.D. 574-600). So we are obliged to accept a pre-fourth century date for the *Śaṅgam* age. Hence the accepted assignment of the *Śaṅgam* works to the first three centuries of the Christian era seems to be unavoidable. "This arrangement could not be shaken except by arguments of equal cogency which do not conflict with the general probabilities of South Indian History."[21]

The inclusion of *Tolkāppiyam* and the 18 'smaller' anthologies, or poems also in the *Śaṅgam* works is objected to by certain scholars now. The late dating for *Tolkāppiyam* is difficult to understand. The style, diction and the subject matter alike of that grammatical work constitute clear proof of its antiquity; the prescription of words like *un* becoming *undu*[22] is an obsolete usage not found in any poem outside *Puṟanānūṟu*. The transition

21 K. A. N.: *P. K.*, p. 19.
22 *Tol. Śol.*: 292.

in the pattern of matrimonial rituals is another indication that the poem belongs to an ancient period, perhaps 2nd or 1st century B.C. If the reference to *Aindiram*[23] in the *Pāyiram* to *Tolkāppiyam* by Panambāranār necessarily suggests a pre-Pānini date for *Tolkāppiyam*, the work can be assigned a date five centuries before Christ. But it is difficult to disbelieve that *Tolkāppiyam* belongs to an age older than that of the other *Śaṅgam* works partly because of its style, contents and obsolete grammatical prescriptions and also because of the persistent tradition to that effect.

The *Kuṟaḷ* is the most important of the 18 'minor' works. Nothing is known of the personal life of the author but it is well known that the *Kuṟaḷ* (55) is reproduced verbatim in the *Śilappadikāram*[24] and the *Maṇimēkalai*[25] and also that *Puṟam* (34), makes an unmistakable reference to *Kuṟaḷ* (110). *Kuṟiñjippāṭṭu*[26] has a paraphrase of the typically *Kuṟaḷ* sentiment contained in *Kuṟaḷ* (134). Hence it is difficult to hold that the *Kuṟaḷ* is 'clearly a post-*Śaṅgam* work.'[27]

Chief among those who ascribe a later date to practically all the 18 'minor' works is S. Vaiyapuri Pillai. He has a notion that Vajranandi's *Śaṅgam* was a literary academy and that it was that *Śaṅgam* that was generally referred to as 'the *Śaṅgam*' and all anthologies were made only under the auspices of that *Śaṅgam* and that the *Tolkāppiyam* and the epics and the 18 'minor' works belong to post-Vajranandi period, i.e. not earlier than the 6th century A.D.[28]

S. Vaiyapuri Pillai's general argument that didactic poetry is alien to the basic pattern of *Śaṅgam* literature is wrong; he

23 *Aindiram* is believed to be a pre-Pāninian Sanskrit Grammar composed by Indra.

24 *Śilap* : XXIII; subjoined *Veṇba*.

25 *Maṇi* : XXII : 59 to 61.

26 *Kuṟiñjippāṭṭu* : 15 to 18.

27 K. A. N. : *H. S. I.*, p. 128.

28 These views are expressed in his *History of Tamil Language and Literature*.

presumes that the *Kuṟaḷ*, *Nālaḍiyār*, *Innā Nāṟpadu*, *Iniyavai Nāṟpadu* etc. do not belong to the *Śaṅgam* epoch because their purpose is didactic and the other *Śaṅgam* works are not such. But the *Puṟanānūṟu* and other anthologies do contain many ideas usually found in didactic literature; and such ideas cannot be considered to be alien to the genius of the *Śaṅgam* Tamils. The fact that a large number of Sanskrit words are found in some *Kiḻkkaṇakku* works is cited as an argument in favour of the late date for those works. The style and diction of the two epics, the 'minor' works and the anthologies are quite similar but for the fact that some of those works contain more Sanskrit expressions than the rest. This difference is due more to the style and taste of individual authors and dependent on the subject matter rather than to any particular trend in particular periods of the literature.

S. Vaiyapuri says that *Innā Nāṟpadu* was not composed by Kapilar, the author of *Kuṟiñjippāṭṭu*, and the *Padiṟṟupattu*, VII Ten, for according to him Kapilar of *Padiṟṟupattu*, praises and delights in the pleasures of meat and drink while the *Innā Nāṟpadu* prohibits non vegetarianism and spirituous drink. We have attempted to show (in the sub-chapter on 'Brahmins' in the chapter on 'Social life') that there is really no contradiction here, for Kapilar was only a vegetarian brahmin who in the *Padiṟṟuppattu* assumed the role of a non-vegetarian *pāṇan* (bard) when he wrote that laudatory poem. It was usual for the *Śaṅgam* poets to do so.

S. Vaiyapuri again says that Poygaiyār who composed *Kaḷavaḻi Nāṟpadu* was different from the one who composed the *Puṟanānūṟu* stanzas.[29] He gives no other reason for this view except that the same poet could not have praised a Chēra king[30] and a Chōḻa king[31]; anyone who had studied the *Śaṅgam* literature to any purpose can easily see that this practice of a poet bestowing praises on many kings is quite usual. It is again suggested that Poygaiyār, author of *Kaḷavaḻi Nāṟpadu* was the same as Poygai

29 *Puṟam* 48, 49. 30 Chēramān Kōkkōdai Mārban.
31 Chōḻan Seṅgaṇān.

Āḻvār, the Vaishnavite saint. But that the author of *Kaḷavaḻi* is different from and anterior to the Vaishnavite saint is clear, because while Poygai Āḻvār, true to the tradition of his sect very emphatically says "he will not praise any but God",[32] in the *Kaḷavaḻi*, the Chōḻa king *Śeṅgaṇān* is eulogized greatly. The exclusively Vaishnavite zeal noticeable in the Āḻvar is a definite post-*Śaṅgam* outlook. Poygaiyār, author of the *Kaḷavaḻi*, surely was a *Śaṅgam* poet.

The reference to Muttaraiyar (or Peru Muttaraiyar) in *Nālaḍiyār*[33] is mentioned by S. Vaiyapuri to suggest a later date for *Nālaḍiyār*. He says that the family of Muttaraiyar are known to us through epigraphy to have flourished from the 7th century to the 9th century A.D. and he concludes that the Muttaraiyar were not famous before the 7th century A.D.[34] His argument does not show that the Muttaraiyar family did not exist before the 7th century. Lack of epigraphical information is mere 'silence' and no conclusion can be drawn therefrom. That the *Nālaḍiyār* mentions them itself is proof that the Muttaraiyar were an important people during the *Śaṅgam* age, too. It would be proper to deduce the age of the Muttaraiyar from the references in *Nālaḍiyār* and not quite correct to fix the age of *Nālaḍiyār* from the meagre information we have about that family from epigraphical sources.

S. Vaiyāpuri is not reluctant even to misread a commentary for this purpose. He says that Nachchinārkkiniyar and Pērāśiriyar hold the authors of the 18 'minor' works as 'later' scholars (*Piṟ Śāṉṟōr*) by reading *Piṟa Śāṉṟōr* (other scholars) as *Piṟ Śāṉṟōr* (later scholars) in the commentaries to the *Tolkāppiyam*.[35]

It is certain that the entire body of the Eight anthologies (*Eṭṭuttogai*), the Ten poems (*Pattuppāṭṭu*) and the 18 'minor'

32 *Nālāyira Prabhandam: Mudal Tiruvandādi:* 11; 63; 64; 88; 94.

33 *Nālaḍi:* 200, 296.

34 S. Vaiyapuri's edition of *Tirikaḍugam* and *Śiṟupāñchamūlam*, introduction, p. 13.

35 *Ibid.*, p. 11.

works *(Padineṉ Kiḻkkaṇakku)* and the two epics *(Śilappadikāram* and *Maṇimēkalai)* belong to the pre-Pallavan period, that is to the few centuries immediately preceding and following the Christian era. Possibly *Tolkāppiyam* belongs to an age slightly earlier.

But any way the system of government and social life depicted in that body of literature was the same througout till the age of religious devotion (exclusively concerned with particular religion) dawned on Tamiḻaham, that is, the beginning of the 7th century A. D. So it will be quite right for us to treat all the literary works (classified as *Śaṅgam* literature) as relevant for our purpose.

PART II

SANGAM POLITY : GOVERNMENTAL

CHAPTER IV

GOVERNMENT AT THE CAPITAL

1. *The King*

(a) Introduction

The Tamils during the *Saṅgam* age were ruled by vigorous kings and there is no evidence to show that, at any time be fore then, they had known any form of government other than monarchy. Tamiḻaham was a large area embracing territories of different climate and terrain and organized government must have arisen in different parts of the country under different conditions; and the boundary or demarcation lines between these states could not have been definite or fixed or even accepted as such. The kings were ruling over territories the exact extent of which was not clearly known to them and border feuds were continuous and profitable to the lawless elements at the farthest ends of the states. Lack of communications rendered it impossible for the kings to establish law and order in the modern sense: and kings who were anxious to extend order had to wage constant punitive wars. And the number of feudatory chiefs in parts of the country must have been very large. Probably some feudatories were encouraged to serve as a sort of frontier guards or marchers while others could not be subdued. And so *Saṅgam* polity was made by more than one monarchy and several feudal princes who tried to assert their independence whenever the kings lacked the power to hold them down.

From the earliest times Tamiḻaham has known only three major kings: the Chēras, the Chōḻas and the Pāṇḍyas. The Chēras ruled over the south-western part of the country; the Chōḻas, the north-eastern part and the Pāṇḍyas, the south and

south-eastern parts. The entire land consisting of the present Chittoor, North Arcot, Madras-Chingleput, South Arcot, Tanjore and Trichinopoly districts composed the Chōḻa area; of these Chittoor, North Arcot and Madras–Chingleput areas constituted the 'Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam'. The Pāṇḍyan territory lay to the south of the River Kāviri, east of the Ānaimalais, right up to the eastern sea and extended southwards to Cape Comorin (*Kumari*); the Chēra territory extended over modern Kerala State and parts of Coimbatore and Salem formed the Koṅgu land ruled by many *Vēḷirs* or *Vēḷāḷa* feudatories, but forming part of the Chēra land under powerful rulers like Neḍuñjēral Ādan or Śeṅguṭṭuvan. Coorg, Nilgiris and South Kanara formed part of the land of the Kōśars.[1] The southern and central Mysore area were under the rulers known as the Gaṅgas. But the foremost kings were the Chēras, the Chōḻas and the Pāṇḍyas.

Parimēlaḻagar, the commentator on the *Kuṟaḷ* says[2] that the three kings of Tamiḻaham had been ruling over the land from 'the day of Creation' which is to say that their origin goes back to the days long past and therefore immemorial. The references in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Mahābhārata*, the *Artha Śāstra*, and Kātyāyana and the Asokan edicts take us back to a period long before the commencement of the Christian era; the accounts found in the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* and Strabo's and Pliny's accounts are eloquently confirmed by references in the Tamil literature of that period. During all this time we hear of the three ruling families : the Chēras, the Chōḻas and the Pāṇḍyas.

1 The 'Satiyaputras' of Aśoka's inscriptions. *Vide* my paper on 'The Kōśars' : *M.U.J.* : Vol. XXXIII, No. 2 (Sec. A). Mr. Burrow's identification of the Kōśars with the Adiyamāns is not convincing at all; for one thing, it is not known if the Adiyamāns were at any time important enough to merit special mention by Aśōka; again the verbal derivation of Satiyaputra from Adiyamān leaves much to be desired.

2 *Kuṟaḷ* : 955; Pari. com.

The origin of kingship in Tamiḻaham was not very different from the origin of that institution in other parts of the world. It has been suggested[3] that organized government under a king in the Tamil country must have had its origin in the pasture land or *Mullai* tracts. The argument advanced to uphold this view is somewhat as follows. "In the Tamil language the 'King' is known as 'Kōn' which also means a cowherd. 'Kō' (meaning King) is but a shortened form of 'Kōn'.[4] While the analogy between the functions of a cowherd and those of a king is obvious, the use of the same word to express the two ideas can only mean that kingship originated in the pasture land". If this is accepted, it must have happened like this : an enterprising and 'leading' cowherd in a pasture land must have induced his friends to lift the cattle from a neighbouring farm and must have himself provided the necessary leadership. This 'cattle-lifting' must have provoked a 'War'; during the War both sides must have chosen their leaders; the leader of the successful party becomes 'the Kōn', the undisputed leader of the vast horde of cowherds, getting ready to lift more cattle from yet more farms; the war-time leader, because of his training in leadership becomes the peacetime leader also; and kingship *(Kōnmai)* is established. But it may not be quite accurate to say that kingship had its origin only in the pasture land; in the hilly and forest areas where the hunters abound, the hunter-chief leading the hunting expedition against wild animals could have more easily assumed command of his society. The fact that the Chēra land is *Malai Nāḍu* (hill country) and that their royal emblem is the 'bow' (so essential for the hunter) clearly proves that at least in Chēra land kingship had its origin in hunting expeditions and that the earliest king there was a hunter chief. It is notable that the king, the cowherd and the hunter hold the *Kōl* in their hands as a staff of office.[5]

3 P.T S. : *The Tamils*, p. 10.

4 The simpler meaning of 'a leader' or 'a chief' for the word 'Kōn' was not unknown : *Madurai* : 74.

5 *Kōl* means a sceptre, a shepherd's staff and an arrow.

Possibly, kingship spread to the fertile delta areas, where civilized communities are generally found, after the conquest of the peaceful villages by the more aggressive people from the hilly and forest areas.

The usual order in which the three Tamil Kingdoms are mentioned in a single expression is 'Chēra-Chōḷa-Pāṇḍya' and on that ground it is held by some that the Chēra Kingdom was the oldest of the three. Further, if 'a Dravidian incursion into Tamiḻaham' is accepted and if they are held to have taken the west coast route to South India from the Punjab (as they must have done in such a case), the land of the Chēras must have been reached first, then the Chōḷa or the Pāṇḍya *Nāḍu*. This can be supported by the fact that in *Puṟanānūṟu* the poems dealing with the Chēras are arranged first, then those relating to the Pāṇḍyas and then those relating to the Chōḷas;[6] and that in the *Tolkāppiyam Pōndai* or *Panai* (the palm-leaf emblem of the Chēras) is mentioned first among the totemic garlands of the kings.[7] But, while the order observed by the *Puṟanānūṟu* and *Tolkāppiyam* is Chēra-Pāṇḍya-Chōḷa', the later familiar order is 'Chēra-Chōḷa-Pāṇḍya'; and clearly there is no uniformity in the practice. It can be held that the order sprang from ease of pronunciation and the formation of a convenient phrase and is not concerned with chronology.

On the other hand, it can be maintained that the Pāṇḍyan Kingdom was the earliest Tamil Kingdom to be established. The *Rāmāyaṇa* (*Kishkinda Kāṇḍa*) and the *Mahābhārata* references mention only the Pāṇḍyan Kingdom; the *Artha Śāstra* of Kautilya mentions[8] only 'Pāṇḍya Kavāṭaham' and 'Māthuram'. Megasthenes mentions only the land of the 'Paṇḍaia, daughter of Herakles'. For the first time we come across a reference to all the three kingdoms in Aśoka's inscriptions only.[9] But it

6 This order continues from *Puṟam* : 2 to 16; and after that the order is given up and is confused.

7 *Tol. Poruḷ* : 60. ''போந்தை வேம்பே ஆரென வருஉம்''.

8 *Artha Śāstra* : Kautilya; Book II, Chap. 76.

9 Aśoka's inscriptions : Rock Edicts II and XIII.

cannot be said that kingdoms that are not mentioned in the early references could not have been in existence then, nor that the only kingdom noted was the earliest. It must also be admitted that the interval between Chandragupta Maurya and Aśoka is too short for two well-organized governments to have been set up in the South to be treated on a par with the Pāṇḍyan Kingdom by Aśoka in his inscriptions. But whether the Pāṇḍyan Kingdom or one of the other two was the first kingdom to be established still remains a mystery. If *Pāṇḍya* is held to be from *Paṇḍu* (old) [*Paṇḍaiya* — பண்டை — (old)] it is possible to argue that the Pāṇḍya kingdom was the most ancient.

Derivations for the words 'Chēras', 'Chōḷas', and 'Pāṇḍyas' have been suggested by various scholars. The Chēras are known by many equivalent titles: *Vānavar, Villavar, Kuḍavar, Kuṭṭuvar, Poṟaiyar, Malaiyar*, etc. *Vānavar*[10] has been translated by V. Kanakasabhai as the 'celestials' and the references to 'Imaya Varamban'[11] and 'Vāna Varamban'[12] make him assign a Bengali origin to the Chēras.[13] But the interpretation seems to be erroneous. 'Vānavar' refers to the *Devas* supposed to reside high above in the *Deva Loka*; and so the Chēras ruling over the 'high land' (the *Mēlnāḍu* or the *Malai Nāḍu*) were *Vānavar*. The Chēras were *Villavar* because they were 'hunters' or 'bowmen', and *Kuḍavar* or *Kuṭṭuvar*[14] because they were westerners. *Poṟai* and *Malai* are equivalent terms, both meaning 'mountain' and naturally the Chēras, the rulers of the mountainous land were called *Poṟaiyar* and *Malaiyar*.[15] The 'Chēras' were also called *Pūḻiyar* but as *Pūḻi* means 'dust' it would mean 'the rulers over the land of dust'. But the probable derivation will be from *Pūḻi Nāḍu* which was part of the Chēra land. The name 'Chēra' itself defies explanation. It is, however, worth noting that the Egyptian

10 *Śilap*: XXVI: 99. 11 *Śilap*: XXX: 161.
12 *Puṟam*: 212. 13 V. K.: *The Tamils* 1800, p. 48.
14 *Puṟam*: 17; *Kuḍam* and *Kuṭṭam* mean 'West'.
15 *Śilap*: XXIX: *Ūśal Vari*.

word 'Seru' means a 'prince'. 'Kēraḷa' is a Sanskritisation of 'Chērala' or 'Chēra'.[16]

The Chōḷas were known as *Śennis, Śembiyans, Vaḷavan* and *Kiḷḷi*. *Śenni*[17] 'means' head and so the Chōḷa was a *Śenni* (meaning 'leader'). *Śembiyan* is possibly a corruption of *Śemmaiyan* for it is permissible for *mma* to become *mba*. But it is strange that *Śembiyan* should have been derived from *Śibi*.[18] If the derivation is to be accepted the use of *Śembiyan* must be restricted to the descendants of *Śibi* and cannot be applied to *Śibi* himself. But such a usage occurs in *Puṟanānūṟu*.[19] The *Viraśoḻiyam*[20] authority is evidently an afterthought and can be understood because of Buddhamitra's anxiety to assign a Sanskrit origin to as many Tamil words as he could. *Vaḷavan*[21] clearly means 'He who rules over the fertile land'; *Vaḷamai* is fertility and it is common knowledge that the Kāviri delta is the most fertile part of Tamiḻaham; the Chōḷa land is called the *'Chōḷa Vaḷa Nāḍu'*. *Kiḷḷi* is an intriguing title and it has led to many wild guesses. 'Kil: to dig up' may be dismissed at once as unsubstantial;[22] and no less fanciful than Dr. G. U. Pope's equation of *Kiḷḷi* with 'Pallavar'; *Kiḷḷi* is generally used as a chief[23] and when it is used along with Chōḷa titles like *Kiḷḷi Vaḷavan*, there is no repetition but only a qualification i. e., 'the chief that is *Vaḷavan*'. It is also known that the title *Kiḷḷi* was not used exclusively for the Chōḷa princes; some officers under the Chōḷas also were called *Kiḷḷis* e. g., *'Enādi* Tirukkiḷḷi'.[24] 'Chōḷa' has been connected with *Chōḷam* (millet) which is very unconvincing for the Chōḷa land is primarily

16 Smith, however, thought that 'Chēra' was a variant form of 'Kēṟala'; *E. H. I.*, p. 185 again, quoting Pandit D. Savarirajan from the *Tamilian Antiquary*, No. 1, pp. 69-71, he says that "Chēralam means mountain range and so is equivalent to Malabar". p. 447.

17 *Śilap*: I: 2.

18 *Vide* 'Amba' and 'Amma'. K. A. N.; *Cōḷas*, pp. 19 and 20.

19 *Puṟam*: 37.

20 *Vira Śōḻiyam*: *Taṟṟida*—V: 3.

21 *Śilap*: V: 90,

22 K. A. N.: *Cōḷas*, p. 19.

23 *Puṟam*: 220.

24 *Puṟam*: 167

famous for paddy a wet crop and not millet a dry crop; Bhandarkar's derivation of 'Chōḷa' from *Chōra*[25] (thief) does not sound satisfactory. The term 'Chōḷa' defies explanation.

The Pāṇḍyas are known as *Mīnavar, Kavuriyar,*[26] *Pañchavar,*[27] *Tennar,*[28] *Seḻiyar, Māṟar, Vaḻudi* etc. *Mīnavar* originally must have indicated a fisherman origin to the 'Pāṇḍyas', even as *Villavar* indicated a 'hunter' origin to the Chēras. Later it could easily refer to 'the kings with the fish-flag.'[29] *Kavuriyar* and *Pañchavar* were the result of a later day attempt to connect them with the heroes of the *Mahādhārata* which was also responsible for the legend of 'Arjuna's matrimonial adventure in Madurai'. *Tennavan* means the 'southerner' and easily refers to the Pāṇḍyas as the *Kuḍavar* refers to the Chēras. *Seḻiyan* is a famous Pāṇḍyan title found in the names 'Neḍuñjeḻiyan' Iḷañjeḻiyan', 'Veṟṟivēṟ Cheḻiyan' etc. Just as *Vaḷavan* was derived from *Vaḷamai, Seḻiyan* must be derived from *Seḻumai*, which also means fertility or prosperity. *Māṟan* was perhaps used as an equivalent of *Tennavan* as both words can refer to *Kāladeva* the lord of the southern direction. The word 'Pāṇḍya' itself has been derived by some from 'Pāṇḍu' as it is said that Kātyāyana's derivation of 'Pāṇḍya' from 'Pāṇḍu' relates to the Pāṇḍyas of Madurai. But it is a very legitimate doubt that K. A. Nilakanta Sastri has raised; i.e., if it is not 'Pāṇḍu'

25 *Carmichael Lectures*: 1918; pp. 8, 9.

26 *Śilap*: XV: 2.

27 *Puṟam*: 58. The Pāṇḍyan land consists of Mullai, Kuṟiñji, Marudam, Pālai and Neydal tracts and hence the rulers were called the Pañchavar or 'the rulers of the five lands'.

28 *Śilap*: IV: 22.

29 The fish emblem on their flag was one of 'double carp'. The expressions 'Mīnākshi' and 'Kāmākshi' could be rendered as 'Mīnakkaṇṇi' and 'Kāmakaṇṇi'. If 'Kaṇṇi' is taken to mean 'pair' 'Mīnakkaṇṇi' would mean 'double carp'; and 'Kāmakkaṇṇi' would mean 'Mithuna' or 'the pair in union'. The suggestion, here is that 'Mīnākshi' and 'Kāmākshi' are perhaps erroneous translations.

a people in Madhya Dēsā that Kātyāyana was referring to.[30] The doubt is further strengthened by the fact that the great Sanskrit grammarian would not have given a Sanskrit derivation to a Tamil word. It is possible that 'Pāṅḍyan' was immediately derived from *Pāṇḍyam* (meaning 'toil' 'service') and so refers to the Pāṅḍyas — the men of action.[31]

The belief that the Pāṅḍyas were descended from the Moon-god was perhaps the earliest belief which suggests the 'divine origin' for the kings of Tamiḻaham. Moon (crescent) worship was a persistent faith with the Tamils. The belief that the Chōḻas were descendants of the Sun-god was just perhaps an afterthought and a competitive title to match the Pāṇḍyan lunar ancestry.

This account of the various attempts made to explain the ancient titles of the three crowned monarchs of Tamiḻaham proves at least the antiquity of these kingdoms.

In the *Saṅgam* age there were thus three crowned monarchs in Tamiḻaham.[32] In addition to these three, there were a large number of more or less independent chieftains who shared the government of the country. But these feudatory chieftains, at times functioned independently of the crowned monarchs, but were still supposed to be subordinate in theory at least to one or other of the crowned monarchs. Smith computes the number of such feudatories at 120.[33]

The king was the very centre and embodiment of administration. He was called *Kō, Mannan, Vēndan, Koṟṟavan, Iṟaivan. Kō*[34] is a term commonly used for 'King' as well as 'God'. It is difficult to say whether *Kō* meant 'God' because he is 'King of the Universe', or it meant 'King' because he was

30 K.A.N.: *P.K.*, pp. 13 and 14. 31 *Kali:* 136:20.

32 *Puṟam:* 35. *Tol, Poruḷ:* 79, ''வண்புகழ் மூவர்''.

33 Smith: *E.H.I.*, p. 439.

34 *Kō* is derived for the 'king' from the 'shepherd': it is possible that by the same analogy the term was extended to include God — 'the shepherd of the universe'.

considered to be 'God-incarnate'. The palace of the king as well as the Temple of God were both called *Kōyil* (the abode of the *Kō*). *Mannan* was one that had earned a 'permanent reputation' (*Puhaḻ*) [35], but *Mannan* indicated a lesser king while *Vēndan* referred to a bigger and a greater king.[36] *Vēndan* was one who wore a crown — *vēyndōn*. Only the three crowned monarchs of Tamiḻaham were *vēndar*; the lesser chieftains did not wear a regular crown and so could be called only *mannar* and not *Vēndar*. The *Tolkāppiyam* refers to the three crowned monarchs as *Vēndar*.[37] *Koṟṟavan* means 'the victorious one'; for *Koṟṟam* is 'valour that leads to victory'. *Iṟaivan* or *Iṟai* means also 'king' as well as 'God'. Vaḷḷuvar uses the word *Iṟai* to indicate 'King' in *Iṟaimātchi* and uses that expression to mean 'God' also in his prayer chapter.[38] *Araśan* a common term used to refer to a king is a Tamilized form of *Rājan*.

(b) Eligibility, Succession and Coronation

The most common form of government in the *Śaṇgam* age was hereditary monarchy. The eldest son of the reigning king generally succeeded his father; and the throne was inherited by him as by right and was called '*Muṟai Mudal Kaṭṭil*'.[39] Of the two sons of the Chēra King Imayavaramban Neḍuñjērālādan, i.e. Śenguṭṭuvan the elder and Iḷaṇgo the younger (whose original name is not known to us) the astrologer said the younger was going to inherit the throne of the Chēras; the elder son Śeṅguṭṭuvan got very angry, because his right to the throne seemed to be denied. To prevent a misunderstanding with his elder brother to whom the throne rightfully belonged, the younger prince turned an ascetic[40]

35 *Puṟam*: 6. The word Man is said to mean 'permanent' and in the context of a king probably relates to the permanence of the institution of kingship.

36 *Puṟam*: 308; 4 and 5.

37 *Tol. Poruḷ*: 60

38 Sten Konow has an interesting guess that the word *Rāvan* was but a Sanskritisation of the Tamil *Iṟaivan* (*J.R A.S.*, 1914, p. 285).

39 *Śilap*: XXVII: 134.

40 *Śilap*: XXX: 172 to 182.

and therefore, thereafter, was called only 'Iḷaṅgō Aḍigaḷ'. This shows beyond doubt that the system of succession by primogeniture was long established by that time.

The crown prince was always called *Kōmahan*, while the younger princes were known as *Iḷaṅgo*, *Iḷañjeḻiyan*, *Iḷañjēral*, *Iḷaṅkōśar*, *Iḷaveḷimān*, *Iḷavichchikkōn* were all titles of junior princes who were often given viceregal posts; thus we hear of *Koṅgiḷaṅkōśar*,[41] who were the *Iḷaṅkōśar* discharging gubernatorial functions in Koṅgu Nāḍu on behalf of the Kośars of Tuḷu Nāḍu. When Iḷaṅkumaṇan drove away his elder brother and captured the throne for himself, it was considered usurpation.[42] The right of succession was called *tāyam*; in fact any right of securing a property was *tāyam*, or *urimai*.[43] The right of succession to a throne acquired by virtue of conquest was differentiated from the right of succession acquired by birth. When the Chōḻa king Kōpperuñchōḻan waged war on his own sons the poet Pullāṟṟūr Eyiṟṟiyanār declared that it was senseless on his part to fight his own sons; "for if he died they would be the persons to inherit the throne". The use of the expression *Avarkku urittu* (belongs to *them*) is slightly baffling.[44] There is, however, no contradiction here; because if the first son of a king died without a male heir, the younger brother of the deceased succeeded him. So the two sons of the king were heir apparent and heir presumptive and so are spoken of as heirs.

Some scholars have held that in the Chēra land succession to the throne was matrilineal, while in the Chōḻa and the Pāṇḍyan Kingdoms it was patrilineal; and others have refuted this view saying that the system of succession was the same all over Tamiḻaham during the *Saṅgam* age and that the system was only patrilineal. As the matter has generated some controversy, it may be pertinent to examine the available evidence. It is evident that the same system of inheritance prevailed in all the three kingdoms. Tolkāppiar who speaks of Tamilian practice and not exclusively

41 *Silap*: *Uraiperu Kaṭṭurai*. 42 *Puṟam*: 165—colophon.
43 *Paṭṭina*: 227; *dāyam* in *Skt*. 44 *Puṟam*: 213.

of Chōḷa or Pāṇḍyan practice uses the expression, *Tāyattin aḍiyā:*[45] *tāyam* is explained by Nachchinārkkiniyar as 'things that are inherited by sons as father's property'. So inheritance was the taking over the father's property by the son as is made clear by the above reference. Again in the *Padiṟṟuppattu* (74), it is made perfectly clear by Ariṣil Kiḷar in his address to Tagadūr Eṟinda Peruñjēral Irumporai. "To you is born the heroic son who is well qualified to become a King endowed with the royal virtues of government."[46] This dispels all doubts on the point. The use of the word *Paitiram* (which is derived by R. Raghava Iyengar[47] from *Pitru* father) in the *Padiṟṟuppattu* (19) shows that *Paitiram* was the land inherited i. e. inherited from *Pitru* (father) and not *Mātru* (mother). A certain phrase employed in the *Padihams* to the *Padiṟṟuppattu* is interpreted to support a *Marumakkaḷ Tāyam* (matrilineal descent) theory but it can be easily seen in the context that the author of the *Padihams* has only been giving the name of the maternal grandfather of the hero and is not referring to any inheritance through the mother. The expression *Kuḍa Puḷaṅ Kāvalar Marumān,*[48] is quoted to support a matrilineal system, for *Marumān* means 'nephew' (i.e. sister's son) but *Marumān* also means merely 'descendant' as we have in *Tenpuḷaṅ Kāvalar Marumān*[49] and *Kuṇapuḷaṅ Kāvalar Marumān.*[50] Referring to Śeṅguṭṭuvan, Iḷaṅgo uses the word *Kōmahan*[51] meaning 'he was the *son of a king*', a prince by *birth*. Those who try to find matrilineal succession among the ancient Chēras cannot establish their case from contemporary *Śaṅgam* literature itself; what became in Malabar a prevailing practice was a much later mode of inheritance. There is absolutely no doubt that in the matter of succession to the throne as in other matters Tamil practice

45 *Tol. Poruḷ*: 221.

46 The sacrifice referred to in this poem, (*Padiṟṟu*: 74) doubtless was the Putrakāmeshṭi Yajña (i.e. the sacrifice performed with a view to begetting a son—i.e a successor to the throne).

47 R. Raghava Iyengar: *Tamiḻ Varalāṟu*, pp. 151, 152.

48 *Śiṟupāṇ*: 47.

49 *Śiṟupāṇ*: 63.

50 *Śiṟupāṇ*: 79.

51 *Śilap*: XXX: 6.

in the *Śaṅgam* age was the same all over the Tamil country. The succession was through the eldest male descendant failing whom it was secured in the usual patrilineal way. In the *Padiṟṟuppattu*,[52] reference is made to Śeṅguṭṭuvan's defeat of the nine claimants to the Chōḻa throne; it means only that successively in the patrilineal way there were nine princes (heirs presumptive all of them) who were all defeated by Śēṅguṭṭuvan.

It is not known if a woman ever succeeded to the throne in her own right. In the entire range of *Śaṅgam* literature or contemporary literature of other places making any reference to Tamil *Śaṅgam* society, we do not come across a single instance of a woman ruling over any of the traditional states of Tamiḻaham. There are, however, some references which are not historical but go back to the days of legend; (1) Magasthenes refers to Paṇḍaiya being a daughter of Herakles;[53] (2) Taḍātagai Pirāttiyār ruling over Madurai is mentioned in *Tiruviḷaiyāḍal Purāṇam*. These are legendary and mythological information on which no historical conclusions can be based. V. Kanakasabhai discussing the 'crown' however, says that "the queen did not wear a crown unless she had inherited it in her own right".[54] This implies that she had a right 'to inherit the throne in her own right,' but the presumption is not warranted by any evidence from the sources.

When due to any extraordinary accident, the throne fell vacant and no suitable claimant to the throne was available a strange way of choosing a king was adopted by the leading subjects and the erstwhile ministers and others. They fitted out an elephant to wander about with a garland on its trunk till it dropped the garland on any one whom it chose and brought him to the palace. Then the person so chosen was treated as king divinely appointed. It is stated that the Chōḻa king Karikālan was chosen king in this way.[55] But this is the only known

52 *Padiṟṟu* : V : *Padiham*.

53 J. W. McCrindle : *Ancient India as described by Megasthenes and Arrian*, pp. 62, 63.

54 V. K. : *The Tamils*, 1800, p 111.

55 *Paḻamoḻi* : 62.

instance of this device for choosing a king; and obviously it was resorted to only when no heir could be found.

Normally, the form of government being hereditary monarchy based upon hoary tradition, there was no question of 'popular approval' of a king, much less popular choice. V. R. Ramachandra Dikshitar says :[56] "That the choice of a king depended on the goodwill of the citizens at large is evident from a 'turai' (situation) called 'Piḷḷaiyāṭṭu': when a prince of the blood royal offered a bold front in battle and secured victory, the people celebrated his success with festivities and *crowned him king*." This statement is not supported by the text. The commentator says :[57] "The people (of the conquered territory) accepted him as their king"; but it is quite probable that the king carved out a separate territory for the *Iḷaṅgo* and made him ruler there. It is likely that at some inaugurations the people were formally assembled to acclaim the arrangement. But such an event cannot be called an election in its modern sense. Even for such informal popular gatherings, we have no evidence; there is absolutely no textual reference to a king being 'elected' or 'chosen' or a 'choice of the candidate for the throne being *approved*' by the people.

Usually, the king ascended the throne at any age if the throne was vacant and if he was eligible. There is no mention of any particular age at which a king can begin to rule of his own without being subject to the guardianship of a regent. The idea of a regency does not occur at all, though it must be presumed that some arrangement should have been made to assist the king when he was too young to rule. Karikālan, the Chōḷa king, according to one account, ascended the throne at the age of five.[58] This has no corroboration in *Saṅgam* literature, but his ascension to the throne at an early age is borne out by many references.[59] Talaiyālaṅgānattu Cheru Venṛa Neḍuñjeḻiyan

56 V. R. R. Dikshitar : *Studies*, p. 182.
57 *Tol. Poruḷ* : 60. Nach. com.
58 *Peruntogai* : 779. "அஞ்சின் முடிகவித்து."
59 *Maṇi* : IV : 107, 108, *Porunar* : 187, 188; *Paḻamoḻi* : 21.

is also described as very young when he led his armies against a league of his foes.[60]

No detailed account of the ceremony of coronation is available in our sources. But it can be said that when a king ascended the throne, there was a formal function called *Araśu Kaṭṭil Ērudal* or *Muḍi Śūṭṭu Viḻa*. The function was primarily one of 'crowning' the king viz. coronation. Naturally the regalia peculiar to the king's dynasty and to his office were presented to him at that time by the senior members of the royal family, elderly and hereditary advisers etc. The *Padiṟṟuppattu* (38) is in praise of a Chēra ruler called *Kaḷaṅgāikkaṇṇi Nārmuḍi Chēral*. The commentary to this stanza says that the king wore a crown of rough fibre and a necklace of black berries because, for some reason, "on the occasion of his coronation" he could not use the proper crown or wear the prescribed necklace.

From the date of coronation, evidently the number of years he ruled the land was calculated. At the end of the *padihams* to each chapter of the *Padiṟṟuppattu*, the author of the *padihams* mentions the reign period of the king praised in that decad of stanzas. So Imaya Varamban Neḍuñjēraḷādan ruled for 58 years; Palyānai Śel Keḻu Kuṭṭuvan ruled for 25 years; Kaḷaṅgāikkaṇṇi Nārmuḍi Chēral ruled for 25 years; Śeṅguṭṭuvan ruled for 55 years; Āḍukōṭpāṭṭu Chēralādan for 38 years; Śelvakkaḍuṅgō Vāḻi Ādan for 25 years; Peruñjēral Irumpoṟai for 17 years; Kuḍakkō Iḷañjēral Irumpoṟai for 16 years; the average reign period of 34 years per king is credible and shows that the Chēra rule at least during the *Śaṅgam* period covered by the *Padiṟṟuppattu* was not subject to serious disturbances.

The Tuṟai 'Piḻḻaiyāṭṭu' which mentions the victorious prince becoming king on the battlefield possibly refers to a practice of the king being in the first instance crowned on the field of battle itself. Such a practice was not unknown in later days; e. g. Rājendra II was crowned in the field of Koppam

60 *Puṟam* : 72.

in A D. 1054. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri quoting inscription 87 of 1895 says that the coronation of a king on the field of battle was something not done before[61] But 'Piḷḷaiyāṭṭu' of *Tolkāppiyam* being a military situation, suggests[62] that the *Talaiyaḷi* or the 'great presentation' (namely endowment of a territory or coronation) took place on the battlefield itself. So it can be held that what happened in the case of Rajēndra II was not an unprecedented occasion in Tamil history. Perhaps such an event had not occurred within the recollection of Rajēndra's contemporaries.

The reign of a king is called *Viṟṟiruttal*; it literally means "the king was 'seated' (on the throne) free from fear of danger". Some scholars have imagined *viṟṟiruttal* to be a condition of being alive and the number of years mentioned in the *Paḍiṟṟuppattu* colophons to be his age and not reign period. The reign period is of greater political importance than the total age of a king as it is the effective period of his life and the mention of the King's total age in the colophon is therefore unlikely. The years 17 and 16 mentioned for the last 2 kings in Paḍiṟṟuppattu could not have been the total age of those kings who had so many exploits to their credit. The date of coronation was ever after remembered and celebrated in a fitting manner. The account of the number of years a king had reigned was maintained by the official astrologer called *Perumkaṇi*. It seems that every year of his reign period he was 'crowned afresh' and the ceremony was called *Śiṟanda Śirthi Maṇṇu maṅgalam*; this was different from the king's birth day celebration, which was called *Nāṇmaṅgalam*. This seems to have been celebrated not only for the crowned monarchs but for the feudatories also. There was a special occasion on which the officials of the state wrote down the number of years that had passed by after the king ascended the throne.[63]

61 K. A. N. : *Cōḷas*, p. 257.
62 *Tol. Poruḷ* : 60.
63 *Ibid* : 60 Nach. Com.

(c) THE COURT AND THE ROYAL ROUTINE

The crowned kings of *Saṅgam* Tamiḻaham held an impressive court and their feudatories also held their courts according to their means. And much mention is made of the courts of the crowned monarchs. The court was called *Avai*. This word is a corruption of the Sanskrit *Sabha*. *Avai* is used as a verb also in Tamil (as *Avaittal)*[64] 'assembling'. So *Avai* and *Avaiyam* become 'assembly'. The expression *Avaiyam* is found in the *Pāyiram* to *Tolkāppiyam* which is the earliest extant Tamil text.

The royal court was also called *Araśavai*[65] or *Ōlakkam* or *Irukkai*. It was also called *Vēttavai*.[66] This court was the centre of the king's official activities. The court of the Tamil kings was an open court to which the members of the royal family, the officers of the crown, and members of the public had access; and it was not a 'privy council' or 'a council chamber'.[67] The king's court assembled in the morning, and was called therefore *Nāḷirukkai*[68] or *Nāḷavai*;[69] it was also styled *Nāḷmahilurukkai*[70] or *Perunāḷirukkai*.[71] The king presided over the court in person. The morning court of the Chēra was famous for its grandeur;[72] the *Avai* of Uṟaiyūr *(Uṟandai)* was very famous for its impartial and just ways.[73] Much of the daily official business of the king was transacted in this meeting of the royal court.

The court was a gay place; the pleasant noise of musical instruments was always heard in the court.[74] There was no special restriction on the king's free appearance in public. Māsūdi, the Arab geographer *(A. D. 943-955)* says that "Kings of South India do not appear before the public except on particular occasions which are fixed at certain intervals, and then it is only for the

64 *Śiṟupāṇ*: 193, 194; *Porunar*: 16 to 18.
65 *Porunar*: 54, 55. 66 *Malaipaḍu*: 39.
67 *Vide* V. R. R. Dikshitar: *Studies*, p. 18.
68 *Madurai*: 53. 69 *Puṟam*: 54 123, 129.
70 *Madurai*: 443 71 *Śilap*: XXIII: 56.
72 *Ibid*. 73 *Naṟṟiṇai*: 400; *Puṟam*: 39.
74 *Malaipaḍu*: 39, 40.

inspection of state affairs, for in their opinion, the kings lose their respect and give away their privileges if the public gaze at them".[75] There is no such prohibition mentioned in the *Saṅgam* literature but the *Tolkāppiyam* says[76] that it is also part of the functions of a king to appear in public. Later day poets evolved a form of literature called *Ulā* which described the grandeur of the royal procession through the main streets of the city under the full gaze of an admiring public. The appearance and the presence of the king in the audience hall must have been a routine matter. It was expected that the king should put on a smiling and inviting countenance and be easily accessible while transacting official business at court.[77]

The queen was present in the audience hall by the side of the king. Whether the queen shared the throne and whether she was present invariably at court are not known. But Iḷaṅgo mentions the presence of Perumkōppeṇḍu in Neḍuñjeḻiyan's court and Iruṅko Vēṇmāḷ in Śēnguṭṭuvan's court.[78] The queen does not seem to have participated in official business but advised the king if her advice on any matter was sought for. The king and the queen usually came to the court from their apartments in the palace together and on their way to the court (which was held in the courtyard of the palace), the royal couple witnessed dance performances arranged by the ballet master (*Kūttuḷ Paḍuvōn*).[79]

The king sat on the throne (supported by figures shaped like lions and so called *Ariyaṇai*) in the audience hall with all his insignia of umbrella, whisk and sceptre. He was also surrounded by the chief government officials and generally some poets (mostly the court poets or the ones most favoured by the king. The very distinguished visitors like the ambassadors or chiefs of other states to the audience hall were seated on the right side of the king.[80]

75 Quoted by S. Mohd. Hussain Nainar: *Arab Geographers knowledge of South India*, p. 145.

76 *Tol Poruḷ* : 85.

77 *Śilap* : XXVIII : 38.

78 *Śilap* : XX and XXV.

79 *Śilap* ; XXVI : 125.

80 *Malaipaḍu* : 549.

Kapilar, was among poets, Pāri's favourite; Auvaiyār was the favourite poetess in Adihaimān's court; Māṅguḍi Marudanār was the favoured poet in Talaiyālaṅgānattu Neḍuñjeliyan's court at Madurai; Paraṇar seems to have had a particular fancy to Śeṅguṭṭuvan's court at Vañji. Literary discussion took place in the open court when the official programme for the day was not heavy or when the king was in a mood to listen to his poets. The king was, generally, neither illiterate nor a man of low tastes; quite a large number of the kings were scholars and poets themselves and could match their wits with the poets. The Chēra's court was a spacious and largely attended court; scholars and wits and philosophers and poets thronged his court and carried on literary discussions in the court.[81] The *Pāṇar*, (the minstrels) and others who sought the king's bounty were always to be found in the court.[82]

The king was surrounded by his officials who stood by in obedience awaiting either his orders or their turn to state their views. There was no system by which the ministers or other advisers could volunteer advice or suggestion; they had always to wait for the favourable royal mood which might permit the tendering of advice or make it acceptable. In the *Śilappadikāram*, it is mentioned[83] that purohits (*Āśān*), astrologers (*Peruṅkaṇi*), ministers (*Amaichchar*) and the army chiefs (*Tānaittalaivar*) stood in their proper places and faced the king in the proper direction blessing him and awaiting his (the king's) words.[84] It is to be noticed that they are not shown as giving advice to him but as waiting for the words of command or initiative to come from him.

This court was distinguished and wise; in theory, its duty was to advise the king and steer him in the proper course of government. Tolkāppiyar mentions[85] the eight qualities of the *Avaiyam*. Nachchinārkkiniyar explains the eight qualities as (1) good birth (and good breeding), (2) good education, (3) good conduct,

81 *Paḍiṟṟu* : 65; 11 to 13.
82 *Puṟam* : 2?.
83 *Śilap* : XXVI : 3 and 4.
84 *Śilap* : XXVI : 6.
85 *Tol. Poruḷ* : 76.

(4) truthfulness, (5) purity (of thought and action), (6) impartiality, (7) absence of envy or jealousy in their hearts and (8) lack of personal motives in promoting government affairs. The *Yāpparuṅgala Virutti* of Amita Sāgara (though of a later age, the work follows the ancient tradition) says,[86] "The perfect court (Niṟaiyavai) is that which includes all virtues in itself and foretells coming events". The good men of the court are those who care for 'Aṟam', are learned exponents in the art of disputation, never yield to bad temper, are never obstinate, are of pleasant countenance and would patiently listen to others and would never themselves be guilty of partiality though the king was unwise. The associates of the king were to be such that even if he were a headstrong and uncontrollable person, they could in a proper and tactful manner bring him round and steer him in the right path.[87] The officials, certain varieties of them known as 'Mudalvar' or leaders, wore coats and they were called 'Kañjuga Mudalvar'. The *Kañjugam* or *Śaṭṭai* a tailored jacket, must have been a distinguishing apparel, a sort of livery in a society where the common people were dressed in loin cloth and the better off persons wore shawls dropped over their shoulders.

Elderly, experienced, wise and learned persons generally had the courage to tell the king that "a life spent wholly in acquiring material possessions and comforts and in fighting was not the more desirable kind of life; and that one should remember that in a transient world man should give prior thought to peace, charity, love, worship of god etc. and in general pave his way to everlasting bliss in Heaven". But even in tendering such advice the most considerate and tactful language was employed; some bitter but necessary advice was always coated with the sugar of ceremonious flattery;[88] for in those days (as also in these days) a displeased or enraged ruler could be very unreasonable. The kings could get extremely angry and do very objectionable things; while in a fit of anger a king would

86 *Yāpparuṅgalam* : *Oḷipu* : *Sūtram* 3.
87 *Malaipaḍu* : 77 to 80. 88 *Śilap* : XXVIII : 112 ff.

forget even past services and behave ungratefully[89] and they would be ferocious about a trifle. But it was part of the tradition of the land to show respect to age, experience and wisdom. Arrogant kings no doubt were freaks who ill treated the wise but they were few and quite unrepresentative. The kings, however, were not subject to any code of public behaviour, it seems. Āryappaḍai kaḍanda Neḍuñjeḻiyan who was witnessing a dance recital in the court looked at a particularly beautiful dancer admiringly; and that provoked the queen's jealousy and she abruptly left the audience hall; the king also left the audience hall hastily in pursuit of the queen to pacify her.[90] By modern standards the whole scene seems to be very unseemly but then it was all 'royal'. The king could take anybody's advice on any matter, i.e. no particular official had any right to be heard by the king. The main function of the king in the *Avai* was to listen to the petitions or complaints filed by his subjects, enquire into them taking the advice of his judicial advisers and punish the guilty according to custom. Though law-making was not part of the king's job, (the laws already existed; his duty was to preserve them and to make the benefit of the laws available to all) occasionally royal orders were passed and these orders were proclaimed by beat of drum. The king's orders were 'unequalled pronouncements' so called because no 'second' or 'contrary' order was possible. P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar says[91] that "the king had no administrative functions and that what little was required by way of administration was discharged by village assemblies in accordance with hoary custom". Though this is largely true, it is wrong to suppose that the kings had an easy time. As power was concentrated in the king he had to bear the total responsibility for all that happened in the kingdom; "rainfall, penance of the anchorites and the chastity of the maidens, depended on the righteous rule of the king".[92] A leading king of the *Saṅgam*

89 *Kali* : 8 : 15 to 18. 90 *Śilap* : XVI : 131 to 140.
91 P.T.S. : *The Tamils*, p. 190.
92 *Kuṟaḷ* : 559, 560. *Maṇi* : XXII : 208, 209.

period, despairingly declared: "Onerous (almost thankless) are the duties of a king",[93] so it will be true to say that even in the *Śaṅgam* age of the Tamils 'uneasy lay the head that wore a crown'.

The king's birthday was celebrated every year and the day was called *Perunāḷ* (the great day).[94] This was the day on which the king showed his clemency by releasing prisoners, distributing extraordinary largesse to beggars and poets and military honours to his army men; prisoners were released and tax arrears were written off.[95] The *Perunāḷ* of *Nannan*, a feudatory chief gets great praise in *Maduraikkāñji*.[96] The Mahārājahs of Travancore, who may be expected to have inherited some at least of the Chēra traditions it is noteworthy, considered their birthday celebrations as very important state festivals. The king was a 'divine' person in the eyes of the people who when they wanted to make a solemn affirmation touched the feet of the king and did so.[97]

The practice of weighing a king against solid gold is one that has persisted to the present day. In the *Śaṅgam* age, kings were weighed in gold and the gold was distributed to deserving persons of the king's choice. Seṅguṭṭuvan was so weighed and he weighed fifty *Tulāms*. Fifty *Tulāms* of gold were presented to the brahmin Māḍalan of Puhār.[98]

The kings had certain basic functions prescribed for them; and they were five in number: (1) learning, (2) performing sacrifices, (3) making presents, (4) protecting the subjects and (5) punishing the wicked and the guilty.[99] The sacrifices which were prescribed for the kings were *Rājasūyam* (the imperial sacrifice) and the *Aśvamēdha* (the horse sacrifice) according to Nachchinārkkiniyar. While it is known that at least one Chōḻa king performed the *Rājasūyam*,[100] we do not know if any king per-

93 *Śilap*: XXV: 102.
94 *Maṇi*: XXVIII: 19; *Śilap*: XXVII: 44.
95 *Tol. Poruḷ*: 91. 96 *Madurai*: 618
97 *Kali*: 94: 36
98 *Śilap*: XXVII: 174 to 176.
99 *Tol. Poruḷ*: 75.
100 'Rājasūyam Vēṭṭa Perunaṟkkiḷḷi': *Puṟam*: 16 etc.

formed the 'horse sacrifice', which Nachchinārkkiniyar calls *Turaṅga Vēḷvi*. The Chōḷa king Karikālan is reported to have performed many Vedic sacrifices.[101] Śeṅguṭṭuvan, too, performed *Rājasūya* sacrifice, according to the *Śilappadikāram*.[102] Pāṇḍyan Palyāgaśālai Mudukuḍumi Peruvaḷudi's titles suggest his having performed and encouraged the performance of many sacrifices and the building of many sacrificial halls. The Chēra Palyānai Śelkeḷu Kuṭṭuvan is said to have performed ten great sacrifices as a result of which the poet Pālai Gautamanār and his wife attained the great release.[103] The Talaiyālaṅgānattu Neḍuñjeḷiyan is also said to have performed the sacrifice appropriate to a great conqueror.[104] The Chēra Peruñjēral Irumpoṛai is said to have become the father of a male successor to his throne as a result of a vedic sacrifice performed by him; evidently it was the *Putrakāmeshti*.[105] The Chēra king Iḷam Chēral Irumpoṛai performed the Soma Yajña (Madukkoḷ Vēḷvi).[106]

The daily routine of the king was, according to custom regulated in a rough way, though none could compel him to stick to that programme. The day consists of sixty *nāḻigais* (a *nāḻigai*: 24 minutes). During the first ten *nāḻigais* in the day (calculated from sunrise) i.e. from about 6 A.M. to 10 A.M. the *aṛam* prescribed for a person of royal rank was pursued: during the second half, i.e. 10 *nāḻigais* from 10 A.M. to 2 P.M. he sat in the court listening to popular plaints meting out justice to them and distributing presents to deserving persons.

101 *Paṭṭina*: 20.

102 *Śilap*: XXVIII: 177, 178 and 191 to 199.

103 *Padiṛṛu*: III Ten; *Padiham*. 104 *Puṛam*: 26.

105 *Padiṛṛu*: 74. In this poem on Peruñjēral Irumpoṛai by Ariśil Kiḷar, we see that the king performed a 'Vēḷvi' for begetting a son. In that context, it is said that "The queen put on a circular piece of deerskin on her shoulders". This may be compared with the prescribed procedure in connection with the *Putrakāmeshṭi*, viz., "The fire is surrounded with the wool of a male animal and the woman ties this piece of wool around herself".

106 *Śilap*: XXVIII: 147, 148.

The third ten *nāḻigais* in the day from 2 P.M. to 6 P.M. were spent in entertainment and relaxation.[107] At daybreak the king was awakened by the beating of the drum specially intended for that purpose and by the singing of the bards.[108] He then planned the programme for the day.[109] In the morning after his ablutions were over, he sat in meditation for a while contemplating the divinity.[110] The kings entertained their guests lavishly and partook of the liberal fare of meat and drink freely with considerable gusto in the company of guests and visitors high and low. The fine clothes which the kings wore were shining stiff and starched.[111] The nights were spent in drinking bouts or in the company of the women[112] or in witnessing dances and drama in the theatre.[113]

Hunting was an important occupation for kings. They had to protect the people by putting down unlawful elements in the country and by hunting down the wild animals. Tigers were hunted often and killed but occasionally also captured alive, by using the cages and by lighting a fire near the lair of the animals,[114] and by employing deer, sheep etc. to attract the wild beasts.[115] Elephants were a common object slaughtered or captured during the hunting expedition.[116] They hunted with bow and arrows, and slings. The hunters were accompanied by dogs especially for the chase.[117] The shepherds whistled sharply to drive foxes away from sheepfarms.[118] Ōri a great feudatory chief had a great strong bow and so he was called

107 *Puṟam*: 69. Com; *Iṟai*. *Ahap*: 40, Com.
108 *Madurai*: 223, 224. 109 *Āchārakkōvai*: 4.
110 *Madurai*: 724.
111 *Aham*: 387; *Neḍunal*: 134; *Madurai*: 721.
112 *Puṟam*: 29: 6, 7. 113 *Śilap*: III; 39.
114 *Puṟam*: 19.
115 Such animals (used to attract the wild animals) were called 'Pārvai' animals. *Puṟam*: 320.
116 *Porunar*: 142. 117 *Puṟam*: 33.
118 *Aham*: 274.

Val vil Ōri. With a single arrow he could kill an elephant, a tiger, a deer, a bear. He was a veritable Nimrod.[119] The Vēṅkaṭam chiefs specialized in the elephant hunt.[120] The kings generally were expert horsemen,[121] though they rode an elephant usually when they went out on war. *Manage* was a favourite training for the princes of the royal family.

Hunting is prohibited by the *Artha Śāstra* of Kautilya;[122] in Tamil, also, 'hunting', harsh word, heavy punishments, gambling, spirituous drinks and lust' are prohibited; but probably this is only a translation of the Kautilyan dictum[123] and does not represent the Tamil view entirely. The *Kuṛal*, far from decrying hunting, mentions how (in hunting) it is more heroic to hold a spear which has failed against an elephant rather than claim to have captured a hare.[124] The Tamil kings actually were great hunters. Even the Sanskrit *Purāṇas* especially in the story of Dushyanta going out to hunt, and many other stories to that effect, would show that ancient custom did not only not prohibit 'hunting' but placed it among royal duties. The *Vēḍar* or the hunter or the 'hunter community' naturally provided the hunting retinue needed for the king on these occasions

The kings spent most of their time in the capital city and in the palace there; but processions along the streets of the capital, hunting, and going out to war were some of the occasions on which he left his palace and could be seen by subjects. After conquering foreign territories he used to stay in the enemy's territories to reorganize government there or to reclaim the land ruined by warfare and arson. This was known as 'staying in the newly conquered land'.[125]

119 *Puṛam* : 152.

120 *Puṛam* : 389. 121 *Nānmaṇi* : 54.

122 *Artha Śāstra* : Kautilya : Bk. VIII : 3.

123 ''வேட்டங் கடுஞ்சொல் மிகுதண்டம் ரூதுபொருள்
சூட்டங் கட் காமமோ டேழு''.
Kuṛaḷ : 566 Pari. Com.

124 *Kuṛaḷ* : 772. 125 *Kali* : 26 : 11, 12.

The Tamil kings of the *Saṅgam* age were many of them discerning critics and good scholars; some of them were poets as well. Practically all of them encouraged poetry, dance and drama. Karikālan was a man of many parts. Pāṇḍyan Aṟivuḍai Nambi and the two Neḍuñjeḻiyans were poets.

Their great appreciation of literature and fine arts made them shower large gifts on the artistes. It was part of their daily routine to receive poets, bards and minstrels and entertain them. The gifts were not always proportionate to the worth of the art. Mostly they were a token of royal recognition and appreciation of art and as a rule, parsimonious princes were few. Often the presents made by fabulously generous rulers verged on 'waste'.

The poets normally expected a king to make presents to them in recognition of their art and to relieve their poverty. They would not take presents given without dignity, grace or respect;[126] they would not accept presents given through agents.[127] They expected the kings to discriminate between worthy men and others and to have a sense of proportion in assessing the work of a poet.[128] These rules of philanthropy were drawn up by the beneficiaries of that virtue. They (the poets) knew that it was disgraceful to beg of a man for some presents or gifts, but they took care to impress upon the king that it was more disgraceful to refuse to give present to a bard or a poet. The general principle however, that it was natural for a man to refuse to give what he cannot give was accepted.[129]

While there was a very large number of very generous patrons among the kings of the Tamil *Saṅgam* there were seven liberal patrons famed for particular acts of great liberality. (1) Pāri, the ruler of Parambu Nāḍu of 300 villages and a hillock, praised greatly by his court poet, friend, philosopher and guide, Kapilar, once gave up his chariot for a *mullai* creeper which had no trellis to climb on; his solicitude for even such a low organism like a creeper met with universal appreciation and he is immortalized in

126 *Puṟam* : 208.
127 *Ibid.*
128 *Puṟam* : 121; *Malaipaḍu* : 541 to 543.
129 *Nāladi* : 111.

imperishable verse by Kapilar.[130] (2) Ōri, ruler of Kolli hills.[131] (3) Kāri, or Malaiyamān, ruler of Kōvalūr on the banks of the Pennār.[132] (4) Adihamān Neḍumān Añji ruler of Tahaḍūr (the modern Dharmapuri), patronized the famous poetess Auvaiyār. He once gave her a *Nelli* (the myrobalan) fruit which it was said made the eater thereof deathless. Instead of himself eating the fruit, he gave it to Auvaiyār without telling her of its divine qualities. He told her of it after she had eaten it. She in her turn immortalized him in verse.[133] (5) Pēhan, ruler of Nallūr of the hilly country once gave a wollen blanket to a peacock.[134] (6) Āy, ruler of Āyguḍi or Podiyil hills was lavish in his gifts of elephants to poets.[135] (7) Naḷḷi, ruler of Naḷḷi in the Pāṇḍyan land. Kumaṇan, chief of Mudirai hills, who was a successor to these seven great patrons[136] gave his sword to the poet Peruñchittiranār begging him to take his (Kumaṇan's) head to the king Iḷankumaṇan (Kumaṇan's younger brother) who had set a price on it thus rewarding the poet when he was himself a penniless refugee.

Karikālan, the great Chōḷa king gave 1,600,000 *pons* (gold coins) to Kaḍiyalūr Rudran Kaṇṇanār for his poem *Paṭṭinappālai* of 301 lines,[137] which works out to about 5330 gold pieces per line of poetry. Later tradition raised the figure to 160 million *pons*.[138]

The *Padiṟṟuppattu* gives us in the colophons to the eight tens (extant ones), details of the presents made to the poets (authors of these tens) by the kings praised: (1) Kumaṭṭūrkkaṇṇanār received from Imaya Varamban Neḍuṅjēral Ādan, the *Brahmatāyam* rights for 500 villages in the District of Umbarkkāḍu (the 'elephant forest' in the Chēra land) and part of revenue

130 *Puṟam* : 200, 208.
131 *Puṟam* : 152.
132 *Puṟam* : 124.
133 *Puṟam* : 91.
134 *Puṟam* : 141.
135 *Puṟam* : 127 to 136
136 *Puṟam* : 151.
137 *Kaliṅgattupparaṇi* : *Rājapārampariyam*; 21.
138 *Tamiḻ Viḍu Dūtu* : 193.

derived from the southern lands for 38 years. (2) Pālai Gautamanār received from Palyānai Śelkeḻu Kuṭṭuvan the help and necessary facility to perform nine great Vēdic sacrifices. As a result of the sacrifices, the Brahmin poet and his wife 'disappeared'. (3) Kāppiyāṟṟu Kāppianār received from Kaḻaṅgāi Kaṇṇi Nārmuḍi Chēral four million *pons* and part of the royal revenues. (4) Paraṇar received from Seṅguṭṭuvan the *Umbarkkāṭṭu vāri* and the prince Kuṭṭuvan Chēral (probably as a disciple). (5) Kākkaipāḍiniyār Nachcheḻḻaiyār (a poetess) received from Āḍukōṭpāṭṭu Chēralādan nine *kās* of gold in lieu of ornaments and 100,000 *kāṇams* of gold and she got the privilege of being seated by the side of the King. (6) Kapilar received from Śelvakkaḍuṅgō Vāḻiyādan 100,000 *kāṇams* of gold (as a token present) and the *Brahmadāyam* rights on all the land which he and the king could survey from the top of a hill called 'Navira'. (7) Arisil Kiḻār received from Peruñjēral Irumpoṛai 900,000 *kāṇams* of gold and sovereign rights over the king's dominion. The king and the queen stepped out of the palace leaving the poet in possession of the palace. But the poet declined; and accepted only a ministership under the king. (8) Peruṅkuṛūr Kiḻar received from Iḷañchēral Irumpoṛai 32,000 *kāṇams* of gold; and innumerable towns and villages and untold wealth were made over to him without his knowing.[139] Apart from these princes, Akkuran, a great chief, is mentioned as a proverbially generous patron.[140] "The most liberal rewards sought out even the faintest glimmerings of literary merit." Even second rate poetry profited by the spirit of competition among patrons to excel one another in acquiring legendary titles of munificence.

Some of these presents might appear to be fabulous. But by and large the basic fact of unusual largesse being distributed to bards and minstrels seems to be substantiated by these numerous references. It was not as if these presents did not strike the

139 *Puṟam* ; 210, 211; *Paḍiṟṟu* : IX Ten *Padiham*.
140 *Paḍiṟṟu* : 13.

contemporaries even as 'waste' and occasionally misplaced; that is why they took care to note down the facts. In the case of granting a chariot to a creeper and blanket to peacock, contemporary record also says it was *koḍai maḍam* (thoughtless gifts)[141]. But it was not the gift or the recipient that mattered but the generous motive that was really important. Auvaiyār once jestingly, but with considerable justification, asked, "When I only asked for a handful of rice, I am given a huge elephant, as big as a mountain. Do not patrons know what presents to give, when and to whom?" Obviously the elephants which were given as presents were later on exchanged for consumer goods.[142] The bards and the brahmins were usually presented gold lotuses.[143] The description of these bards, poets, minstrels, etc., as sycophants would be ungenerous for they had often been extremely outspoken and very critical of those very patrons. The great influence which poets had on kings is best illustrated by reference to Kōvūrkiḻār, who saved Iḷandattan, a poet and the children of Malayamān, and Poigaiyār, who saved Kaṇaikkāl Irumpoṛai. It is not as if only *royal* patrons were so generous. 'Kaḍiya Neḍu Vēṭṭuvan,'[144] a tall *hunter* chief of Kōḍai hills, 'Piḍavūr Kiḻan Mahan Peruñjāttan'[145] a *Vēḷāḷa* chieftain, 'Pārppān Kavuṇiyan Viṇṇantāyan'[146] a rich *Brahmin* were all great patrons. It is also seen that some of the poets were not above flattering even unworthy patrons.[147]

141 *Puṛam* : 141; 142. In view of the expression in line 5 of this poem, there can be no doubt as to the meaning of the word; some scholars have equated this Tamil word 'maḍam' with the Sanskrit word 'matha' and tortured the word to extract a different meaning. In this context of princely munificence it may be noted that Qutb-ud-din Aibek was so generous that he was praised by all writers as 'lakhbaksha' or giver of lakhs; and Mahmūd of Ghazni gave one gold coin for every couplet of Firdausi. The Khankanan gave three million rupees for a single verse of Gangaprasad; and so on.

142 K. A. N. : *H. S. I.* 'It is not clear what use the poet could have for the animal'; p. 131.

143 *Puṛam :* 126.

144 *Puṛam* : 205.

145 *Puṛam* : 395.

146 *Puṛam :* 166.

There were some kings who delayed granting the usual presents too long and consequently incurred the displeasure of the poets.[148]

Dancers in the court were lavishly rewarded by kings; especially on the occasion of their first performance in public. It was called 'capital reward' *(Talai Varisai)*. Mādhavi received from the Chōḻa king of Puhār not only his garland but 1008 *Kaḻañjus* of gold. The gifts granted to the brahmins were called *Brahmatāyam* meaning 'that which is inherited by the Brahmans from the king'. This term is mentioned as Brahmadēya or 'Brahmadēśa' *(*the land of the Brahmins*)*, [149] in medieval inscriptions. Āryappaḍai Kaḍanda Neḍuñjeḻiyan gave the two villages of Tangāl and Vayalūr as gift to the brahmins whom he had unjustly treated.[150] Brahmins were also given ornaments and gold lotuses to wear.[151] The *Pāṇar* who were much rewarded still continued poor and they complained that 'their hunger was ancient',[152] and so the kings specially favoured them. When the *Pāṇar* arrived in the palace toddy, meat, cakes and fine cloths were given to them. Then came the royal present of elephants, etc.

Gifts to temples were not unknown; Śelvakkaḍuṅgo Vāḻi Ādan gave the village of Ohandūr (famous for the 'Ōtra' variety of paddy) as a gift to the temple of Tirumāl. Śeṅguṭṭuvan after constructing the temple for Kaṇṇagi established the tradition of worship there and donated property to the temple.[153] The relevance of arbitrary munificence of the king to the polity consists in the arbitrariness and not the munificence; the former is a power exercised by whim, contrary to declared and therefore predictable governmental procedure and so consequential to the entire subject population, while the latter is personal benefaction to particular individuals.

147 *Puṟam:* 148. 148 *Puṟam:* 197.

149 A reference to the *Padiṟṟuppattu* colophons and to the chapter on 'Tāyakkoḻhai' *(*the theory of inheritance*)* in the *Tamiḻ Varalāṟu* by R. Raghava Iyengar will dispel all doubts about the original form of the word.

150 *Śilap:* XXIII 151 *Porunar:* 62.

152 *Śilap:* XXIII: 118, 119. 153 *Śilap*; XXX: 151, 154.

At midnight when the daily routine of the palace drew to a close, a bell was rung to announce that hour.

(d) ABDICATION, DEATH AND REGENCY

There were no known instances of any king being deposed by the people; that would have been political revolution engineered from below, a process unknown to the ancient Tamils.

Abdication is mentioned by Tolkāppiyar as '*Kaṭṭil Nīttapāl*' i.e., 'the situation of (a king) abdicating the throne'.[154] Kings had voluntarily abdicated on certain occasions: (1) When a king sustained defeat and was overcome with grief and shame and retired to give up his life. The Chēra King Peruñjēral Ādan who fought Karikālan in the battlefield of Veṇṇi and was defeated having sustained a wound on his back was so smitten with a sense of shame that he committed suicide by the process known as *Vaḍakkiruttal*.[155] (2) When the sons of a king revolted against the father and the father got disgusted with secular life as a result thereof. The Chōḻa King Kōpperuñchōḻan who was first inclined to fight his rebellious sons was, however, persuaded by his friends to give up the war; and he also committed suicide by the process of *Vaḍakkiruttal*.[156] (3) A defeated king, if imprisoned and ill-treated, was struck by shame and took his own life. Chēran Kaṇaikkāl Irumpoṛai who was defeated in the battle of Kaḻumalam by Chōḻan Seṅgaṇān, was ill-treated by the prison-guards, who refused to give him even water to drink; so he decided to starve to death.[157]

Vaḍakkiruttal literally means 'being seated in the north', evidently facing the north. It is stated that kings who were defeated in battle went north and sat fasting in some place till they died. It was a kind of penance. Such kings took their swords, which had also tasted defeat, with them and then the act of self-immolation was called *Vāḷ Vaḍakkiruttal* and does not mean 'dying by cutting one's own throat'. Perhaps the sword also was destroyed.

Two interpretations can be given for this practice.

154 *Tol. Poruḷ*: 76.
155 *Puṛam*: 65.
156 *Puṛam*: 217.
157 *Puṛam*: 74.

(1) That those who were desirous of securing salvation by ridding themselves of the crass and unworthy human body went northwards — a direction deemed to be 'the holy and blessed direction', and did penance by fasting unto death. The northern direction in Sanskrit is *Puṇya Diśa* and a person renouncing the world and planning to die was pointed to the north.[158] This is called in Sanskrit *Mahāprastāna* or *Uttaragamana*.

(2) Possibly, even as the Āryans held that the south was an inauspicious direction associated with death, the primitive Tamils in the early stages held the belief that the northern direction was the land of the 'dead' and so when they wanted to die they went to the north. But this was just, possibly a relic of a very ancient practice in society which had persisted in historical times, but was later given an explanation consonant with subsequent Āryan traditions.

Normally, the kings were to die fighting a hero's death in the battlefield. If they died peacefully at home their body was symbolically quartered and the 'Brahmanical mantras made heroes of them';[159] but if the king met with defeat in battle, self-immolation was the only course open to him, consistent with his honour and that act of suicide was *Vaḍakkiruttal*.

Kings died by accident too. Kaḍalul māinta Iḷamperu Vaḻudi,[160] the Pāṇḍyan prince was drowned in the sea, as his name indicates. Āriyappaḍai Kaḍanda Neḍuñjeḻiyan died[161] on the throne struck by remorse at having committed cruel injustice.

The process of *Vaḍakkiruttal*, so far as available literature can guide us, was adopted only by those who were defeated in battle. It seems that *Vaḍakkiruttal* which had a limited and specialised significance in the early days later came to have a generic sense and meant 'suicide' or 'self-immolation' by whatever means it was achieved. That is why Kapilar who is reported by a late inscription of Tirukkōilūr to have 'entered fire', is also described

158 *Śiṟupañcha*: 79; *Aham*: 55.
159 *Puṟam*: 93.
160 *Puṟam*: 182.
161 *Śilap*: XX: 38.

as having performed *Vaḍakkiruttal*.[162] There is not necessarily any contradiction here if *Vaḍakkiruttal* had acquired the general meaning of 'suicide'.

The author of *The Studies in Tamil Literature* says: "Sutra 76 of *Tolkāppiyam Poruḷadikāram* contains evidence of another fact of great importance. This was the relinquishing of the throue called 'Kaṭṭil'. It seems that after having ruled the kingdom according to the established laws of the land satisfactorily and well, the king used to relinquish his office in the evening of his life, to lead a life of penance and prayer."[163] This picture generalises too much, though there is occasional mention of Tamil rulers having abdicated the throne 'to lead a life of penance and prayer'.[164] Nachchinārkkiniyar could not cite the instance of any Tamil king to illustrate the theme; he mentions only Bharata and Pārthipa as instances for this political situation called 'abdication'; Palyānai Śelkeḻu Kuṭṭuvan who renounced and left for the forest did so because he merely wished to follow the example of Neḍumbāratāyanār, his *purohit*; and it is interesting to note that Iḷampūraṇar gives an altogether different meaning for the expression *Kaṭṭil Nitta Pāl*. He calls it 'avoiding sharing another man's bed' (*Piṛar Manai Nayavāmai*). So it can by no means be claimed, as V.R. Ramachandra Dikshitar does, that "the king *used* to relinquish his office in the evening of his life, to lead a life of penance and prayer".

It would appear that the succession of a king took effect practically from the moment of his predecessor's death. The institution of an unlimited monarchy is such that it must be a continuing office and an interregnum could mean chaos especially in a polity in which there is no self-propelling bureaucratic mechanism which could, at least for some time, function without the chief executive. The king was not only the soul but the body of the administrative machinery. He was the foreman, as it were, in the factory of

162 *Puṛam*: 236.
163 V.R R. Dikshitar: *Studies*, p. 182.
164 *Puṛam*: 251, 252.

government. In his absence, the workmen (i. e. the king's officers) and the machinery (i. e. the government in the abstract) would automatically come to an end. There was no arrangement for a worker's council (i.e. a Regency) to take charge of the factory (i. e. government). Karikālan, the famous Chōḷā king came to the throne at the early age of five, the age at which Louis XIV of France became king. Irumpiḍarttalaiyār, the maternal uncle of Karikālan was no doubt, a great adviser and help to the juvenile king. But he was no more than an adviser, i. e. he was no 'constituted regent'. That is, there was no provision for a regency to be automatically set up as soon as the legitimate king was disabled from personally discharging the duties of government.

It has been suggested that a council of regency consisting of five persons, viz. (1) *Āśān (purohit)*; (2) *Peruṅkaṇi* (the great astrologer); (3) *Aṟakkaḷattu Andaṇar* (judicial advisers); (4) *Kāvidi* (the titled nobility or the revenue collectors as some interpret it) and (5) *Mandirakkaṇakkar* (the royal scribes or correspondents), constituted themselves into a council of regency when Āṟyappaḍai Kaḍanda Neḍuñjeḻiyan suddenly expired. Dr. T. V. Mahalingam, repeating Dr. S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar,[165] says, "when Madurai passed through a period of interregnum as a result of the Pāṇḍyan King's death closely following the execution of Kōvalan, the administration of the kingdom was temporarily in the hands of a body of five consisting of the (1) *Āśān*; (2) *Peruṅgaṇi*; (3) *Aṟakkaḷattu Andaṇar*; (4) *Kāvidi* and (5) *Mandirakkaṇakkar*"[166] It is curious to find this idea being readily accepted and repeated by every student of South Indian History. The authority that is quoted in support of this theory of 'Regency' is the two lines (8 and 9) in *Śilappadikāram Aḻaṟpaḍukādai*. It is a pity that the following two lines (10 and 11) also are not considered. The *Śilappadikāram* says only that when a king died the officials of the king (*Āśān* to *Mandirakkaṇakkar*) and the servants of the palace

165 S.K.: *Hindu Institutions*, pp. 18, 19.
166 T.V.M.: *S. I. Polity*, p. 102.

(Kōil Mākkaḷ) and the members of the harem *(Kuṟuntoḍi Magaḷir)* not knowing what to do, remained like statues or painted pictures and were completely silent. Then the *Kādai* proceeds to say that protective gods of Madurai deserted the city and the God of Fire consumed it. It is impossible to read any regency in this situation. It is only complete confusion that is admirably portrayed here. It must be presumed that consequent on the destruction of a good part of the city and the curse that lay on it, the city was quickly abandoned by the population (a reason why Kaṇṇagi and Śāttanār left the city) and Koṟkai from where Veṟṟi Vēṟ Cheḻiyan was ruling, became the temporary capital of the kingdom. The fact that from the moment Neḍuñjeḻiyan expired to the day when Veṟṟi Vēr Cheḻiyan propitiated the Goddess of Chastity by sacrificing a thousand goldsmiths, Madurai was in the grip of chaos, confusion and suffering is well brought out in Māḍalan's message to Śeṅguṭṭuvan.

(e) The Royal Family and the Palace Establishment

The royal family over which the king presided included the queen (or queens), the royal princes and such other near relatives as were considered indispensable by the king. But the number of members of the family was far exceeded by the number of servants and attendants in the palace.

The queen (i.e. the chief queen) was the *Kōilāḷ* which means the wife (literally 'the housekeeper') of the king *(Kōil* being the king's house) even as *Manaiyāḷ* means the keeper of the *Manai* (an ordinary house). But in the royal context *Kōilaḷ*[167] meant only the primary wife of the king, i.e. 'She, whose son would ascend the throne after the king'. No queen ever seems to have ruled the dominions in her own right, like Catherine of Russia or Elizabeth of England; or even to have jointly ruled the kingdom with her husband, like Nurjehan and Jehangir or Mary and William III. The queen could not succeed to the throne or even have any interest in the throne because of the *Makkaḷ Tāyam* system of succession.

167 *Padiṟṟu:* VIII Ten-*Padiham.*

The queen, it must be presumed, played a subordinate and occasionally advisory role in the palace as well as in the government. But being the wife of the king she was much respected by the subjects. But the king treated the queen just as any man treated his wife compelling her to accept a position of subordination. There was at least one queen who was particularly badly treated by her royal husband. Pēhan divorced his wife Kaṇṇagi, and actually sent her away from the palace and set his heart upon another woman. The cruelty of this treatment of a wedded wife became such a scandal that the leading poets of the day Kapilar, Paraṇar, Ariśil Kiḻār and Peruṅkuṛūr Kiḻār took it upon themselves to plead with the heartless Pēhan on behalf of Kaṇṇagi.[168] If the divorce had been reasonable, the great poets would not have pleaded the cause of the unfortunate queen. But still Pēhan is praised as one of the last seven patrons. This can only mean that public philanthropy and charity can co-exist with extremely objectionable behaviour in the domestic sphere.

In the royal families of the three kingdoms inter-marriages among the members of those families were common. The Chōḻas and the Chērās seemed to have been more related to each other than the Pāṇḍyas were to either. The *Vēḷs*, the traditional feudatories and the higher class *Vēḷāḷas* were enjoying *jus connubium* with the royal families and so socially there was no distinction among them.

The women, who were the members of the harem were the *urimai magaḷir*; there were also the women who were captured in the battlefield as booty. These women bathed in the public bath as distinguished from the other women in the palace whose privacy was protected. These captive ladies assembled in the *Podiyil* or the *Manṛam* — a public place of assembly — where there was a stump (*Taṛi* or *Kandu*) which was treated as a deity, duly garlanded and worshipped. When these women prayed in the *manṛam* possibly they prayed for their emancipation, for there is nothing to show that their condition was any better

168 *Puṛam* : 143 etc.

than that of slaves.[169]

The *Periplus* mentions that the Roman merchants exported every year beautiful maidens for the harems of Indian kings.[170] Though there is no specific corroboration of this fact in *Saṅgam* literature, the facts that the Greeks and the Romans had not only extensive trade relationship with Tamiḻaham but many of their countrymen were employed in the service of the Tamil kings and noblemen and that those foreigners had set up colonies in some parts of the country and from what we know of the ways of the Tamil kings of those days, it is not improbable that many of 'the beautiful Roman maidens' mentioned in the *Periplus* found their way into Tamil royal harems.[171] In the *Peruṅgadai* the expression *Urimai śuṟṟam* is found explained as the *ladies* of the harem.[172]

The eldest prince was the heir-apparent and usually called *Kōmahan* while the other princes — the younger sons and brothers of the reigning king — were heirs presumptive and called *Iḷaṅgo*.[173] It is possible that these princes, especially the younger brothers were entrusted with viceregal responsibilities; we hear of 'Veṟṟivēr Cheḻiyan' ruling at Koṟkai while Āryappaḍai Kaḍanda Neḍuñjeḻiyan was at Madurai. The two branches of the Chōḻa family ruling at Uṟaiyūr and at Puhār must have had an origin similar to the two dynasties among the Chāḻukyas — the Eastern and the Western. The major members of the royal family seemed to have been associated with government in a gubernatorial capacity; hence we hear of a large number of princes within the short period of the *Saṅgam* age.

169 *Paṭṭina* : 246 to 249

170 Schoff (Ed) : *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, pp. 40-47.

171 Writing many centuries later *(C.* 1293*)* Marco Polo makes an interesting observation : "The king hath some 500 wives; for whenever he hears of a beautiful damsel he takes her to wife" *(Travels of Marco Polo* — Ed. by Yule and Cordier. Bk. III chaps. 16, 17*)*.

172 *Peruṅgadai* : III : 13, 16.

173 *Silap* : XXVII : 159 "இளங்கோ வேந்தற் இறந்ததற் பின்னர்".

While it is usual for the entire royal family to jointly resist aggression as the nine Chōḻa princes resisted (but without success) Seṇguṭṭuvan,[174] division of the family against itself also occurred occasionally. The case of Kōpperuñchōḻan[175] and his sons is an instance in point.

The king being *Kō*, the palace (the house of the king) was called *Kōil*;[176] *Nagar* was another name generally applied to all houses but specially to palaces and temples.[177] The gateway of the palace was well guarded by sentinels specially posted there; the guards stood at the gates of the palace with their spears reclining against the walls nearby.[178] Strangers were usually not allowed to get into the palace as is evident from Piśir Āndaiyār's address to the *Annaśēval* (swan) which he sent as his ambassador of friendship to the Chōḻa king Kōpperuñchōḻan. The guards generally put on a stern look and the poet advised his bird-friend not to be frightened by that look.[179] The bards (*pāṇar*), the actors (*porunar*), the Brahmins (*pārppār*) and the poets (*pulavar*) were never refused admission into the palace,[180] just as an envoy, a *Dūta*, could always without obstruction gain admission into the palace. But with regard to other categories of persons, admittance was strictly controlled.[181] Foreign eunuchs (*Āryappēḍiar*) were maintained as servants in the palace; possibly because like the Greeks, they could not understand the local language and so would not reveal palace secrets to the public. These eunuchs were quite probably employed as guards in the queen's apartments.[182] The queen's apartments were in accessible to males other than members of the royal family.[183] The *Śilappadikāram* styles the queen's apartments as *Kōpperundēvi Kōil*[184]

174 *Padiṟṟu* : V Ten-*Padiham*. 175 *Puṟam* : 213.
176 *Puṟam* : 378; *Śilap* : XIX : 75. 177 *Puṟam* : 6.
178 *Malaipaḍu* : 490-491. 179 *Puṟam* : 67.
180 *Perumpāṇ* : 401; *Porunar* : 66; *Śiṟupāṇ* : 203-206.
181 *Śilap* : XVI : 140. 182 *Śilap* : XXVII : 186.
183 *Neḍunal* : 107. "ஆடவர் குறுகா அருங்கடி வியனகர்"
184 *Śilap* : XVI : 139.

The royal emblem (viz. the tiger of the Choḻa, the bow of the Chēra and the carp of the Pāṇḍyan) was inscribed on the outer gates of the palace.[185] On the palace gates images of Gods were either painted or sculptured and they were worshipped after being bathed in clarified butter (or oil) and this practice made the outer door look blackish. An usual feature of the outer gate was the bell of justice.[186]

The king's domestic expenses were always met out of public funds (i.e. the royal revenues) and it did not constitute 'misappropriation'. The entire revenue belonged to the king to be spent by him in any manner he liked. A good part of the ample revenue, perhaps, was received in kind;[187] so that the king would always have been above want.

(f) THE REGALIA

The king had his royal emblems and other paraphernalia, more or less inseparably associated with him. Tolkāppiyar says that[188] (1) The Weapon (usually the sword), (2) The Flag, (3) The Umbrella, (4) The Drum, (5) The Horse, (6) The Elephant, (7) The Chariot, (8) The Garland and (9) The Crown are the essential regalia. Some students of *Tolkāppiyam* have taken *paḍai* in Sūtra 626 to mean 'army'; and this has puzzled them so much that they do not see why the army has not only been included in the regalia but also given the primary place there.

185 *Puṟam :* 33; *Paṭṭina* :40, 41.

186 *Śilap* : XX : 10. *Puṟam* : 388 : 13. We hear of such bells of justice elsewhere in history also. "In order to defeat the obstruction to the common people from the royal servants, Jahangir fastened a chain between his apartments and the bank of the Jumna, which everyone could touch and to which bells were attached". Beni Prasad : *History of Jahangir*, p. 111. Beveridge points out "Muhammad Shah in 1721 revived this practice and hung a long chain with bells attached to it from the tower which looked to the river." (*Sair-ul Mutakharin* I, 230). The bell of justice rung by the cow and mentioned in the *Manu Nitikaṇḍa Purāṇam* is quite famous.

187 *Śilap* : XVII : 5–10.

188 *Tol. Poruḷ* : 626.

Some have felt[189] that as the *Śaṅgam* Tamils treated the army as the very person of the king[190] and as war was one of the two functions of a king[191] the army finds the primary place in Tolkāppiyar's arrangement. It is also possible to add that the *Śaṅgam* king was so much dependent on the army that great primacy was given to it. But really *paḍai* here does not mean 'army', but means only[192] the sword, which of course in other places in *Tolkāppiyam* is treated on a par with the 'drum' and the 'umbrella'.

Later works make out an elaborate list of 21 articles;[193] (1) the crown, (2) the umbrella, (3) the whisk, (4) the prod (a kind of elephant prick or goad), (5) the drum, (6) the wheel of royalty, (7) the royal elephant, (8) the flag, (9) the fortress, (10) the decorative festoon, (11) the pot full of holy water, (12) the garland, (13) the conch, (14) the sea, (15) the fish, (16) the tortoise, (17) the symbol of the double carp, (18) the lion, (19) the lamp, (20) the bull and (21) the throne. The latter list contains many similes and adds things not quite essential as emblems of royal authority. In *Śilappadikāram* seven articles: (1) the drum, (2) the umbrella, (3) the fly-whisk, (4) the banner, (5) the prod, (6) the spear and (7) the noose are mentioned as accessories common to kings and to ogres. Thus there seems to have been no standard list of accessories, for even *Tolkāppiyam* omits such an important item as the 'throne'.

189 Dēvanēyan: *Paḷantamiḻātchi*. 190 *Śilap*: XXV: 191.

191 (a) Destruction of enemies and (b) protection of allies.

192 Pērāśiriyar, the commentator, who tries to explain away this difficulty says that though the horse, the elephant and the chariot are parts of the army, they are separately mentioned to show that there were a special royal horse, a royal elephant and a royal chariot. But the text is tortured to yield this meaning. A careful study of Pērāśiriyar's own commentary elsewhere (On *Sūtras*: *Poruḷ*: 631 & 6.6) will show clearly Tolkāppiyar has used the word *Paḍai* to mean 'a weapon of war'. This is fully substantiated by Nachchinārkkiniyar's interpretation of *Paḍai* as a 'bow' in his note on *Tol. Poruḷ*: 85.

193 *Chūdāmaṇi Nikaṇḍu*.

(i) The Crown

Traditionally the Chēras, the Chōḷas and the Pāṇḍyas were the only crowned heads in Tamiḻaham then; they were called the *Muḍiyuḍai Mūvēndar*[194] i. e. 'the three crowned kings'. The feudatories and the other lesser rulers did not wear crowns, for at least in theory they owed allegiance to one or other of the three kings. The superior rulers wore the crown and were called *Vēndar*, while the inferior rulers were *Mannar* and wore no crown,[195] at least none of the same shape and size as that of a sovereign ruler. So, even among rulers, the privilege of wearing a crown was reserved for these three only. Hence, it may be assumed that the crown, more than any other royal emblem, represented sovereignty.

The crown was called *Muḍi* and the ceremony of coronation *Muḍi Sūṭṭal* or *Muḍi Kavittal*. We hear of one *Kaḷaṅgāikkaṇṇi Nārmuḍichchēral* meaning the 'Chēra King who wore a garland or festoon of 'Kaḷaṅgāi' (a variety of black berry) and a crown made of rough fibre'.[196] The *Paḍiṟṟuppattu* commentator says[197] that the particular Chēra king wore such a garland and such a crown because due to certain circumstances on the occasion of the coronation it was found that the proper garland and the right crown were not available and so he wore a *Kaḷaṅgāikkaṇṇi* and a *Nārmuḍi*.[198] When a person was installed as a king, i. e. on the occasion which served as the starting point of the reign of a king, the ceremony of wearing a crown was obviously the most important one, though the king assumed the various other royal emblems also at that time, like 'the umbrella', 'the throne' and

194 *Śilap*: XXIII; *Kaṭṭurai* — line 1. *Tol Poruḷ*: 626 Pēra. suggests that Tolkāppiyar mentions Muḍi as the last item here, because it is the most important and gives the king competence to govern the land and punish the wicked.

195 The term *Vēndan* is derived from *Vēidal* (to wear); *Vēindōn* is he who wears (the crown) e.g., *Koṇṟai Vēndan*. *Kali*: 142. Nach. Com. The expression *Niṉmuḍi* perhaps suggests a long cone-shaped crown.

196 *Paḍiṟṟu*: IV Ten-*Paḍiham*. 197 *Paḍiṟṟu*: 38 Gloss.

198 K. A. N.: *H. S. I.* p. 114: "It was not altogether to be despised for the crown had a golden frame and festoons of

'the sceptre'. Consequently, the occasion was called *Muḍi Śūṭṭu Viḻā* just as in English the word 'coronation' is derived from 'corona'.

The Chēra kings in particular are often described as wearing an ornament (a garland) known as *Eḻu Muḍi Āram*[199] exhibiting or suggesting the seven crowns of the Chōḻas, the Pāṅḍyas and five others (referred to as superior *veḷirs)* whom those Chēras are reputed to have conquered. Imayavaramban and his son Śeṅguṭṭuvan are both known as *Eḻu Muḍi Mārban*. But for specific references about this 'seven-crowned garland' one might think that it was only a garland with seven knots (*Muḍi*: Knot) which the Chēras wore.

(ii) *The Sceptre*

The sceptre is *Kōl*[200] in Tamil; just as the shepherd holds the staff, the king held the sceptre in his hand. The analogy is appropriate, for the king's sceptre and the shepherd's staff are both called *Kōl* in Tamil, the king was the shepherd and the people were the sheep, and the relationship between the ruler and the ruled was not unlike that between the shepherd and the sheep. In both cases, the *Kōl* is to be used in the interest of the flock so that they may not go astray. The *Kōl* also means the central rod of a balance which is impartial between the two pans of the balance.[201]

The sceptre, together with the crown, the throne and the royal umbrella stood for visible emblems of royalty. While the

precious pearls'' *Paḍiṟṟapattu* glossator shows that this was not the case.

199 *Paḍiṟṟu*: 14, 16, 40, 45; *Śilap*; XXVIII: 169.

200 The Sanskritists would call it *Danda* which means 'sceptre' as well as 'punishment'. In Tamil *Kōl* refers to the 'sceptre' as well as 'justice'. The crozier or the staff used officially as an ensign of office or dignity by the Christian Bishops is said to be derived from the Lictor of the Roman augurs and it is similar in origin to the royal sceptre.

201 Parimēlaḻagar's introduction to *Kuṟaḷ*, 55. *Puṟam*: 117 means that a straight sceptre is essential for virtuous men to thrive in the kingdom.

umbrella represented royal protection to the people and the crown the royal supremacy over others, the sceptre represented royal justice.[202] It was a rod made straight to indicate justice which is to be 'straight'. The path of justice (*Aṟam*) which the king was to follow was to be straight and not perverted i.e. bent on either side. The *Kōl*, by a figure always referred to 'justice'; and if justice was fair, the *Kōl* was straight i.e. it was *Seṅkōl;* but if it was by the slightest degree miscarried, it was figuratively called 'the bent sceptre' i.e. *Koḍuṅkōl*. Tyranny and cruelty were *Koḍuṅkōl*. Considerate and fair government was Seṅkōl.[203]

Kōl is occasionally used as a general term for royal authority.[204] The *Kuṟaḷ* which details the essential characteristics of an ideal king speaks at length in a whole chapter about *Seṅkōl*[205] and devotes another chapter[206] to warn against the dangers of *Koḍuṅkōl*.

Ancient Tamil kings generally were just; and resented any imputation of *Koḍuṅkōnmai (*injustice, tyranny etc.*)* to their rule; they felt ashamed even if a neighbouring ruler was accused of unjust rule and felt relieved if the imputation were proved wrong.[207] Wilful injustice and cruelty were perpetrated, no doubt;[208] but only occasionally and under heavy provocation. The concept of the *Seṅkōl* points to the general fairness of the *Saṅgum* rulers.

(iii) The Umbrella

The umbrella, circular in shape, large in size and spotless white in colour[209] like the 'Moon' was a visible emblem of royalty among the Tamil *Saṅgam* rulers. The umbrella was called the *Kuḍai* and as it was of white cloth it was *Veṇkuḍai*. It had a long handle of gold and golden tassels.[210] When the king sat in

202 *Puṟam :* 35
203 *Silap :* XXV : 98, 99.
204 *Kuṟaḷ :* 552.
205 *Kuṟaḷ :* Chap : 55.
206 *Kuaṟḷ :* Chap : 56.
207 *Silap :* XXV; 99.
208 *Kuṟun :* 292.
209 *Silap :* XXVIII: 1 and 2. *Puṟam :* 3.
210 *Ibid.* "தமனிய நெடுங்குடை".

the audience hall, the umbrella was held by servants (male or female) over his head. It was no relic of ancient protective arrangement to keep the sun and the rains away; but it connoted 'valour and invincibility and victory' and was a symbol of protection to the subjects in distress.[211] Hence the umbrella is generally referred to as *Veṇkoṟṟak Kuḍai*. It is also supposed to refer to the royal prerogatives and rights.[212] When subordinate chiefs (who also enjoyed the privilege of using the royal umbrellas — possibly smaller in size) accompanied the king, the king's umbrella was held aloft to indicate superior eminence while the others were held low to indicate inferior status.[213]

The royal umbrella or parasol was normally a symbol of 'royal clemency and gentle mercy'.[214] The umbrella like the 'Moon' shed 'cool lustre' on all the subjects of the king.[215] When the king was righteous and the government was just, the umbrella was held high, even as 'the sceptre stood erect'. But when the king's rule became a tyranny, 'the umbrella was lowered' (not necessarily literally but figuratively, in the eyes of mankind) even as the sceptre was 'bent'.[216] When the king was accused of 'injustice' or 'despotic cruelty' the umbrella and the sceptre were the first and twin casualties.[217] The umbrella was held over the head of the king by attendants wherever he went. But as the Gods in the temples were honoured by similar umbrellas, the royal umbrella, when the king went to the temple for worship, was held at a lower level than that of the temple umbrella to indicate royal submission to the divine power.[218]

When the king went out on a military expedition the umbrella (i. e. the deity that was supposed to reside in the umbrella) was worshipped; and along with the sword and the drum, it

211 *Puṟam*: 35.
212 *Siṟupāṇ*: 64.
213 *Puṟam*: 31.
214 *Śilap*: XV: 3.
215 *Śilap*: I: 1.
216 *Śilap*: XXVII: 77; XX: 73.
"தாழ்ந்த குடையன் தளர்ந்தசெங் கோலன்".
217 *Śilap*: XX: 2.
218 *Puṟam*: 6.

was removed from the palace in the direction of the battlefield, on an auspicious day; the ceremony was called *Kuḍai Nāṭkoḷal*.[219] This ceremony was supposed to benefit the monarch who set out on the expedition.[220]

So, the royal umbrella accompanied the king to the battlefield. In *Kaḷavaḻi Nāṟpadu*, there are innumerable references to the umbrellas of the kings being destroyed by the elephants in the field of battle.[221] The flag and the umbrella, which were the two visible distinguishing emblems of the contending monarchs in a battlefield were the targets of the enemy archers and elephants. If the umbrella of a king was lowered, it was indicative of his being dishonoured; if it was destroyed it meant his defeat.

We hear of a special type of dance called *Kuḍai-dance*; this refers to the 'dance supposed to have been performed by Lord Muruga' in the field of battle in which he met his Asura foes; 'He danced a dance holding the umbrella low'.[222] That the umbrella was taken to the battlefield in all pomp and ceremony is the significant fact here.

The umbrella signifies 'cool shade'; and the royal umbrella was the protective symbol of the government (i. e. the king) under which the people lived. Any danger to the royal umbrella meant loss of peace and security to the people; the honour of the king was inseparable from that of the umbrella. When a king conquered fresh territory and brought it under his rule, figuratively he is said to have brought it under his umbrella of protection; hence the reference to great kings as bringing 'the whole world under one umbrella'.[223]

The *Śilappadikāram* mentions a strange practice of how conquering kings cut standard yard sticks out of the stem of the royal umbrella of the defeated rulers.[224] This is perhaps one of the indignities put upon defeated foes by conquerors in the *Śaṅgam* age.

219 *Tol. Poṟul* : 68.
220 *Ibid.*
221 *Kaḷavaḻi* : 36.
222 *Śilap* : III : 115.
223 *Porunarr* : 228.
224 *Śilap* : III : 114, 115.

Saṅgam age.

(iv) *The Throne*

The Tamil king, like any other king, sat on a throne; and true to tradition the throne was supported by sculptured lions.[225] The throne was called *Araśu Kaṭṭil*.[226] Ascending the throne (*Araśu Kaṭṭil Ēṛudal*) was the symbolic act of assuming kingship like wearing the crown.[227] The word *Kaṭṭil*[228] usually means only a bedstead, but it means also a 'seat' or a 'stand'; there was *Muraśu Kaṭṭil*[229] on which the royal drum was stood and the *Tūṅgu Kaṭṭil*[230] which was used as a mere bedstead. The prefix *Araśu* to *Kaṭṭil* indicates the throne, though occasionally *Kaṭṭil* is used without the prefix where the context helps us to know it is a 'throne'.[231] The expression *Araśu Kaṭṭil* means the throne which symbolises royal authority and not the piece of furniture on which the king sits.

The king in the audience hall sat on the throne and exercised his royal functions. *Śilappadikāram* mentions Āryappaḍai Kaḍanda Neḍuñjeḻiyan as dying while seated on the throne;[232] he listened to Kaṇṇagi's famous plaint officially from the throne; and that is what entitled her to plead her case and him to listen to it. The ivory tusks of the elephants captured in war were made into the four legs of the throne.[233]

In later days the kings seem to have captured and brought away as part of the war loot the throne of the enemy and named it after the defeated owner; e. g. 'Maḻavarāyan', 'Kaliṅgarāyan'.[234] But in the *Saṅgam* period there is no evidence of this practice.

(v) *The Drum*

The 'drum' was a symbol of royal authority and had its uses

225 Stanza at the end of *Porunar*: "அரிமா சுமந்த அமளி". *Śilap*: XXV: 78; XX: 23.
226 *Paḍiṛṛu*: VIII Ten-*Padiham*. 227 *Puṛam*: 17.
228 Connected with 'Cot' in English.
229 *Puṛam*: 50—Colophon. 230 *Kali*: 13: 15, 16.
231 *Puṛam*: 17—Colophon. 232 *Śilap*: XXII: 7.
233 *Paḍiṛṛu*: 79: 13, 14. 234 K. A. N. *Cōḻas*, p. 318

in peace and in war during the *Śaṅgam* age. It was usually stood on a large and commodious pedestal resembling a spacious cot, called, *Murašu Kaṭṭil*; and the *Murašu Kaṭṭil* was in an apartment of the king's palace. The Tamils of the *Śaṅgam* age attributed divine qualities to the drum and so bathed it in holy water, garlanded it and worshipped it;[235] they believed that there was a deity in the drum, and when the deity was worshipped the drum was loudly beaten.[236]

The drum in peace-time announced the commencement of festivals etc. On such occasions the drum was mounted on an elephant and taken round the town anouncing the festival.[237] The *paṛai* seems to have been a variant of the *Murašu*. The drum-beaters were a hereditary class and were adequately paid for their services. When the king wanted to make anouncements of coming events, even if it be in the nature of a warning, he did so by beat of drum only.[238] When the royal elephant was in rut and ran amok in the streets the event was announced by beat of durm, to clear the streets of gazing crowds to prevent accidents. The king who failed to so forewarn the people was supposed to have failed in his duty.

The drum seems to have been used on many occasions; the occasions on which it could be used, the persons who could use it and those who could authorize its use were all well settled for the drum was a 'public institution'. It bore the marks of the beat on it and the spot on the drum-leather at which it was beaten looked like a ghost's (?) eye.[239]

The drum was a symbol of protection and was called the tutelary drum-*Ema Murašu*,[240] probably because it annouced the commencement of hostilities and prepared the people for war. The drum which announced the declaration of war sounded at dawn and was called *Kālai-Murašu*.[241] The martial drum according

235 *Paḍiṟṟu*: 17, 19. 236 *Paḍiṟṟu*: 30.
237 *Śilap* V: 141, 142; *Madurai*: 361, 362.
238 *Kali*: 56. 239 *Paṭṭina*: 236.
240 *Kali*: 99: 14, 15. 241 *P.V. M.*: 117; *Madurai*: 232.

to an ancient tradition, was made of the untanned skin of a 'bull which had killed a tiger.'[242] Even in the camps or in the barracks the drum was sounded to make announcements.[243] The roar of thunder is, by a conventional simile, compared to the noise of the drum.[244] The drum, like the sword, and the umbrella was sent to the battlefield on an auspicious day to ensure victory in the battle.[245] Clearly the purpose of the drum in a battlefield was to rouse the spirit of the soldiers. The drum like the other royal emblem the umbrella, was a cherished booty in a battlefield; and he that could capture these emblems was a hero.[246] The victorious soldiers were rewarded with a drum by the grateful kings.[247] It is also mentioned that the wooden frame of the was drum was made out of the 'totemic tree' of the enemy.[248]

The royal drum was of three kinds: (a) *Vira Murašu* (b) *Tyāga Murašu*, (c) *Nyāya Murašu*.[249] These were the drum of victory, the drum of gifts or sacrifice and the drum of justice respectively. Whenever feudatories and other lesser kings brought their tribute to their kings. the arrival was announced by a special drum which also generally sounded in the morning.[250]

The drum which sounded at dawn regularly was intended to wake up the king; Aḍiyārkkunallār calls this *Murašam Paḷḷi Eḻuchchi Murašam*;[251] it was perhaps intended to rouse not only the king from his slumber but generally as an announcement to the entire town the dawn of the day, for there were special officers to wake up the king and the beating of a drum should not have been necessary to wake up even an exceptionally heavy sleeper.

(vi) *The Sword*

Whatever might be said about other sanctions, kings flourished by the might of their sword; and the *Šaṅgam* Tamil kings were no exception. They almost always had their sheathed sword

242 *Madurai*: 732, 733.
243 *Mullaip*: 79.
244 *Tirumurugu*: 121.
245 *Šilap*: V: 91, 92.
246 *Padṛṛu*: VIII Ten-*Padiham*.
247 *Šilap*: XIII; 143, 144.
248 *Padiṛṛu*: 43.
249 *Kali*: 132.
250 *Šilap*: XXVI: 52, 53.
251 *Šilap*: XVII: 6.

buckled to their side; and they were not the people to think twice before unsheathing the sword and using it to deadly purpose. They worshipped the sword, just as the martial drum was worshipped; they bathed it in holy water and wreathed floral garlands on it.[252] On the eve of battle, like the drum and the umbrella the sword also was taken out in an auspicious hour towards the battlefied.[253] As the umbrella signified the protection to the subjects, the sword meant destruction to the enemies of the realm and it personified the valour of the king. The king was said to plough the battlefiled with the sword as the tiller ploughs the paddy fields with the ploughshare.[254] The personal weapon of the king was also an emblem of royalty.

(vii) *The Banner and the Royal Crest*

The banner or the flag has been a universal feature in royal paraphernalia at all times. The *Śaṅgam* king had his flag and the purpose was to indicate his distinguishing creed or tradition on it. It was, as usual, a piece of cloth of cotton or silk, on which a particular emblem peculiar to the king used to be inscribed; and it was flown on a pole or pillar of varying height. There were flags of different sizes and the larger ones are known by the Sanskrit name *Paṭāka*.

The Chēras, the Chōḷas and the Pāṇḍyas had for their emblem on their flags the bow (*Vil*),[255] the tiger (*Puli*)[256] and the fish (*Kayal*)[257] respectively. Many theories have been advanced to explain the choice of these emblems. It may be surmised that as the Chēras ruled mostly over hilly country (what later came to be called *Malai Nāḍu*) and as the Chēra kings originally were but hunter chiefs, the 'bow' appropriately became their emblem. The Pāṇḍyans, being a seafaring people and trading largely in fish, assumed the 'carp' emblem, and one wonders if it is a mere accident that the presiding deity in Madura is the 'fish-eyed maiden'. The 'tiger' has long defied explana-

252 *P. V. M.* : *Uḻiñai-Vāḻ Maṇṇu Nilai.*
253 *Tol. Puruḷ* : 68
254 *Puṟam* : 368.
255 *Śilap* : XXVI : 139
256 *Śilap* : X : 142.
257 *Śilap* : XVIII : 1.

tion; but it may be said that because the tiger is a strong and overbearing animal representing strength and victory they chose that emblem.[258] The palm or the *Panai* leaf was an emblem of the Chēras and used by their feudatories also. Adihaimān Neḍumān Añji is said to have used the *Panai* emblem on his flag.[259] These emblems were but totemic symbols inherited from the most ancient times by the respective dynasties, and the symbols were inscribed on the banners and were used as crests.

The flag itself was often used as a synonym for the emblem on it, as but for the emblem, the flag was but a piece of cloth. When it is said that Seṅguṭṭuvan engraved the 'bow flag' on the Himālayan rocks, it means only that he inscribed the 'bow emblem'. *Koḍi* had come to mean the design or crest as much as the flag on which it was borne.

The army, on battle eve, carried the banner and held it high to make it plain to which side the holder belonged. Removing or despoiling the flag was a disgrace and an insult to the holder thereof and a triumph to the destroyer. The flag was the 'conquering flag'[260] and to destroy it was an aim in the field. The biggest elephants carried the flag high on their back[261] and the roof of the royal gateway was specially high to permit the passage of the flag-bearing elephants.[262] After the battle was won, the conquering flag was praised by the bards and the eulogy in this literary situation was called *koḍi nilai*.[263] This practice of a uniform flag for the entire army is different from the practice we find mentioned in the *Mahābhārata* where each hero had his own flag. An auspicious day was chosen for hoisting the flag on the ramparts of the fort [264]

258 It may be contended that the Choḻas ruled over the eastern delta areas where tigers must have been strange animals; but it is known that there were thick forests in that area before it was made fertile by the engineering efforts of Karikālan who had to 'cut down the forests and make the land habitable' (*Paṭṭina :* 283.)

259 *Puṟam* : 99.
260 *Padiṟṟu* : 44; "வெல் கொடி".
261 *Puṟam* : 9.
262 *Neḍunal* : 7.
263 *P. V. M.* : *Pāḍāṉ* : 39.
264 *Silap* : XV : 217.

The 'White Flag' represented victory in the *Saṅgam* days, thereby indicating a practice just the opposite of what now prevails — that the 'white flag' means 'surrender'. The king's honour was inextricably mixed up with that of the flag and the flag-sentiment in those days, as now, seems to have been very strong. When women sang in chorus the king's praise, they praised his flag as well.[265] Though the royal and the military flags were one and the same, there were many civilian and private flags apart from the flags which waved on the top of every temple building bearing on it the emblem of the presiding deity like the *Garuḍa* for Tirumāl[266] or the *Cock* for Murugan.[267] The flag was flown on a flag staff called 'Koḍi Maram'.[268] The broad streets of the capital towns of the three kingdoms were marked by rows of flags on either side.[269] The temples, the houses, the battlements or the ramparts and the elephants and the chariots going out to battle — all had the flags flying atop. The emblem like the 'bow' or the 'tiger' or the 'fish' was intended not only to be inscribed on the banner but also to be used as a crest on seals affixed to royal correspondence and on seals[270] on government property of all kinds. The packets containing exported and imported commodities lying in the warehouses in the harbour were sealed with the royal emblems to indicate the country to and from which the commodities were shipped.[271] The royal letters were sealed carefully with wet clay which after drying stuck like wax; even private correspondence seems to have been sealed in similar fashion.[272] In Puhār, on the gates of the fort the tiger emblem of the Chōḷas was inscribed;[273] and it was to show that the city was ruled

265 *Silap*: XXIX — *Vaḷḷaippāṭṭu*. 266 *Silap:* XI: 136.
267 *Tirumurugu* : 210, 211. 268 *Silap*: XI: 136 Aḍiyār. Com.
269 *Paḍiṟṟu:* 47.
270 *Silap*: XXVI: 171. *Puṟam:* 33: 7 to 9.
271 *Paṭṭina :* 129.
272 *Silap :* XIII : 83-86; *Kali :* 94: 42, 43.
273 *Paṭṭina :* 40-41

by the Chōḷas.

According to Nachchinārkiniyar, the flags signified the spiritual as well as the secular interests of man. The flags flown from temple tops indicated the festivals there and signified human preoccupation with *spiritual* matters; and the flags of victory in a battlefield were of a *secular* nature and on those flags the victories won by the commanders of the king in capturing many a difficult fort, were inscribed. The toddy-shop in the market place distinguishing itself from other shops, announced its existence through special flags.[274] The Chōḷia Enādi Malaiyamān also had the tiger emblem affixed to his castle gates, as he was a feudatory of the Chōḷa king.[275] It happened once in a way that practically the whole of Tamiḻagam came to be conquered by one of the three rulers, as under Karikālan, or Talaiyālaṅgānattu Neḍuñjeḻiyan; that even after the conquests the other rulers are found ruling their respective domains and their dominions are not annexed to the kingdom of the victor is perhaps due to the policy of 'conquest but not annexation' such as was followed by Samudragupta in his South Indian campaigns. But when one Tamil ruler conquered the other two, he used all the three emblems on his flag.[276]

(viii) The Garland

Distinctive garlands were worn by the rulers of Tamiḻaham in the *Saṇgam* age. The Chēras wore a garland of palm leaves,[277] the Chōḷas a garland of *Ār* (Bauhinea tomentosa)[278] and the Pāṇḍyas *Vēmbu* (the Margosa).[279] Why they should have chosen these particular botanical varieties to constitute their garlands is difficult to explain; but it may be taken that the different trees were found in great abundance in the particular areas and that probably accounted for the choice.[280]

274 *Madurai :* 366 to 372. 275 *Puṟam*: 174.
276 *Silap* : XXV : 171, 172.
277 *Silap* : XXIX — *Vaḻḻaippāṭṭu*.
278 *Silap: Padiham* — 13. 279 *Silap*: XXIX — *Vaḻḻaippāṭṭu*
280 Panai Nāḍu: District spoken of as one of the twelve major

The *Tolkāppiyam* says that kings chose these distinctive garlands to enable them to be easily recognized in the battle-field.[281] But it is not stated in that ancient text which particular king wore which garland.[282] Kings not only wore garlands around their necks and on their shoulders but also girded them around their heads. The garland when worn around the neck was called *Tār*, and when worn on the head *Kaṇṇi*. The *Tār* and *Kaṇṇi* for each king were from the same plant. It is not quite clear whether the kings used to wear such garlands while at court, but the totemic garlands like the totemic symbols on the banners came to be inseparably associated with particular dynasties of kings.

During the war time, these garlands were invariably worn. These are to be distinguished from other flowers which the king wore while going out to battle, like *Vetchi, Karandai, Vañji, Kāñchi, Nochchi, Uḻiñai, Tumbai, Vāgai.*[283] On those occasions, the totemic garlands as well as the military garlands were worn.[284] The king's generals and the royal elephants were also decked in

divisions of Tamiḻaham; and it has generally been located in the Chēra dominions. Ār is much in evidence in the Chōḻa dominions; e.g. 'Ārkkāḍu' (Arcot), Tiru Ārur. Similarly 'Vēmbu' (Margosa) in the southern regions. But it would be risky to try to assign any definite reason for the choice of the totemic symbols, for the choice must have been made in pre-historic days.

281 *Tol. Poruḷ* : 60.

282 It may be seen from the *Tolkāppiyam* reference (*Poruḷ* : 60) to these three garlands only that the lesser did not wear such a garland. The expression *Māperuntānaiyar* (leaders of the grand armies) helps us to this conclusion. It may be surmised that the way in which *Tolkāppiyam* generalises the use of these particular garlands alone during wartime shows that the practice must have been well established long before *Tolkāppiyam* mentioned it and must have become a regular convention by that time.

283 *P. V. M.* : The *Paḍalams* are named after military situation to which these flowers are relevant.

284 *Silap* : XXVI : 219.

these garlands.[285]

The system of recognizing by what may be called 'totemic flowers' was not peculiar to the kings; the very gods were associated with particular flowers — on what basis it is difficult to say; e.g. *Koṉṟai*: [286] Śiva; *Kaḍambu*: Murugan;[287] *Kāyā*: Tirumāl.[288]

There are instances of minor feudatories also wearing their own distinctive garlands; Āy Aṇḍiran wore the *Śurapunnai*[289] and Ēṟaikkōn his *Kāndal* garland.[290] That these garlands specially used by the feudatories are not mentioned in the *Tolkāppiyam* need not mean that in the days of *Tolkāppiyam* the garlands were not associated with the feudatories, for *Tolkāppiyam* was concerned only with the crowned monarchs in that context.

(ix) *The Fly-Whisk*

This was a peculiarly oriental item in the royal paraphernalia; the kings in the *Śaṅgam* Tamiḻaham, like kings in other parts of India, then used to keep servants standing on either side of them to wave the whisk over their heads. What was probably originally a function of necessity later became a conspicuous luxury, still later to degenerate into an empty formality to be classed with what came to be called *Ashtamaṅgalam*.

The whisk was a hairy flap, a collection of the tail hair of a special type of deer, the *Kavari*; the hair was to be of spotless white colour to match the whiteness of the royal umbrella. It was also called *Śāmaram*.[291] This luxury was permissible only for those strictly and specially entitled to it by the king; his favourites, so entitled, enjoyed this privilege.[292]

In the markets of Madurai in the *Śaṅgam* age the whisks were on sale in large numbers; it was an article of abundant manufacture and was sold in the 'Big bazaar';[293] it must have

285 *Paḍiṟṟu*: 31; *Śilap*: XXVI: 70, 71.
286 *Puṟam*: Prayer stanza.
287 *Naṟṟiṇai*: 34.
288 *Śilap*: XVI: 74.
289 *Puṟam*: 131.
290 *Puṟam*: 157.
291 *Śilap*: XIV: 171; XXV: 38.
292 *Śilap*: XIV: 171.
293 *Ibid*.

been used by the common people, too; but the official use of the ceremonial whisk was reserved for just a select few.

We hear of how a poet, Mōšikīran, by mistake fell asleep on the 'bedstead of the drum' in the palace of the Chēra; but the king Peruñjēral Irumpoṛai, instead of killing the impertiment poet on the spot, as it would have been very natural for him to do, only stood fanning him with the royal whisk till the poet woke up.[294]

The whisk was an emblem of royalty and was classed with the drum, the umbrella, the banner, the spear, the noose and the prod.[295]

(x) *The Wheel of Royalty*

The concept of a 'wheel of royalty' traversing the length and breadth of a kingdom is very ancient; and the Sanskritists speak of an Ājña Chakra. The *Saṅgam* Tamils spoke of the *Āḻi* which is Tamil for *chakra* (the wheel). It is but the potter's wheel.[296] Even as the potter fashions the pot on the wheel according to hil design, the king fashions government and political life on the whees of royalty according to pattern.[297] Analogy of the potter's wheel is similar to that of the shepherd's rod. The king's writ is to 'run'; and a wheel runs swiftly. The king is often likened to Tirumāl, the protecting deity that rules over the universe, and that deity has a wheel: the *chakra* which protects the faithful and destroys the sinners; the royal wheel also protects the loyal and punishes the disloyal. The king whose duty was to maintain the *Aṛa Āḻi* or *Dharma Chakra* was also supposed to hold an *Āḻi*.[298]

The wheel never stays in the same place but is always on the move, like the 'wheel of destiny'. It is supposed to travel 'clock-wise'.[299] It is reminiscent of the *Digvijaya* being undertaken in a clock-wise direction.

294 *Puṛam* : 50 — Colophon.

295 *Śilap* : XXII : 53, 54 296 *Paḍiṛṛu* : 18

297 *Puṛam* : 32

"வேட்கோச் சிறுஆர் தேர்க்கால் வைத்த
பசுமட் குருஉத்திரள் போல அவன்
கொண்ட குடுமித்துஇத் தண்பனைநாடே"

298 *Puṛam* : 3. 299 *Śilap* : I : 5

It seems there was no visible royal emblem or a material representation of a wheel as in the case of *chakravarti* with the wheel symbol (e.g. the Aśoka *Chakra*). The *Āḻi* was but a concept.

(xi) *The Royal Elephant*

The Royal elephant was the favourite mount (*Ūrdi*) of the king. When the king went out to battle, he rode on it;[300] when he came round the streets of his capital, he rode on it.[301] A rope with bells attached to each end hung astride its back and announced its approach.[302] These bells were indispensable in the case of the royal elephant, for it was believed that it was not proper for a king to ride an elephant whose back was not adorned by the bells.[303] When the king got down from the elephant, the bells were removed.[304] If the elephant ran amok, the guards had an excellent method of controlling them. They used to scatter all round the animal iron files sharp like thorns. The animal afraid to step on them would stop and could thence be easily brought under control.[305] A flag and a conch were attached to its forehead.[306] The totemic flags and the garlands which the king wore were also exhibited on the massive elephant.[307]

(xii) *The Horse*

Next to the elephant, the horse was the favourite mount of the king on routine drives. Some of the horses which the kings rode were given particular names. The famous horse of Malaiyamān Tirumuḍi Kāri was named *Kāri*, probably after its owner.[308] The horse which the king rode was garlanded and was fed on food mixed with ghee; its mane was nicely cut short and trimmed to improve its appearance.[309]

(xiii) *The Chariot*

The chariot was a simple vehicle with two wheels drawn by swift horses and the kings used the chariots. Bells were attached to the

300 *Śilap* : XXVI : 71
301 *Muttoḷḷāyiram*
302 *Śilap* : XXVI : 201
303 *Innā* : 14
304 *Puṟam* : 305
305 *Madurai* : 597, 598
306 *Śilap* : XXVI : 202
307 *Śilap* : XXVI : 70, 71
308 *Puṟam* : 158
309 *Puṟam* : 299

sides of the chariots and these perhaps announced the king's approach.[310] Chariots drawn by four horses are also mentioned.[311]

(xiv) *The Tutelary Tree*

This is peculiar to *Śaṅgam* society. Each king maintained a particular totemic tree as extremely sacred to him, to his dynasty and to the kingdom. It was a kind of tutelary tree and was called *Kaḍi Maram*[312] or *Kāval Maram*; there was a divinity in the tree and if it happened to be cut down the city might be ruined. We hear of 'Paḻaiyan of Mōhūr' cherishing a 'Margosa' tree [313] it was cut at the root by Śeṅguṭṭuvan who defeated Paḻaiyan.[314] The kings (or pirates) of certain islands in the Arabian Sea, whom Śeṅguṭṭuvan is said to have defeated in a naval battle cherished the *Kaḍambu* tree[315] and Śeṅguṭṭuvan destroyed that *Kaḍambu*, too.[316]

It was held that if an enemy king succeeded in tying his elephant up to the tutelary tree it was as bad as the tree being destroyed and constituted the most serious disgrace to the owner of the *Kaḍi Maram*.[317]

(g.) TITLES AND HONOURS

The *Śaṅgam* age believed in aristocratic practices; and the king bestowed titles and honours on his subordinates who had distinguished themselves in the discharge of their duties. This must have been an incentive to greater effort and a recognition of proved worth and attached the senior officials to the king.

The honours conferred by the king on his officials or other important men in his land, were called generically *Mārāyam*[318] and we hear of three kinds of *Mārāyam*. (1) *Eṭṭi*; (2) *Kāvidi*; (3) Ēnādi. *Eṭṭi* and *Kāvidi* were local titles of honour;[319] Ēnādi was reserved for the highest officials, civil and military.

It seems *Eṭṭi* was a title conferred by the king on leading merchants, the *Vaṇigars*[320] and it was in the shape of a flower,[321]

310 *Aham* : 4
311 *Perumbāṇ* : 488 to 490
312 *Puṟam* : 57, 162, 336.
313 *Paḍiṟṟu* : 44.
314 *Ibid.*
315 *Śilap* : XXVII : 135.
316 *Śilap* : XXV : 1.
317 *Puṟam* : 162.
318 *Tol. Poruḷ* : 63.
319 *Tol. Puruḷ* : 14. Nach. Com.
320 *Tol. Śol.* 14.
321 *Maṇi* : XXII 113.

which the distinguished recipient was entitled to wear; the floral badge must have been of gold.

Kāvidi is generally grouped with *Eṭṭi*.[322] *Śilappadikāram* mentions that persons holding the *Kāvidi* honour waited on the king along with the *Āśān* (purohit), *Peruṅgaṇi* (chief astrologer), *Aṟakkaḷa Andaṇar* (judicial advisers), and *Ōlai Mandiram* (Accountants);[323] the commentator on that passage calls the recipients of *Kāvidi* as *Variyilār* or the tax-free citizens; freeing them from the obligation to pay taxes was probably the honour conferred. But *Kāvidis* are associated by some scholars[324] with 'collection of taxes'[325] on the authority of the *Śilappadikāram* glossator who calls them *Variyilār* an expression which can mean either 'tax-collectors' or 'persons exempted from paying tax.' The holders of the *Kāvidi* seem to have been generally raised to ministerial rank with the privilege of advising the king.[326] Nachchinārkiniar says in another context[327] that the *Kāvidis* of *Pāṇḍiya Nāḍu* were *Vēḷāḷās* who had the privilege of entering into matrimonial alliance with the major royal families of Tamiḻaham. There is also mention of *Kāvidi* flower[328] which shows that the *Kāvidi* recipients also wore a kind of flower, made of gold of course. The *Eṭṭi* and the *Kāvidi* honours seem to have been shared by women also at times.[329]

Ēnādi was an important honour bestowed generally on distinguished soldiers. Some scholars consider *Ēnādi* as a corruption of *Śēnādhipati*, and it is not improbable. It is also made to appear that *Mārāyan*, *Mārāḻi* are the titles of male and

322 *Maṇi* : XXIV : 144.
323 *Śilap* : XXV : 9.
324 T. V. M. : *S. I. Polity*; p. 180.
325 *Madurai* : 499.
326 *Tol. Poruḷ* : 30.
327 *Tol. Eḻut* : 154.
328 *Peruṅgadai* : II : 3, 144, 145. The commentator Dr. U. V. Swaminatha Iyer is of the view that woman derived the title through husband (even as a count's wife became a countess or a Duke's wife a Duchess).
329 S. K. : *Hindu Institutions*, p. 180.

female recipients of the *Mārāyam* honour[330] but the expression *Mārāyan* or *Mārāśi* is nowhere mentioned in *Śaṅgam* literature. In later days, no doubt, *Mahārāyan* became corrupted into *Mārāyan*. Ēnādi consisted in the grant of 'a gold ring studded with gems' to be worn by the recipient.[331] While *Eṭṭi* and *Kāvidi* were in the shape of a flower, *Enādi* was a ring.

The Vēḷvikkuḍi grant speaks of the 'Śēnādhipati Ēnādi Āyina Śāttan'. There are cases of ministers also getting the *Enadi* honour.[332] *Periyapurāṇam* mentions a Saivite Saint Ēnādi Nātha Nāyanār who was also a military man. In *Kalittogai* we hear of a colony set up by an Ēnādi; it was called 'Ēnādippāḍi'.[333] When the king wanted to confer on a person the *Ēnādi* honour he first chose an auspicious day; then he assembled the augurs, the five bodies of advisers, the members of his family, his consorts and the army, then he presented to the conference the *Ēnādi* ring bearing the king's own name and made huge presents of lands, horses, chariots and elephants to him[334] Dr. U. V. Swaminatha Iyer in his gloss on the *Peruṅgadai* reference to *Enādi* says, that an army commander or a *Śēnādhipati*, was superior in status to a Minister or a *Mantri*.[335] It was possibly so in a polity in which war played a more vital role than administration. Mr. T. A. Gopinatha Rao says: "Ēnādi corresponds to the European Knighthood";[336] but that the comparison is not happy will be clear if we bear in mind the essentially different kinds of society which accounted fol an *Enādi* and a Knight; and that none of the ideas of medieva| European chivalry and Knight errantry are relevant to any stage in Indian History. There were *Enādis* conferred by the Pāṇḍyas as

330 T. V. M.: *S. I. Polity*: p. 180. 331 *Madurai*: 719.

332 *Maṇi*: XXII: 205 and the introductory piece below the *kādai* heading: "மந்திரியாகிய சேமிய ஏனாதி".

333 *Kali*: 81: 17.

334 *Peruṅgadai*: IV: 9: 1 to 14.

335 *Peruṅgadai*: Gloss by Dr. U. V. Swaminatha Iyer on above. *Vide* also footnote by E. V. Anantarama Iyer to *Kali*: Vol. II, p. 481.

336 *Travancore Archaeological Series*, Vol. I, p. 4. n. 9.

well as the Chōḷas; to distinguish the later from the former, the latter were called 'Chōḷia Ēnādi'.[337]

The right of wearing a special coat of distinction was at times conferred on meritorious citizens; and in rare cases, the honour of getting the king's name attached to one's own was conferred.[338]

The conferment of privileges on the king's own favourites was quite common.[339] The right to go about in closed vehicles, being accompained by bodyguards, and being taken about in a palanquin were some such privileges. Those favourites could enjoy the privilege of using a gold box for keeping betel leaves, a short sword, and having attendants to fan them with whisks. Mostly the persons enjoying such privileges happened to be women who served as the bodyguards of the king. Such women lived in separate suburbs in cities like Madurai.

What originated as mere titles of military or civil honour seem to have later stabilized into castes bearing those names; e. g. Mudali, or 'Sēnai Mudali' which originated to signify only an army commander later got stabilized as a caste; 'Mudaliār' which in its turn led to many more sub-castes.[340]

2. *Aimperuṅkuḻu and Eṇpērāyam*

Two institutions called *Aimperuṅkuḻu* and *Eṇpērāyam* are often discussed in connection with the *Saṅgam* polity. They are mentioned in many Tamil *Saṅgam* texts like *Silappadikāram*,[341] *Maṇimēkalai*,[342] *Maduraikkāñchi*,[343] and in some post-*Saṅgam* texts like *Peruṅgadai*.[344] *Piṅgala Nikaṇḍu* of a later age tries to explain the constituent's of these institutions. The absence of a detailed description of the constitution, functions and powers of those institutions in the *Saṅgam* texts has led to different interpretations even in the texts of the middle ages. So that there is no wonder that modern historians depending upon the ex-

337 *Puṟam*: 394.
338 *Silap*: XVI: 105 to 112.
339 *Silap*: XIV: 126 to 131.
340 M. S.: *Tamil Studies*, p. 66
341 *Silap*: XXVI: 38 to 41.
342 *Maṇi*: I: 17.
343 *Madurai*: 508 to 510.
344 *Peruṅgadai*: II: 5; 6.

aggerated pictures painted by enthusiastic pandits should have allowed themselves to be misguided in many respects here. It is necessary for us to read the sources and see what these institutions were.

V. Kanakasabhai says, "The system of government was far from despotic; *the king's power was restricted by five councils* which were known as the five great Assemblies". Evidently he is referring to the *Aimperuṅkuḻu*. And then he says, "They consisted of the representatives of the people, the priests, the physicians, the astrologers or augurs and ministers. The council of representatives safeguarded the rights and privileges of the people... separate place were assigned in the capital town, for each of their meetings and transactions of business."[345] Dr. S. Krishnaswami Iyengar says: "It is clear that the group of five was a *recognized body of people* composed by five divisions and constituting a council".[346] He again says, "They constituted the standing council of the monarch *whom he was bound to consult* on all questions of importance."[347] But this is further qualified so much that it constitutes nearly a contradiction. "Either the king must have selected the more important, or there was a customary arrangement in which certain kinds of officals actually represented the interests of the body as a whole and *offered advice when consulted* by the king."[348] The first part said that the so called 'council' had the right to give advice, while the second part means that initiative for consultation rested entirely with the king. These two positions are clearly incompatible. V. R. Ramachandra Dikshitar mentioning the conncil says, "His (i.e. the king's) power was so limited by a system of checks and balances, the council, the Purohit and public opinion that he dared not misuse his rights."[349] V. A. Smith quoting V. Kanagasabhai speaks of the "five great assemblies which checked the autocracy of Tamil kings and comprised the people,

345 V. K. : *The Tamils* — 1800. p. 109.
346 S. K. : *Hindu Institutions*, p. 19.
347 *Ibid*, p. 20. 348 *Ibid.*, p. 22.
349 V. R. R. Dikshitar : *Studies*, p. 196.

the priests, the astrologers, the physicians and the ministers."[350] Similar statements are made about the *Eṇpērāyam* also.

Some Tamil *Saṅgam* texts like *Maduraikkāñchi*, *Silappadikāram* and *Maṇimēkalai* mention two groups of persons associated with the king; they are called the *Aimperuṅkuḻu* and the *Eṇpērāyam*. In the *Maduraikkāñchi* there is actually mention only of *Nāṛperuṅkuḻu*,[351] i. e. the 'four great groups', but as the commentator points out, since the 'minister' has been referred to earlier in line 499[352] the other four are mentioned here. They are according to Nachchinārkkiniyar : (1) the purohit, (2) the army chief, (3) the ambassador and (4) spies. This list tallies with the list mentioned by Aḍiyārkkunallār. The latter commentator quoting another list : 1. the people, 2. the Brahmins, 3. Maruttar, 4. Nimittar, 5. Amaichchar, dismisses it as unacceptable. He rightly does so for it is a strange group of persons including 'the people' also and many of them like 'astrologers' and 'physicians' serve no political purpose. Nachchinārkkiniyar and Aḍiyārkkunallār being responsible commentators who may be depended upon to continue ancient traditions properly may be taken to have given the correct list.

So the *Aimperuṅkuḻu* consisted of : (1) ministers (*Amaichchar*); (2) purohits (*Purohitar*); (3) army chiefs (*Sēnāpatiyar*): (4) envoys or ambassadors (*Dūtar*); and (5) spies (*Oṟṟar*). It is clearly seen that this list (derived from *Divākaram*) consists of persons discharging political functions like attending to civil administration; religious interpretations of *Aṟanūl* provisions; military matters; foreign relations; and secret service.

In view of the reasonableness of the list presented by Nachchinārkkiniyar and Aḍiyārkkunallār the five political associates of the king may be taken to constitute the *Aimperuṅkuḻu*. It is learnt that the expression *Aimperuṅkuḻu* has been translated into Sanskrit as *Pañchamāvargha* but there is no corresponding institution in North Indian polity and so it has no interest for us. *Pañcha mahā Pradānis* mentioned by Dr. S. Krishnaswamy

350 Smith., *E. H. I.*, p. 442. 351 *Madurai* : 510.
352 "செம்மைசான்ற காவிதி மாக்களும்".

Iyengar[353] is evidently not *Aimperuṅkuḻu* for *Kuḻu* is not the same as *Pradāni*.

The *Aimperuṅkuḻu* is not to be confused with the later 'five ministers' *(Pañcha Pradānah)* mentioned in the Pittāpuram and Chellūr plates of Vīra Chōḻa,[354] even as the *Eṇpērāyam* (which will be considered below) is not to be confused with anything like the Mahratta Ashṭapradān.

As for the *Eṇpērāyam*: Nachchinārkkiniyar says[355] (1) *Karaṇattiyalavar*, (2) *Karumakārar*, (3) *Kanakaśuṟṟam*, (4) *Kaḍaikāppāḷar*, (5) *Nagara Māndar*, (6) *Paḍaittalaivar*, (7) *Yānai Virar* and (8) *Ivuḷi Maṟavar* constituted the *Eṇpērāyam*; and Aḍiyārkkunallār agrees.[356] This list is based on the *Divākaram*. Of this also a variation is supplied by the 'earlier g'ossator on *Śilappadikāram* who says that the following are the *Āyam* or the associates of the king: Those that supply (1) *Sāndu* (cosmetics); (2) *Pū* (flowers like garlands); (3 *Kachchu* (belt); (4) *Āḍai* (clothing); (5) *Pākku* (arecanuts); (6) *Ilai* (betel leaves); (7) *Kañjuham* (coat); and (8) *Ney* (hair oil). No doubt these are personal attendants and have no political or official significance; and they are not likely to have been mentioned along with the *Aimperuṅkuḻu*. So the list we get from the standard commentators is more reliable; and that list is: (1) *Karaṇattiyalavar* (accountants); (2) *Karumakārar* (executive officials like the clerks in the secretariate); (3) *Kanakaśuṟṟam* (treasury officials); (4) *Kaḍaikāppāḷar* (palace guards); 5) *Nagaramāndar* (elderly persons in the city who were generally required by the king to inform him of the welfare of the people); (6) *Paḍaittalaivar* (chiefs of the infantry); (7) *Yānai Virar* (chiefs of the 'elephant corps'); and (8) *Ivuḷi Maṟavar* (chiefs of the cavalry). The *Nagaramāndar* could not have been the entire body of subjects in the capital city; nor could there have been any system of election, for there is no mention at all of such a system; and if there were, it would

353 S. K.: *Beginnings*, p. 139. 354 *E. I.*: V. p. 71.
355 *Tol. Sol*: 57, Nach. Com.

be incompatible with the autocracy of the king. So the *Nagaramāndar* were perhaps the elderly persons in the community whom the king from time to time consulted on general questions of popular welfare The *Paḍaittalaivar* mentioned as item 6 were not the commanders-in-chief mentioned as item 3 of the *Aimperuṅkuḻu* but only chiefs of the infantry division while the chiefs of the 'elephant corps' and cavalry divisions are mentionedas the seventh and the eighth of the *Eṇpērāyam*.

There is a mention in the *Piṅgala Nikaṇḍu*[357] about eighteen 'councillors': V.R. Ramachandra Dikshitar suggests that the number eighteen is arrived at by adding the *Aimperuṅkuḻu* 5; and the *Eṇpērāyam* 8; and including 5 more, namely, intimate friends, *Andaṇar*, cooks, physicians, astrologers, he arrives at 18. This eighteen seems to be a late concoction and an attempt to accommodate the two lists, for these latter five are also non-officials. Again, the five are not logically properly divided. There is overlapping and intimate friends, physicians, *Andaṇar* and astrologers can so easily exchange places so that the list seems illogical and incredible.

Then to arrive at the figure 24, (mentioned in the commentary to *Pāyiram* of Ēlādi), another six have to be added and they are found in (1) *Paḍai*, (2) *Kuḍi* (3) *Kūḻ*, (4) *Amaichchu*, (5) *Naṭpu* and (6) *Araṇ*, (i.e. army, the body of subjects, treasury, ministers, allies and natural defences) mentioned in the *Kuṛaḷ* (381).[358] Here again it can be easily seen that ministers, the subject population, intimate friends and the army overlap for they already occur among the *Aimperuṅkuḻu* and the *Eṇpērāyam*.

So the 18 and the 24 can be and ought to be dismissed as later and unreliable date. The *Aimperuṅkuḻu* and the *Eṇpērāyam*,

356 *Silap*: V: 157 Aḍiyār. Com.

357 *Piṅgala Nikaṇḍu*: V: 44 to 47.

358 T. V. M.: *S. I. Polity*, p. 103. That the no. 24 found in the Ēlādi has nothing to do with civil servants but refers only to the Jaina Tirthankaras has been pointed out by me in my paper 'Administrative Arrangements in the Saṅgam Polity': *M. U. J.* Vol. XXXI, No. 2. Sec. A

because they are mentioned in the *Śaṅgam* texts and reliably commented upon by responsible commentators like Nachchinārkkiniyar and Aḍiyākkunallār, have to be accepted. More than these 13, no other officials would have any meaning in the context of the *Śaṅgam* polity.

V. R. Ramachandra Dikshitar spent much ingenuity on the 18 and the 24 and set a precedent for later works. Dr. Majumdar, like Smith, following V. Kanagasabhai, says: "It appears to me that the so-called five assemblies were really the five committees of a great assembly. V. Kanagasabhai has traced them to the Magadhan Empire but they seem to me rather the modification of the Vēdic Samiti, which left its relic, in every part of India. The representative character of these bodies and the effective control which they exercieed over the administration is clearly established. It is interesting to note that the ministers formed one of the assemblies. The assembliess taken together, may justly be compared to the Privy Council—the assembly of the ministers corresponding with the cabinet composed of a selected few".[359]

An unclear conception of the general pattern of the Tamil *Śaṅgam* polity and an indiscriminate application of modern terminology (like the 'Privy Council' and the 'Cabinet') to ancient institutions are responsible for the difficulty in understanding the *Aimperuṅkuḻu* and the *Eṇpērāyam*.

It is well known that the *Kuṟaḷ* does not mention these two bodies, the *Aimperuṅkuḻu* or the *Eṇpērāyam*. But it is also true that the *Togai* works (8) do not mention them either. Nor does the *Tolkāppiyam* mention them. That silence signifies little. The *Kuṟaḷ*, however, elaborates on the ministers, the army, etc., which are included in the two institutions. To conclude, therefore, it can be presumed that the *Śaṅgam* kings were surrounded and helped by certain categories of officials who had no collective status but only individual responsibility to the king. They were the *Aimperuṅkuḻu* and the *Eṇpērāyam* mentioned

359 Majumdar; *Corporate life in Ancient India*, pp. 130, 131.

in *Saṅgam* literature. The *Aimperuṅkuḻu* consisted of (1) the Purohit, (2) the army chief, (3) the ambassador, (4) the spies and (5) the ministers. The *Eṇpērāyam* consisted of (1) the *Karaṇattiyalavar* (the accountants); (2) *Karumakārar* (executive officials); (3) *Kanakaśuṟṟam* (treasury officials); (4) *Kaḍaikāppāḷar* (palace guards); (5) *Nagaramāndar* (leading men among the king's subjects in the capital city); (6) *Paḍait-talaivar* (chiefs of the infantry); (7) *Yānai Virar* (chiefs of the elephant, corps) and (8) *Ivuḻi Maṟavar* (chiefs of the cavalry). There was no difference in status between these groups of royal servants for to the king they were all equally subordinate. References to larger numbers of such groups found in later texts must be dismissed as spurious and not relevant to the conditions in *Saṅgam* age or society. The officials are referred to as belonging to groups of five and eight only for facility of reference; it is quite improbable that they had any collective functions to discharge.

3. *The Ministers*

Apart from the collective institutions, individual officials who did the bidding of the king are also mentioned. Among them, the minister was a very important official. He was called *Amaichchan*. The word has been derived from *Amātya*, a Sanskrit word. *Mantri* is again a Sanskrit word. Vaḷḷuvar calls the *Amaichchar, Uḻai Irundār*[360] (i.e. those that are nearby); and Kaḍiyalūr Rudran Kaṇṇanār calls *Amaichchar, Śuṟṟam*.[361]

The king employed many ministers and their duties were advisory. They were present in the court and advised the king on matters on which they were consulted. Seṅguṭṭuvan had two ministers: Villavan Kōdai and Aḻumbil Vēḷ of whom the former was a member of the Chēra family as both parts of his name (Villavan and Kōdai) indicate, while the latter was a Vēḷ. They were not attached to particular departments of official duty but carried out whatever duty was from time to time assigned to them. The Aḻumbil Vēḷ was not a permanent

360 *Kuṟaḷ* : 638. 361 *Perumbāṇ* : 447.

Finance Minister or even an expert financier but it so happened that the king was pleased on a particular occasion[362] to order him to attend to certain financial duties, like revenue remission which he attended to. There is not enough evidence to entitle us to conclude that Aḷumbil Vēḷ was a 'Finance Minister'[363] Maiyūr Kiḻān, evidently a Veḷaḷa was a minister who served Iḷañjēral Irumpoṟai.

It was the business of the minister to try to guide the king. If the king is perverted or evil-minded, the minister must try to reform him 'by adopting fair means if possible or foul means if necessary'.[364] 'Even as the floods are an indication of the rains on the hills, the constitution of the court is an indication of the wisdom of the king'.[365] Successful government, therefore, according to the *Saṅgam* Tamils though immediately traceably to the servants of the king, must be finally attributed to the ability of the king to choose his servants.[366]

The *Kuṟaḷ* has a special chapter on *Amaichchu* (ministership)[367] that is supported by 9 more chapters. Chapter 69 on 'ambassadors' alone deals with a subject not falling strictly within the purview of a minister though it is true that in those days the portfolio system was not known to the Tamils and on occasion a minister was sent out as an ambassador and an ambassador got ministerial work to do. Chapter 64 of the *Kuṟaḷ* summarises the general qualifications for a minister and says that a minister must be wary and careful about the context of his functioning,[368] must be steadfast, be learned and full of application and also be a protector of the subjects.[369] He must be able to avoid enemies, contract

362 *Śilap* : XXVIII : 202.

363 V. R. R. Dikshitar : *Studies*, p. 209.

364 *Paḻamoḻi* : 323. 365 *Paḻamoḻi* : 264.

366 It is noteworthy that all successful autocrats were largely successful because of their choice of assistants like Akbar and his Todar Mal or Louis XIV and his Colbert or Elizabeth I and her Cecil.

367 *Kuṟaḷ* : Chap. 64. 368 *Kuṟaḷ* : 631.

369 *Kuṟaḷ* : 632.

judicious friendship and be able to bridge differences.[370] He must be constant and emphatic in his advice to the king.[371] He must be a careful and effective speaker;[372] and a man of practical experience.[373] Even if he is destined to advise a cruel tyrant, he must speak out the truth,[374] however unpalatable it might be to the king. A treacherous minister is more dangerous than a million open enemies.[375] Oratory, having an eye to the end of one's actions, being virtuous and laudable, the necessary determination to persevere in reaching one's goal, the marshalling of the means to achieve the difficult ends of government, the knowledge of how to manage the king, understanding the king's mind, knowing the temper of the court and behaving tactfully but always with courage are summed up as ministerial virtues by Vaḷḷuvar.

The ministers were famed because they were strangers to falsehood. It was their nature to give good and wise advice to the kings.[376] They were wise men who 'discriminated' and insisted on *Aṟam* being followed. The *Kāvidi* title was bestowed upon them. While the purohits invariably[377] and the astrologers frequently happened to be Brahmins,[378] there was no definite commitment that the ministers should be selected from any particular community.[379] The *Kāvidi* title perhaps was bestowed upon any one who became a minister. The 'evil minister' was held in great contempt and the *Śilappadikāram* speaks about a 'demon on the cross road' which would eat a minister who indulged in vice and treat him as equal to 'insincere ascetics', 'women living in sin',

370 *Kuṟaḷ*: 633.
371 *Kuṟaḷ*: 634.
372 *Kuṟaḷ*: 635.
373 *Kuṟaḷ*: 637.
374 *Kuṟaḷ*: 638.
375 *Kuṟaḷ*: 639.
376 *Kali*: 68; *Madurai*; 19, 20.
377 *Paḍiṟṟu*: III Ten *Padiham* — The commentator mentions 'Neḍumbāratāyanār' as a *Purohita* who renounced earlier and was later followed by the king. The name 'Neḍumbhāradvājanār' also suggests the Brahmin caste.
378 *Paḍiṟṟu*: 72: 6, 7.
379 *Paḍiṟṟu*: IX: Ten-*Padiham*: Amaichchiyal Maiyūr Kiḻān (i. e. Maiyūr Kiḻān—the minister) was clearly a Vēḷāḷa for he was a 'Kiḻān'.

'adulterous men', 'false witnesses' and 'backbitters'.'[380]

The influence of the ministers on the king was subtle and indirect. And the ministers could be ignored without ill consequences by the rulers if they chose to.

4. *Ambassadors*

Kings of the *Saṅgam* age employed *Dūtas*.[381] The *Dūtas* were were representatives of one king in the court of another. They may be called in modern language 'ambassadors' or 'envoys'[382] Their function is called *Dūtu*.

The *Tolkāppiyam* says that the occasions on which princes left their headquarters were for (a) learning, (b) war and (c) mediation;[383] and a *Dūta* was a mediator also. According to the *Tolkāppiyam Dūtu* can be undertaken by princes as well as Brahmin and other high caste persons; and it was customary for kings or princes to undertake *Dūtu* only as a mediator of honoured status and not as one employed by another. The *Tolkāppiyam Sutram*, referred to, however, does not warrant us to say with V. R. Ramachandra Dikshitar "that Brahmanas were generally sent on this errand".[384] *Dūtu* was a normal political activity; but generally *Dūtas* were busy during war time. Nachchinārkkiniar says: "The ministers, the priests, the generals, the envoys and the spies are the five great advisers".[385] Evidently these were in their respective fields and in the royal presence equal to one another in status.

The *Kuṛaḷ* has a whole chapter[386] on the *Dūtas*. The qualifications expected of a *Dūta* are detailed in that chapter. Parimēlaḻagar, the noted commentator on the *Kuṛaḷ*[387] says that there

380 *Silap*: V: 128 to 134.

381 It is a Sanskrit expression; there is no corresponding expression in Tamil.

382 Envoys rank below ambassadors.

383 *Tol. Poṛuḷ*: 25. "ஓதல் பகையே தூதிவை பிரிவே".

384 *Tol. Poṛuḷ*: 26. V. R. R. Dikhitar: *War in Ancient India* pp. 351, 352.

385 *Mcdurai*: 510. Nach. Com. 386 *Kuṛaḷ*: Chap. 69.

387 *Kuṛaḷ*: 687. Pari. Com.

are three types of *Dūtas*: *(a)* those who are given the initiative to deal with the affairs of state as they deem fit in a foreign court; they are equal in status to a minister of state; (*b*) those whose range of argument in the foreign court is limited by specific and detailed instructions received from their own king or court; they do not enjoy enough freedom to suit their arguments to fresh and unforeseen exigencies; and (*c*) those who transmit a sealed letter[388] and are not competent even to explain the message but are again the bearers of a reply (if any) to the message they had delivered. These three are the types known to the Sanskritists.[389] They style them (*a*) *Uttama*, (*b*) *Madhyama* and *(c) Adhama*, who might correspond to (*a*) ambassadors, *(b)* envoys and *(c)* messengers respectively. It may be at once stated that there is nothing in the *Kuṛaḷ* text to warrant such a division; we do not know if in theory the Tamils of the *Saṅgam* age knew or accepted such a division, though it is quite possible that in practice, according to the needs of the hour, varying powers were vested in different messengers. It is also quite possible that the same messenger was expected to behave in different ways at different times, his behaviour being determined by the nature of the mission and of the foreign court. Parimēlaḻagar says that the use of the word *Talai* (Head: Chief)[390] compels an acceptance of the Sanskritic division. But the author of the *Kuṛaḷ*, it appears, means only to say that "he who knows his duties, chooses an apt occasion for delivering the message and understands his opponents is the best among Dūtas". And when Dr. S. K. Iyengar says, "By referring to the first class here as the best he implies the knowledge of the other classes as well",[391] he is only repeating Parimēlaḻagar. One must conclude that in the Saṅgam age there were *Dūtas*, but there is not enough

388 *Ōlai*. 389 Kautilya: *Artha Śāstra*; Bk. I, Chap. 16.

390 *Kuṛaḷ*: 687.
"கடனறிந்து காலங் கருதி யிடனறிந்து
எண்ணி யுரைப்பான் தலை".

391 S. K: *Hindu Institutions*.

evidence to show that there were categories of them like plenipotentiary envoys, ambassadors and mere messengers.

Ōrampōgiyār, a Śaṅgam poet, mentions[392] a peculiar function of the *Dūtas*; they went about crying aloud for support to their king and collected help for his cause.

The most familiar instance of *Dū'u* in the *Śaṅgam* period is Auvai's *Dūtu* to Toṇḍaimān from Adihaimān Neḍumān Añji. The colophon to *Puṟam* 95 says, "said by Auvai who visited the armoury shown to her by Toṇḍaiman to whom Añji sent her as an envoy". Auvai who was sent by Añji to Toṇḍaimān on probably a military mission, was taken by Toṇḍaimān to his armoury and shown round. Auvai who saw the beautiful and shining arms in the armoury said with characteristic sarcasm, "The armoury of my patron Añji is mostly empty for the weapons are all broken and are in the smithy being repaired, while your armoury is full of shining, unbroken weapons", suggesting thereby that while her patron was a warrior who used his weapons, Toṇḍaimān was a prudent prince who would not risk a battle. Even impertinence in an envoy seems to have been tolerated; but Auvai it may be noted, was not a minister of Añji but only his trusted friend and was a celebrated scholar and poet.

Kōvūr Kiḻār, the noted poet, was good and brave; he hated dissensions and warfare; he loved peace and good-will and he strove to promote those ideals. *Puṟanānūṟu* gives many instances of his trying to subdue royal anger and bring about reconciliation.[393] But, Kōvūr Kiḻār's activities were strictly speaking, not *Dūtu*; for he did not proceed as a *Dūta* from one king to another; he was just a self-appointed mediator, though he perhaps had all the qualifications of an excellent *Dūta* and achieved more than the most efficient *Dūta*.

Chapter 69 of the *Kuṟaḷ* details the chief qualifications of an ideal *Dūta*: (*a*) pleasing manners (to win allies and convert foes); (*b*) coming of a high family (to command attention and respect); (*c*) clemency (that he might moderate the language of the royal

392 *Puṟam* : 284. 393 *Puṟam* : 44, 45, 46, 47.

communication); (*d*) eloquence (that all might listen to him); (*e*) a good and stately figure (that his personal charms might win friends for himself and his cause); (*f*) a good and high standard of education (that he might understand knotty problems of state policy); (*g*) ability to time his message without betraying fear or showing favour; and (*h*) courage even in the face of certain death. He must be, naturally, a person well-trained in administration and the mysteries of government. It is evident that the *Śaṅgam* Tamils considered the *Dūtas* as not only necessary but also quite important. Persuasive eloquence and ability for subtle and convincing argument without causing offence were the qualities which the kings of that age appreciated most. A *Dūta* would not tolerate the arrogant word of an enemy king but would hasten to refute them to establish his own king's reputation.[394] We may surmise that in the *Śaṅgam* age when warfare was not infrequent, the *Dūtas* were frequently in commission and played an important and decisive role.

Śeṅguṭṭuvan, the Chēra king, who is credited with a victorious North Indian expedition, is said to have employed a 'thousand envoys'[395] who were specially dressed in garments called *Kañjugam* or *Saṭṭai*. They were called the 'coated gentry' (*Kañjuga Mākkaḷ*)[396] and they wore turbans (*Talaikkiḍu*).[397] The chief *Kañjugan* was called *Kañjuga Mudalvan*.[398] The chief of these *Kañjuga Mākkaḷ* employed by Śeṅguṭṭuvan was one Sañjayan.[399] These men were responsible persons. These envoys had frequent access to the courts of various kings and were called in for consultations by their own king; so, to give them a distinctive uniform they were obliged to wear coats and turbans; it was not a native attire but probably imitated from the Greeks and Romans and so the term *Kañjuga Mākkaḷ* as denoting a distinct group in the local official society gained currency, even as the expression 'the coated one' (*Śaṭṭaikkāran*) became once again current in Tamiḻaham after the arrival of the Europeans in the 17th century A.D.

394 *Śilap*: XXVIII: 187, 188.
395 *Śilap*: XXVI: 138.
396 *Ibid.*: 186.
397 *Ibid.*: 137.
398 *Ibid.*: 138.
399 *Ibid.*: 145.

It appears from *Śilappadikāram* that these envoys had to manage military affairs also during wartime. Ambassadors were not permanently assigned to foreign courts with a regular and recurring routine of political activity; but were chosen and employed only when and if the need arose. "The system of accrediting ambassadors permanently from one court to another is of modern origin".[400]

5. *The Secret Service*

Spies were employed in large numbers by the ancient Tamil kings; and the spies were called *Oṟṟar* and espionage was called *Vēy* or *Oṟṟu*.[401] It was an elaborate system organized with considerable attention to detail. Espionage was a permanent institution in the *Śaṅgam* polity and was not suspended during peace-time but only became more intense in wartime. Traditionally, an ancient conventional war started with the preliminary 'offence' of cattle-lifting. The *Tolkāppiyam* describes in the *Puṟattiṇai Iyal* the various stages in the development of war from causes to consequencese Describing the early stage of cattle-lifting, it is stated that thos. who lifted cattle as well as those who attempted to recover the cattle employed spies. The spies communicated their message by making varieties of noise already agreed upon as signals. The commentator Nachchinārkkiniar notes that when the spies brought information from enemy ranks they were liberally rewarded.[402]

In his gloss on *Maduraikkāñji*, Nachchinārkkiniar says that the spies also were, like the *Dūtas*, one of the 'five great advisers'.[403]

The *Kuṟaḷ* gives a detailed account of the nature and functions of the spies of the *Śaṅgam* age.[404] The spies were essential for service in the homeland of the king and for foreign service; they had to spy on local persons as well as on foreigners; and to determine who was friend and who was foe to the king. This was an onerous job and involved considerable risk.

400 T.V.M.: *S.I. Polity*, p. 296.

401 *Tol. Poruḷ*: 58; "ஒற்றினெகியவேயே". The subtle distinction between 'very' and 'oṟṟu' is that the former is the report of the spies while the latter refers to the act of espionage.

402 *Tol. Poruḷ*: 58. Nach. Com. 403 *Madurai*: 510. Nach. Com.

404 *Kuṟaḷ*: Chap. 59.

The *Kuṛaḷ* says: "The spies were verily the eyes of the king for through his spies, the vision of the king could reach the places which his own eyes could never hope to reach". "These two, the code renowned and spies; in these led the king confide as eyes".[405] The spies are essential servants as the king must know all that happens in his and other courts.[406] The spies are to spy on the ministers and other officials, the members of the royal family, and foes;[407] they are to go about in strange disguises and even if detected are never to lose courage and never to blurt out any information they had gathered;[408] they are to disguise themselves as Brahmins, ascetics, pilgrims etc., that they may have access to places normally unapproachable;[409] they must be able to find out and understand even words spoken in a whisper;[410] the information supplied by one spy is not to be accepted as final, but must be confirmed by another spy who was to spy on the spy; and a final verification through a third spy is desirable; but these three spies are to function independently and be employed without any one of them knowing that he is being spied upon.[411] The spies are not to be rewarded publicly lest they should be recognized.[412]

The spies had no official status in foreign courts like ambassadors or envoys. While the latter were public servants and were to be treated honourably, the former performed secret service and, if caught, would be summarily executed. "The *Dūta* was an open spy".[413] Iḷaṅgo Aḍigaḷ, while explaining Kōvalan's fate speaks of how in his previous birth Kōvalan was guilty of falsely accusing one Śaṅgaman of espionage and getting him executed.[414] In *Puṛanānūṛu*, we see how Neḍuṅkiḷḷi of Uṛaiyūr, mistook a poet Iḷandattan for a spy and was about to kill him; and how poet Kōvūr Kiḷār saved him by explaining the truth to

405 *Kuṛaḷ*: 581. 406 *Kuṛaḷ*: 582.
407 *Kuṛaḷ*: 584. 408 *Kuṛaḷ*: 585.
409 *Kuṛaḷ*: 586. 410 *Kuṛaḷ*: 587.
411 *Kuṛaḷ*: 588, 589 412 *Kuṛaḷ*: 590.
413 V. R. R. Dikshitar: *Mauryan Polity*, p. 181.
414 *Śilap*: XXIII: 156, 157.

Kiḷḷi.[415] These instances show how the spy, if caught, was liable to be executed.

The spies were used not only to find out what was happening in foreign countries but also what was happening within the country. The main purpose of espionage was for the king to strengthen his own position by knowing in advance the designs and moves of his potential enemies.

Though the spies were a different category of officials from *Dūtas*, the functions assigned to these two varities of officials seem to overlap.[416] But the distinction between the *Dūtas*, and the *Oṟṟar* does not seem to have been fully accepted in practice for it is clear that oftentimes *Dūtas* were also employed as *Oṟṟar*. In *Śilappadikāram* XXVI : 137 Sañjayan is described as *Kañjuga Mudalvan*; and in *Śilapppadikāram* 28 : 81 Nīlan is described as one of the *Kañjuga Mākkaḷ*. The anonymous commentator on *Śilappadikāram* calls 'Sañjayan' 'Chief among *Dūtas*' (envoys); and Dr. U. V. Swaminatha Iyer the editor of *Śilappadikāram* explains in the index, 'Nīlan', as 'Chief among Śeṅguṭṭuvan's *Oṟṟar*'. This shows how usual it is to ignore the distinction between *Dūtas* and *Oṟṟar*.[417] We may conclude that the same officials performed the functions of an envoy as well as of a spy, and that normally they were spies and on extraordinary occasions when open contact with foreign courts was desired, they became 'envoys'. But it is clear that theroretically the distinction was recognized for the *Kuṟaḷ* has separate chapters on *Oṟṟar* and *Dūtar* and describes their functions and qualifications with great precision.

It can be maintained with some plausibility that officially the *Dūtas* were considered superior to the *Oṟṟar*; and that while the king looked upon *Dūtas* as part of his court (on a footing of equality with the ministers), he considered the *Oṟṟar* as part of his personal guards and information service. This point of view can be supported by the fact that we find *Oṟṟu* (espionage)

415 *Puṟam* : 47.

416 *Śilap* : XXVI : 145 etc.

417 *Vide* also V. R. R. Dikshitar : *War in Ancient India*, p. 352.

being spoken of in the 'Araśiyal' while 'Dūtu' is included in the 'Aṅgaviyal' of the *Kuṟaḷ*.

Dr. S. K. Iyengar, observes: "The word Oṟṟu ... is ordinarily translated 'spy'. It is an unsuitable translation, as according to the Arthaśāstra works as well as the *Kuṟaḷ* itself this class of people is included among ministers".[418] It is perfectly clear that the *Kuṟaḷ* does not include the *Oṟṟar* among the ministerial category because the chapter on *Oṟṟu* is in *Araśiyal* and is not in the *Aṅgaviyal*. Dr. Iyengar overlooked the basic pattern of the *Kuṟaḷ* and thought that the *Kuṟaḷ* everywhere and in every detail follows Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra*. This is again why V. R. Ramachandra Dikshitar says [419] that chapters 51 and 52 of *Kuṟaḷ* deal with 'Espionage', which is not true. Chapter 59 of *Kuṟaḷ* alone deals with 'Espionage' while chapters 51 and 52 are concerned with 'methods of recruitment of officers' and 'ways of employing them' only.

K. A. Nilakanta Sastri says: "The importance attached to espionage would imply that the king had little means of ascertaining popular opinion."[420] Though it is probably true that in the *Saṅgam* age, kings had little means of ascertaining popular opinion (if at all such a thing as popular opinion on political or other matters existed then) that was perhaps not the reason for the importance they attached to espionage. It is well known that even to-day when popular opinion can be ascertained in a variety of ways, the system of espionage has not been given up. The secret service of to-day is perhaps better organized, more powerful, much larger and more influential than it ever was before. The spies, then as now, were found necessary for purposes of security and collection of information otherwise difficult to gather.

6. *The Purohit*

One hears of Brahmins playing an important role in the courts

418 S. K.: *Hindu Institutions*, p. 62.
419 V. R. R. Dikshitar: *War in Ancient India*, p. 358.
420 K. A. N.: *Cōḻas*, p. 68.

of kings right from the earliest stratum of Tamil literature. The kings respected the Brahmins; a Chōḻa king Māvaḷattān who once so far forgot himself as to offend a Brahmin poet promptly expressed his regret and the poet had the good grace to appreciate the character of the prince.[421] It was recommended that the kings should normally abide by Brahmanical advice.[422] The purohits of the kings were invariably Brahmins. The purohit was also called *Āśān* or *Karuma Vinaiñan*.[423] The word 'purohit' was corrupted into *Purōśu*[424] also in the Chēra land. Palyānai Śelkeḻu Kuṭṭuvan, a Chēra king had a purohit by name 'Neḍumbāratāyanār' (Pāratāyanār: Bhāradvājanār) who renounced the world and took to a life of penance in the forests; he set an example to the king who soon followed him.

Dr. Ghoshal says, "the Arthaśāstra, however did a distinct service to the cause of political theory by ruling out the purohit from the list of prominent factors of Government, the purohita is conspicuous by his absence in the list of seven elements."[425] V. R. Ramachandra Dikshitar attempts to contradict him by naively suggesting that 'minister' includes *Purohit*;[426] the *Kuṛaḷ*, however, bears out Dr. Ghoshal fully. It makes no mention of the *purohits* and does not seem to include them in 'ministers'. It is not proper to include *purohits* among ministers on the ground that *Amaichchar* is *Uḻai Irundār* and all those who are nearby are ministers — a *purohit* is also by; and so he is also a minister — it is necessary to bear in mind that ministers are political advisers and that *purohits* have no such functions. V. R. Ramachandra Dikshitar gives up his case in quoting the *Aimperuṅkuḻu* which definitely treats the *purohits* as distinct from the *Amaichchar*.

7. *The Astrologer*

The astrologer was a necessary official in the *Saṅgam* king's

421 *Puṟam*: 43.
422 *Padiṟṟu*: 24: 8.
423 *Śilap*: XXVI: 40.
424 *Padiṟṟu*; VII Ten and IX Ten—*Padiham*. *Ibid* III Ten *Padiham*.
425 Quoted in V. R. R. Dikshitar: *Mauryan Polity*, p. 376.
426 V. R. R. Diskhitar: *Mauryan Polity*, p. 376.

court. Faith in auspicious moments and good omens was so profound that kings permanently employed astrologers in their court. The astrologer was called *Kaṇi*. The chief astrologer was a *peruṅkaṇi*. It was his business to mention the proper hour for the performance of royal function, routine as well as extraordinary. The auspicious dates and hours fixed by him were accepted and acted upon by the kings.[427] It was also perhaps his function to keep count of the passage of years and months.

8. *The Time-keeper*

The petty officials who maintained count of the hours of the day were *Nāḻikai Kaṇakkar* (the time-keepers) and they used the *Nāḻikai vaṭṭil*[428] to note the hours of the day. These officials announced the hour of the day to the king in song.[429] It must have been a routine in the palace more for honouring an ancient practice than for the sake of the information conveyed by the songs. They kept awake day and night by turns trying to keep count of the hour; and that was a miserable job.[430].

9. *Miscellaneous Officials*

The scribes or the clerks who were in charge of royal correspondence were called *Mandirakkaṇakkar* and they wrote the *Mandira Ōlai*, the scribes themselves were often known as *Mandira Ōlai*.[431] They wrote the letters, wrote the address on the packets and sealed them. *Śilappadikāram* calls them *Kaṇṇeḻuttāḷar*. M. Raghava Iyengar thinks that,[432] *Kaṇṇeḻuttu* was a kind of ancient Tamil script; and feels that perhaps this *Kaṇṇeḻuttu* was the same as *Vaṭṭeḻuttu* and surmises that it was called *Kaṇṇeḻuttu* because the letters were rounded like the eye. The *Kaṇṇeḻuttāḷar*

427 *Śilap*: XXVI: 30.

428 *Kuṟun*: 261; the vessel containing water of a fixed quantity allowing drops of water to drip away from it at uniform pace, and functioning as a clepsydra.

429 *Śilap*: V: 49. 430 *Kuṟun*: 261.

431 *Śilap*: XXII: 9.

432 M. Raghava Iyengar: *Chēran Śeṅguṭṭuvan*, p. 132.

were the scribes and they wrote to the dictation of the king or some senior minister. The letter was called *Muḍaṅgal*, because it was a roll (*Muḍaṅgu* : roll up). These letters were then sealed : the 'seals' or the 'waxmarks' made of clay were called *maṇ* and the sealed letters were called *Maṇṇuḍai Muḍaṅgal*; commonly letters were written on *Ōlai* or *Tōḍu* (a cut-piece of palm leaf) or *Muṛi* which was a 'broken bit' of an *Ōlai*.[433] These letters were carried by messengers. Nachchinārkkiniyar explains how the royal court used to seal and despatch the letters : "The ends of the Ōlai were tied up and on the top of it the wax emblem was affixed."[434] The royal emblems were the carp, the tiger and the bow for the Pāṇḍyas, the Chōḻas and the Chēras respectively. This business of writing and despatching official letters was attended to by the *Kaṇṇeḻuttāḷar*.

The other officials were the *Aṛakkaḷattu Andaṇar* who were the judicial advisers, *Tandira Vinaiñar* who were the executive officials doing odd clerical jobs and the *Dharma Vinaiñar* engaged in discharging religious duties. The *Āyakkaṇakkar* were in charge of revenue collection.[435]

10. *Personal Attendants, Clowns and Courtiers*

In the palace there were many personal attendants and servants who were not better than slaves and were called *Urimai Suṛṛam*.[436] Dancers (*Kaṇṇuḷar*), the trumpet-blowers (*Kuyiluvar*), and buffoons (*Nagai Vēḻambar*) were permanently engaged in the court. The king had often by his side wits and clowns called *Nagai Pulavar*.[437] These were a class of courtiers who accompanied the king to the field of battle and in the military camps praised and flattered the king; they were called *Ahavar*; they praised the entire dynasty of the king.[438] *Sūtar*, *Māgadar*, *Vēdāḷigar* were other varieties of courtiers. The *Sūtar* seem to be identical with the *Ahavar*. To these men the king granted

433 *Silap* : VIII : 111.
434 *Kali* : 94 : 42, 43.
435 *Silap* : XXVIII : 205.
436 *Silap* : VI : 153.
437 *Puṛam* : 387
438 *Tol. Poruḷ* : 91

chariots and horses.[439] The *Sūtar* are generally distinguished from the *Māgadar* in that the former praised the king standing; while the latter, possibly more respectable than the former were allowed to be seated while they praised the king. The *Vēdaḷigar* were dancers who danced to the beat of the drum.[440] Among these courtiers Nachchinārkkiniyar includes a class called *Vandigar* who were so called because they were always 'praising' or 'thanking' the king for his bounties.[441]

There were maid servants in the palace called *Kūḷiyar* who did the bidding of their masters.[442] Hunchbacks and mutes[443] were also employed, the former perhaps to amuse the king and the latter because mutes could not transmit palace news to others. When the king moved about in the palace, he was accompanied by handsome servant maids who held the lamp in their hands and praised him.[444] The king, during dinner, was served clear toddy (or foreign wine) in gold goblets by braceleted maid servants.[445] These maid servants attended on the king even in military camps and kept watch through the night guarding the king's person. When Kōpperundēvi went to meet the king to narrate to him the evil dream she had, she was surrounded by a bizarre crowd of attendants : servant maids who offered her looking glasses,

439 *Madurai* : 223, 224. "The *Sutas* were a mixed caste of heralds and minstrels with important functions in royal households" K. A. N. *History of India*, I., p. 37. According to the Sanskritic tradition, the *Suta* was born of a Kshatriya father and a Brahmin mother and his profession was governing the horse, and driving the chariot; the Māgadha (i.e. one associated with Magadha) was born of Vaiśya father and a Brahmin mother and trade was his profession. Hence both belonged to this *Pratilōma jāti*.

440 *Śilap* : V. 48

441 *Tol. Porul* : 91; Nach. Com.

442 *Malaipaḍu* : 422; Nach. Com.

443 *Śilap* : XXVII : 214; XX : 17.

444 *Śilap* : XXVIII : 6. 445 *Puṟam* : 24.

ornaments, new clothes, silk, cosmetics, garlands, whisks and incense. The same type of servants are said to have been in attendance on the queen when Iḷaṅgo Vēṇmāḷ (the wife of Seṅguṭṭuvaṉ) was on the way to the Chēra's court.

The Yavana guards of the palace wore the *Meippai* (a uniform or a coat) as a distinguishing garment and it was not different from a *Kañjugam*; probably it was also a kind of armour which they wore.

CHAPTER V

MUNICIPAL AND VILLAGE GOVERNMENT

Towns and the Country Side

THE TAMIL SANGAM polity was a monarchy. It was not centralized or decentralized in the modern sense, i. e., it was centralized because the king was all powerful and the so called checks which are said to have influenced his decisions and actions were all purely theoretical and could be more honoured in the breach than in the observance. The extent and the vigour of the king's despotism in the last resort depended only on his own good sense. So there was either a benevolent despot or a malevolent despot. But still there were some physical factors which imposed a restriction on his despostism, i.e., the enormous distances and the lack of quick communications and the absence of an organized bureaucratic machinery of government in the modern sense, made it really difficult for the king to reach out to the far ends or the interior parts of his domains and tyrannize over his subjects. Even if he wanted to do so, he could not have done much harm. The availability of all these resources makes the modern despot — by whatever political name he might be known — much more effective. It is only in that sense that the *Saṅgam* polity was to some extent decentralized. The king contacted all parts of his kingdom, probably, only for purposes of revenue collection or putting down serious disorder. Otherwise the people were thrown on their own resources in the matter of management of local affairs. So the people of a village, who could not be in any sense effectively governed by the king all the time, governed themselves through rich, experienced, influential and sufficiently wise men of the locality. These were the rudiments of village autonomy, local self-government etc. But it would be wrong to use these latter day expressions to denote primitive institutions.

V. R. Ramachandra Dikshitar says that the *Saṅgam* polity included "a central government and local institutions as is evident

from the *Tirukkuṛaḷ*";[1] but the *Tirukkuṛaḷ* does not speak of 'local institutions' or 'a central government'; it knows only one government and that is 'the king's government'. There is no doubt that one can gather some impressions about certain local institutions from other sources, but the *Kuṛaḷ* is not helpful here.

The village was, as has always been in India, the fundamental unit of administration. Generally the village managed its own affairs. Ūr might stand for 'town', but was always larger than a *chēri*, as a *chēri* was but a suburb.[2]

In connection with the management of village affairs we come across the terms: *Manṛam*, *Podiyil*, *Ambalam*, *Avai*. The *Manṛam*, the *Podiyil* and the *Ambalam* seem to be synonymous terms; and one understands that the small village assembly (*Avai*) met there to transact local business.[3] But in *Tirumurugāṛṛuppaḍai Manṛam* and *Ambalam* are mentioned separately making it appear as if they are different; the commentator also says, "Manṛam: the foot of a tree in the centre of the village for all people to come and sit down"; and equates *Podiyil* with *Ambalam* meaning by *Ambalam* a small building on a slightly raised platform.[4] He, however, equates *Manṛam* or *Manṛu* with *Ambalam*,[5] and speaks of he wandering dancers staying in those *Ambalams*. Auvaiyār speaks of *Munnīṛppodiyil*[6] and suggests that the *Podiyil* where strangers, pilgrims and *Pāṇars* stayed was in front of the village i. e., outside the village proper and on its approaches Nachchinārkkiniyar explains *Podiyil* also as a place where anybody could worship.[7] The *Eyinars* or the hunters used to tie up the lifted cattle in *Manṛams* of their villages.[8] The

1 V. R. R. Dikshitar: *Studies*, p. 177.

2 *Kuṛun*: 262. A collection of houses (பல வீடுகள் சேர்ந்தது) was a Chēri (சேரி).

3 *Madurai*: 161; "அவை யிருந்த பெரும் பொதியில்:
சான்றோரிருந்த பெரிய அம்பலம்".

4 *Tirumurugu*: 226. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri treats the *Manṛam* as a hall and the *Podiyil* as a common place. *Cōḷas*, p. 70.

5 *Malaipaḍu*: 492; Nach. Com. 6 *Puṛam*: 390.

7 *Paṭṭina*: 246–289. 8 *Śilap*: XII: 11

Puṟanānūṟu speaks of elephant calves being tied up there to the tree in the *Podiyil*.[9] There was also a stable by, where cows were tied up; hence cowherds came to be called *Manṟādigaḷ*.[10] The *Nāladiyār* mentions a *Vēḍigai* and suggests that it was a circular, rectangular, or square structure around useful trees in the midst of the village.[11] It is suggested that the *vēḍigai* served only the purpose of giving shelter to passers by; but perhaps this institution led on to later one of *Manṟam*, which at least in the earliest stages was only a dais or a raised platform (*Tiṇṇai*). The *Podiyil* was cleaned with cow-dung paste and captive women were made to look after the maintenance of the *Podiyil*.[12] The word *Podiyil* is derived from *Podu il* meaning 'a common place'.[13] The trunk of a shady tree had always been the venue of great spiritual and secular activities like the Buddha's 'realisation' and Śiva's meditation and the 'meeting' of village elders. When raised seating was provided around the tree, still the tree was an integral part of the *Manṟam* or the *Podiyil;* the foot of a Margosa tree supplied an ideal venue for the *manṟam* as it is well known for its medicinal qualities.[14]

So the *Podiyil* was a village site, generally outside it, usually under a tree where people assembled (1) to take rest, (2) to chatter inconsequentially, (3) to talk responsible politics, (4) to constitute the forum for village opinion for politico-judicial purposes, while the site could not be divested of its primitive religious associations. It was entirely rural in nature. But by extension it could apply to the *Avai* in the capital town also where the king's judicial advisers met to discuss professional matters. "We may trace to these primitive folk gatherings, at least in part, the beginnings of the highly developed system of village government which came into existence and functioned so admirably in later Chōḷa times."[15]

Evidently, the village institutions of *Manṟam* and *Podiyil* were concerned mainly with the arbitration of petty disputes arising in

9 *Puṟam* : 389.
10 *Kali* : 100; Nach. Com. *Kuṟun* : 64.
11 *Nāladi* : 96
12 *Paṭṭina* : 246-249.
13 *Puṟam* : 375.
14 *Puṟam* : 76; 79; 371.
15 K. A. N. *Cōḷas*, p. 71.

the village and they had more powers than present day panchayats for in those days there was no hierarchy of officials to whom appeals could be made and necessarily village elders exercised ample powers. It would be futile to endeavour to find out the basis on which the elders were chosen; possibly they chose themselves and as they were aged, influential and perhaps rich, the others rarely objected to it. The exercise of such powers never carried any remuneration, it must have been considered a part of an elderly person's public duty to be an *Avaiyattān*.

The pressure of the government of a country is most felt in places where there is a concentration of public and commercial activity. In the *Saṅgam* age, the face of the country (i. e. Tamiḻaham) was marked by certain important towns and ports and a very large number of villages. Considering the scope for public activity in those days, the population of leading cities of *Saṅgam* Tamiḻaham, must be considered to have been fairly high: elsewhere land revenue was the one thing which sustained royal interest in the villages.

The kingdom was perhaps not strictly politicalIy divided into provinces, districts or divisions but there are references to show that such divisions for administrative purposes were not entirely unknown. The entire kingdom (big or small) was called *Maṇḍilam*. We do not hear of this *Maṇḍilam* in the *Kuṟaḷ;* but the *Śilappadikāram* refers to kings as *Maṇḍila-mākkaḷ*.[16] The Chōḻa *Maṇḍalam*, Pāṇḍya *Maṇḍalam* and the Chēra *Maṇḍalam* were the original major *Maṇḍalams*. Koṅgu *Maṇḍalam* (a good part of the districts of Salem, Coimbatore and Nilgris) and 'Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam' (North Arcot, Chingleput and South Arcot Districts were other *Maṇḍalams*, probably of later age. Nachchinārkkiniyar speaks of the four divisions of Tamiḻaham: Chēra, Chōḻa, Pāṇḍya and Toṇḍai *Maṇḍalams*. But the rulers of the three *Maṇḍalams* — Chēra, Chōḻa, Pāṇḍya — alone were Muḍimannar or crowned monarchs. It is possible that Koṅgu maṇḍalam and Toṇḍai-

16 *Śilap* : VIII : 84

manḍalam were originally only Koṅgu *Nāḍu* and Toṇḍai *Nāḍu* but later became *Maṇḍalams*, *Nāḍu* being a sub-division of a *Maṇḍalam*. Below the *Maṇḍalam* a major division was *Nāḍu*; and we also hear of a *Kūṟṟam*. It is difficult to decide if *Nāḍu* was a subdivision of *Kūṟṟam*. as V. R. Ramachandra Dikshtiar asserts,[17] or *Kūṟṟam* was a subdivision of a *Nāḍu* as Dr. U. V. Swaminatha Iyer affirms.[18] The *Kōṭṭam* of later days was but a corruption of the *Kūṟṟam*. The *Ūr* was a town or a big village *(Pērūr)*,[19] a small village (*Sirūr*)[20] or an old village (*Mūdūr*).[21] *Paṭṭinam* was the name for a coastal town and *Puhār* was the harbour area. Kāvirippūmpaṭṭinam was the *Paṭṭinam par excellence* of Tamiḻaham, of the *Saṅgam* age and was generally known simply as *Paṭṭinam* as Madras now is. *Chēri* was the suburb of a town or village, while *Pākkam* was a neighbouring area. *Śālai* was the trunk road and *Teru* the street in a town; *Paḷḷi* or *Malarvanam* was a park or a garden and *Ilavandihai* a pleasure resort including a garden and a swimming pond. *Āvaṇam* or *Aṅgāḍi* was the bazaar; *Nagar* or *Manai* or *Il* was the temple, palace or house.

While village administrative arrangements were known, municipal administration like that which prevailed in Pāṭaliputra or even a simple variation of it, is not mentioned; but it is certain that arrangements for essential municipal services existed. Census operations were not known. Foreigners were not dealt with on a different level and there were no committees or councils to maintain accounts of births, deaths or marriages.

There are many towns mentioned but the major towns were Puhār *(*the famous Chōḻa port and coastal capital*)*, and Uṟaiyūr (the Chōḻa inland capital); Koṟkai (the Pāṇḍyan coastal capital) and Madurai *(*the Pāṇḍyan inland capital*)*; Muśiṟi (the Chēra port*)* and Vañji or Karūr (the Chēra capital). Kāñchi,

17 V. R. R. Dikshitar: *studies*, p. 222.
18 *Puṟam* : Introduction, Dr. U. V. S. Iyer.
19 *Perumbāṇ* : 254. 20 *Puṟam* : 324.
21 *Śilap* : III: 111.

the capital of Toṇḍaināḍu, was another major city. Of these, we get a detailed account of Puhār, Madurai and Kāñchi. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri feels that the picture of Kāñchi found in *Maṇimēkalai* is an idealised one and is unconvincing.[22] The *Perumpāṇāṟṟuppaḍai*, a poem by Kaḍiyalūr Rudraṅkaṇṇanār in praise of Toṇḍaimān Iḷantiraiyan of Kāñchi has a short description of Kāñchi[23] the busy commercial life, the tall tiled houses, the large and cool gardens, the palaces of the never failing patrons, the centres of many religions and much festivity. In essential outline this is but a summary of the *Maṇimēkalai* picture of Kāñchi. It can be also noted that the account of Madurai in *Maduraikkāñji* or *Śilappadikāram* and that of Puhār in *Śilappadikāram* or *Paṭṭinappālai* are all stereotyped and do not much differ one from another. It is however not suggested that all these accounts are imaginary. This is only because the major towns were very much alike in the basic ways of urban life. The fullest accounts we have relate to Puhār and Madurai.

While the major towns and particularly the capital cities and ports were generally flourishing, the villages were usually in a desolate condition. The hamlet (*siṟṟūṟ*) especially is often described as so uncared for that 'snakes abounded in the streets'.[24] It seems that due to some reason or other certain towns and villages became desolate and their condition finds description.[25]

There were not many important highways and trunkroads in the country; of course the major cities were connected by some main road. But even they were infested by robbers, the *Eyinar*.[26] These roads were the means of transport and salt, and pepper were important commodities which had to be transported inland over vast distances in carts; the carts might have

22 K. A. N.: *Cōḷas*, F. N. 72 under Chap. IV.

23 *Perumbāṇ:* 398 to 420. 24 *Kuṟun:* 354; *Tiṇaimālai* (150): 13.

25 This might have been caused by wholesale migration of the villagers to urban areas or distant domains or wilful and thorough destruction by enemy action.

26 *Kuṟun* : 12; 16.

to ascend and descend slopes and accidents would happen to overloaded carts. To avoid accidents an additional axle or cross-beam was attached to the wheels.[27] The description of the royal chariot returning victoriously from the battlefield and passing through the green fields probably means that there were not many roads in the country.[28] The caravans no doubt passed laboriously through the roads; they had to avoid the robbers and on the roads their toll was collected by the customs officials.[29] The road was *ulguḍaipperuvaḻi*: 'The trunk road with the toll-gate', as distinguished from the *Kavalai* or the *Koḍivaḻi* which means the bylane or the forked roadway on the country side.[30] There was a system of police patrol to guard these *Kavalai* or *Koḍivaḻi*; archers stood at road junctions to ward off robbers.[31] A few kinds of vehicles were known; the tēr *(chariot)* generally used by the king had acquired a military significance; aristocratic women travelled in a kind of closed vehicle.[32] The males travelled on mules. The road along which Kōvalan and Kaṇṇagi travelled from Puhār to Madurai passed through 'Araṅgam' *(Sriraṅgam near Trichinopoly)*; then it reached 'Uṟaiyūr'. From there the road led straight to Madurai; the boat owned by the ferryman conveyed the passengers across the River Vaigai.[33] Kaṇṇagi took a western route from Madurai to Vañji and reached the hill called Tirucheṅgunṟu (identified usually with Tirucheṅgode, Salem Dt.)

At cross roads, people usually were at a loss to know which road to take; if they were strangers to the place, the right direction was indicated by certain marks made on the road by earlier passers-by who had learnt the correct route by experi-

27 *Puṟam*: 102. 28 *Kuṟun*: 189; *Aham*: 254.

29 *Perumbāṇ*: 80. 30 *Puṟam*: 3.

31 *Madurai*: 312. 32 *Śilap*: VI: 119, 120.

33 The learned editor of the *Puṟanānuṟu*, Dr. U. V. Swaminatha Iyer suggests that from stanza 381 of *puṟam*, it is possible to infer that the system of 'free service' at certain entry points on the banks of the river prevailed in the Saṅgam age. If that interpretation is possible, it would be a most interesting instance of ancient charitable institutions.

ence.[34] They placed knots of grass on the road to show the way. It is clear from this that no official arrangements were made to put up sign boards on roads. It may be inferred that the difficulties in communication were infinite; and so people rarely moved from town to town.

There was perhaps no system of municipal government; but the bigger cities were well looked after, especially if they happened to be the seat of government. The streets of Madurai were cleaned every morning by servants who swept with brooms.[35] The streets were overlaid with fresh sand which should have made it difficult for hoofed animals and sandalled feet to tread. On festive occasions, the old sand was removed and new sand was spread on the roads.[36]

The towns were properly guarded during nights by specially appointed guards known as the *Ūr kāvalar* and they were helped by watch dogs. The watchmen discarded sleep and with lamp in hand came round the towns.[37] They went about with bows and arrows also to shoot down difficult thieves and robbers who might resist.[38] There were common wells in the towns some of which were rarely used and mostly abused.[39] They were full of moss according to the poet Paraṇar.[40] There were different locations in a city inhabited by different communities; e.g. *Iḍaichēri* was the shephered colony and the *Paṭṭinappālai* speaks of the colony of the low born ones.[41] There were tanks in the neighbourhood of villages;and there were special tanks intended to supply drinking water.[42] The squares and the subterranean road (*Suruṅgai Vidi*) mentioned in the *Maduraikkāñji* are indicative of an advanced type of town-building especially in the case of capital cities. The royal palace was presumably

34 *Malaipaḍu* : 392, 393.
35 *Kali* : 96 : 22, 23.
36 *Maṇi* : I: 50, 51.
37 *Puṟam* : 37.
38 *Madurai* : 637-647.
39 *Kuṟun* : 391.
40 *Malaipaḍu* : 450-453.
41 *Paṭṭina* : 75-76. 'சேரி : இழி குலத்தோரிருக்கும் தெரு'. Nach. Com.
42 *Kuṟun* : 113.

the most important secular building in the capital town. It stood within a walled compound and the courtyard was called *Cheṇḍuveḷi*.[43] The outer walls of the palace of the Chōḷa king were whitewashed and looked 'bright like the crescent moon'.[44] Flags waved on the top of the palace tower; on the white walls of the palace, floral designs were painted.

Houses in towns were built of burnt bricks[45] and the roofing was often of tiles[46] and occasionally open-terraced.[47] Burned brick and mortar were used in raising walls.[48] Like walled towns and palaces, there were other residential buildings also surrounded by walls.[49] Water falling from the roof to the floor was collected and let out in one corner of the roofing known as *ambaṇam*; the device resembled a fish in shape.[50] The houses were provided with windows called *kāladar* (the passage for breeze) or *kattaḷai*; they resembled the deer's eye.[51] Doors were fastened by a cross wooden beam called *Nuham*.[52] There were also smaller and attached doors[53] called *Pudavu*. The doors were of double planks which easily dovetailed and were bolted at the joint.[54] The fore-part of the houses had raised platforms called *Vēdigai*.[55] The red clay (*Śemmaṇ*) was applied as a paste to the walls to decorate them[56] and the flooring was usually cleaned and kept free from dust by using cow-dung paste.[57] The gutter or the drain in the house was called an *Aṅgaṇam*.[58] Each house, generally, had its own well; water was drawn by ropes working along pulleys.[59] The walls of houses were often painted with animal figures[60] and the houses of the rich were surrounded by tastefully grown gardens.[61] Artificial hillocks (*Śeigunṛu*) and glass houses (*Paḷikkaṛai*) were aristocratic amenities.

43 *Puṛam*: 174.
44 *Puṛam*: 378.
45 *Perumbāṇ*: 405.
46 *Śilap*: XIV: 146.
47 *Śilap*: V: 7.
48 *Puṛam*: 378.
49 *Perumbāṇ*: 127.
50 *Neḍunal*: 96.
51 *Śilap*: V: 8.
52 *Perumbāṇ*: 127.
53 *Ibid.*
54 *Kali*: 83: 1, 2; *Neḍunal*: 63.
55 *Śilap*: V: 148.
56 *Śilap*: XII: 3 to 6.
57 *Perumbāṇ*: 298 to 308.
58 *Kuṛaḷ*: 720.
59 *Paḍiṯṛu*: 22: 13 to 15.
60 *Maṇi*: III: 127 ff.
61 *Maṇi*: XIX: 120.

CHAPTER VI

WARFARE AND MILITARY ORGANIZATION

1. *The Ethics of Warfare*

WHETHER 'war' is natural to politically organized societies, whether perpetual peace is possible among men or even desirable are problems which have been discussed often by those who interest themselves in philosophical speculation.

It has been held by a certain school of thinkers like the Fascists that war is very desirable for the promotion of the national ideal; that peaceful policies bring about the ruin of a nation-state by discrediting it in the eyes of more powerful and active neighbours; and that the spirit of bellicosity is more masculine and is more befitting the dignity of power and is a necessary virtue to be carefully cultivated by nations aspiring to 'greatness'. The Marxists have said something to the same effect when they said that there is an inevitability about the class struggle involving war and they treat it as an object lesson of history. Respectable opinion like that of Auguste Comte supports the inevitability theory as a sort of corollary of his view of positivist history and more recently thinkers like Karl Marx, Oswald Spengler and Arnold Toynbee have added weight to the rather determinist view that there is a certain extra-human arrangement of human affairs which is the foundational law of history over which man has possibly no control. If an over-simplification of a difficult area of metaphysical speculation is permissible, we might say that this view is the political counter-part of what the Hindus are very familiar with viz the *Karma* theory. In an indirect way the scientists, especially the natural historians led by Darwin, have indicated that the two basic functions of nature are (a) the instinct of self-preservation supported by an arrangement in nature known as 'natural selection, and its consequence (*b*) the phenomenon called 'survival of

the fittest'. No doubt the scientists have said or presumed that all this is not a matter of ethics but a matter of fact. 'The jungle law' may be objectionable, but that the basic law which governs the world is the law of the jungle is very nearly what these scientists have said. The psychologists, very strongly supported by Sigmund Freud have spoken about the instinct of self-preservation as natural and necessary to sustain life. Anthropologists and other sociologists have taken the view that war is natural and endemic to the human race and that it tends to breed itself. But there is an opposite view, not perhaps as vociferously expressed, that war is an indication of the primitive instincts of man and does not reprerent the behaviour of cultured or civilized human societies who can control those instincts and try to build up a more decent and well-behaved society; and then there are the pacifists like Tolstoy and Gandhi who object to war on ideological grounds and say that war is sinful. There are others who do not professedly belong to the pacifist school but still decry war on the ground that it is not perhaps sinful but is wasteful and foolish; and they invent peaceful methods for the realization of objectives usually intended to be realized by war; e.g. the statesmen who brought into existence the League of Nations and the U.N. were shocked by the immense waste and destruction that the World Wars had wrought and were more impressed by the futility of war than possibly its sinfulness. No doubt they talked about war criminals, but it was not a spiritual or essentially ethical view that they took but a more practical and realistic view of the matter. High-ranking philosophers and men of lesser mould have all talked of the efficacy of armed readiness. "It makes without all question for greatness to be for the most part in arms" said Bacon.

But apart from speculation based on possibility or desirability, past history has recorded that war has been an invariable activity of all the known states of the world. Some societies have waged more wars than others; some have had no opportunity to wage any major wars; some like Sparta specialized in warlike preparations as part of their organized social life; some, like ancient Athens, have risen to the occasion when threatened with destruction;

some have built up a brilliant military tradition as a basis for a vast and powerful empire like the Romans of old. Some like the ancient Mongolians or the Huns, in the course of their nomadic movements have taken to warfare as part of their social being, and no society known to history has abjured war — even in the face of the slightest provocation — on theoretical grounds. In short, the pageant of history is punctuated in the background by the distinct rattling of the sword and the mad beat of the wardrum.

Indian thinkers — except the early protesting sects like the Jain and Buddhist orders — are not known to have objected to war on ideological grounds. Kautilya, a representative of the Sanskritist view on the matter, has nowhere prohibited war, but is anxious to find out ways and means of making war as profitable as possible to the *svāmin* (the king) and he reveals a very practical view of military matters. His mention of the larger fish swallowing up the smaller ones is another example of the doctrine of the 'survival of the fittest'.

Tamiḻaham of the *Saṅgam* age was no exception to this state of affairs. The history of Tamiḻaham of that period, as far as can be gleaned from the available sources, is the story of an active and virile people who far from discouraging or discarding war, indulged very much in it. A careful study of the contemporary literature which is our major source of information reveals to us the picture of a society in which war was a major preoccupation of the people. Further, 'War begat the king' among early Tamils as among others elsewhere.

The genesis of war anywhere must have common causes; and in particular countries at particular times may have special causes. V. R. Ramachandra Dikshitar, who has tried to sum up the causes for ancient Indian warfare says[1] that (1) The mental atmosphere of the community being a caste society, (2) psychological barrenness of peace, (3) heroism and adventure, (4) human pugilism and pugnacity, (5) defence complex, (6) angry behaviour and spirit of jealousy and

1 V. R. R. Dikshitar: *War in Ancient India*, p. 8.

(7) the mastery motive are the psychological factors leading to war. Of these causes, except the first, the rest may be considered to be common to all ancient peoples. This classification, however, suffers from the defect of repetition, as 'angry' behaviour and 'spirit of jealousy' are only part of 'human pugilism and, pugnacity' and 'heroism and adventure' are only euphemism for 'angry behaviour' and 'pugnacity' and the 'mastery motive' is only a root cause of 'pugnacity and a spirit of adventure'. It therefore boils down to the fact that Hindu society in North India as much as in South India never debated the question of 'peace or war', but took 'war' for granted and was not ashamed to do so. But these causes cannot be taken to have been universally operative in all parts of India and at all times. They have only a limited bearing on the history of warfare in Tamiḻaham of the *Saṅgam* age.

We could detail other causes as specially operative so far as Tamiḻaham of the *Saṅgam* age was concerned: (1) The idea that war is natural to man; (2) dynastic feuds; (3) craving for conquest and annexation of territory; (4) the spirit of jealousy, intolerance of 'power, greatness, wealth, fame or influence' in others; (5) the martial spirit sustained by a martial community; (6) the belief that those who died fighting in the battlefield reached heaven; (7) misunderstanding arising out of a king refusing to give his daughter in marriage; (8) the belief that the army and its martial tradition added to the glory of the king; (9) the institution of hero stones; (10) the sanctity attached to the tutelary tree; (11) the existence of numerous petty states whose boundaries were all undefined, the rulers of the states owing the crowned monarchs of Tamiḻaham allegiance which was not always beyond question, those crowned monarchs themselves being at war with one another for supremacy; and (12) the fact that war breeds war.

The idea that war is natural to man and is such an ancient human institution that it can be taken to be a perfectly natural part of human life is expressed plainly by the poets of the *Saṅgam* age. Iḍaikkuṉṟūr Kiḻār praising Talaiyālaṅkānattu

Neḍuñjeḻiyan says that "while it is perfectly natural for one man to fight and conquer another (and it is nothing new here, it is but part of the nature of the world) he had never before seen a battlefield like 'Talaiyālaṅkānam' or a conquering hero like 'Neḍuñjeḻiyan' ".[2] There was a kind of philosophy of inevitability of war and it was felt that "the soldiery are bound to suffer in quality for want of war"[3] and the idea was slightly extended and it was deciared that "the king is bound to suffer for want of an army".[4] The pattern of social and political organization which included the *araśar* or kings, whose special regalia included "The weapons of war, the military-flag, the umbrella and the wardrum, the cavalry, the 'elephant corps', the chariot force and the garlands of military significance, naturally put a premium on warfare".[5] The class of persons presumed that their existence was justified only by indulgence in warfare. It was *aṟam* for the king. He was not merely permitted to wage war, but was also praised warmly if he waged bloody war. War between two kings employing large armies was not the same thing as a quarrel or a free fight between two private individuals. The prevailing learned opinion said so. War was but an extension of the ancient activities of the hunterchief of the pre-historic days.

Lust for territorial conquest was a consuming passion with the kings and it was freely indulged in mostly because it was permitted. It was stated that "it was the business of kings to acquire territory held by other kings".[6] The very term *paḍai* (meaning army) means 'that which destroys'.[7] It was believed that the army was maintained to carry out destruc-

2 *Puṟam* : 76
"ஒருவனே யொருவன் அடுதலும் தொலைதலும்
புதுவ தன்றுஇவ் வுலகத் தியற்கை"

3 *Nānmaṇi* : 42 : "போரின்றி வாடும் பொருநர்சீர்"

4 *Nānmaṇi* : 42 : "படையின்றி மன்னர்சீர் வாடிவிடும்"

5 *Tol. Poruḷ* : 626.

6 *Nānmaṇi* : 85 : "பிறனுளும் நாடுகோள் மன்னர்தொழில்".

7 *Paḍu* (படு) : destroy.

tion. The object of the destruction, no doubt, was to acquire fresh territory. "He was a virtuous and great king who would eat the land of the other kings";[8] and the lust for territory is stated to be a sufficient and valid cause for invasion of other territory;[9] the kings were accustomed to feel that their territory was always insufficient in extent.[10]

It is well known that dynastic feuds and quarrels often lead to wars. These feuds are always there and they break out into open war when the suitable opportunity arises or when a king feels that he can successfully promote a war.

Among the three crowned monarchs of Tamiḻaham too there was much disharmony and we have abundant proof that they never missed an opportunity of waging war against one another. Each wanted to improve his own status and rise above the others. The poet Iḷaṅgo says that Pāṇḍyan Neḍuñjeḻiyan inscribed his 'carp' symbol on the Himālayan rocks and the 'bow' and the 'tiger' were inscribed on either side of it and the kings whom these two latter symbols represented did service to the Pāṇḍyan king.[11] The poet Kōvūr Kiḻār says that the royal umbrellas of the Chēra and the Pāṇḍya were held lower than that of the Chōḻa to indicate their subordination to him.[12] They could not even imagine the three kings coming together and some idealists among the poets delighted in imagining the glorious day when the three crowned monarchs would be found in the same court. The poets also generally adopted the language of sycophancy and while praising one king took care to defame the others.[13] It was generally believed that it was quite in the fitness of things that the Chēras, the Chōḻas and the Pāṇḍyas should wage war against one another. Kōvūr Kiḻār who tried

8 *Puṟam* : 20 : "பிறர்மண் உண்ணும் செம்மல்"
The English 'land-*hunger*' and the Sanskrit *Bhūbuk* (the '*eater* of land') are worth noting here.

9 *Tol. Poruḷ* : 62 : "மண் நசை"

10 *Puṟam* : 8 : "இடம்சிறி துஎன்னும் ஊக்கம் துரப்ப"

11 *Silap* : XVII : 1 and 2. 12 *Puṟam* : 31.

13 *Puṟam* : 35.

to compose the differences between Chōḷa Nalaṅkiḷḷi and Chōḷa Neḍuṅkiḷḷi, scions of the same royal family, pointed out that "he could understand the Chōḷas fighting the Chēras or the Pāṇḍyas but not a Chōḷa fighting a Chōḷa".[14]

The spirit of jealousy seems to have been quite normal among those kings; they could not tolerate the eminence of a neighbouring king; they would not be sufficiently royal if they were contented. The ideal was for every king to bring the whole world under his protective umbrella. Whether he did so or not, the poets praised him as the sole ruler of the universe. 'A King with a sense of honour' would not tolerate the expression that he was *one* of the kings in the world. To him the constant endeavour to become the *soul* monarch was 'a legitimate preoccupation'.[14] This emotional background was sure to lead to war.

The martial spirit is a very important cause for war. This indicates traditional and glorified bellicosity as well as individual pugnacity. This pugnacity is but Latin for a quarrelsome nature. But it has right through the ages been considered to be an admirable quality which makes for masculine assertivenses. When a person is challenged to single combat (or a duel) it was considered improper and inconsistent with one's sense of dignity and honour to refuse to take up the challenge.[15] The kings, once roused into the warlike temper, thought of nothing else. They used to plan the destruction of their enemies throughout the night; they did not care to repose even during their usual hours of sleep.[17] They put on a pleasant look born of the prospect of war and slaughter. Many are the occasions on which hostile hosts from the Deccan and further north were defeated by the Tamils. On many

14 *Puṟam* : 45

15 *Puṟam* : 8: "போகம் வேண்டிப் பொதுச்சொற் பொறுத"

16 *Vide Tiruttoṇḍar Purāṇam, Ēnādi Nāda Nāyanār Purāṇam.* It is to be noted that the Nāyanār belonged to the community of military men and was an *Ēnādi*.

17 *Paḍiṟṟu* : 50.

occasions the Tamil kings went into the Deccan and North India and defeated their foes there. Karikālan, Neḍuñjeḻian, Seṅguttuvan, Narasimha Pallavan, Rājarāja Chōḻan and Rājēndra Chōḻan achieved their brilliant victories only with their Tamil armies. Some of them earned great glory by winning considerable naval battles and establishing foreign footholds of power not only in near places like Ceylon but in distant places like Sumatra and Malaya. It is also true that the first non-Tamil to conquer Tamiḻaham was Mālik Kāfūr. Neither Bindusāra nor Aśoka, nor Samudra Gupta achieved the miracle; the defeat of Vishnugopa which in all probability did not occur on Tamil soil; for the first time it was the mighty eunuch who invaded the South successfully. The tribes like the *Maṟavar*, the *Mallar*, the *Eyinar*, the *Maḻavar*, the *Vallambar*, the *Paradavar* etc. still continue in parts of Tamiḻaham and their martial spirit cannot fail to strike those who know anything about them, as very high. These tribes were ancient tribes[18] even in those days and were looked upon as a great community by the people of the land. Among them were special communities known as 'the martial community'.[19] They were the oldest inhabitants of the land according to *Puṟapporuḷ Veṇbā Mālai* which says that 'the warrior class' of Tamiḻaham came into existence when after the deluge the mountains alone reappeared and the plains had not been formed; "they were born with the sword in their hand and they are the most ancient tribe."[20] These men clearly formed a good part of the king's army. Their presence in the army should have deterred aggression.

In the *Puṟanānūṟu* and other anthologies consisting of war poems, we get abundant information about these martial communities. "The young warrior son of the old dame of the unkempt and gray hair, was like the drop of butter milk in a pot of milk, able to spell ruin to a whole army".[21] "When that old lady" (another of the same community) "heard that her son had died in the

18 *Śilap*: I: 15: "பதியெழு அறியாப் பழங்குடி"
Malaipaḍu: 479: "பதியெழல் அறியாப் பழங்குடி"

19 *Śilap*: XII: 14: "மறக்குடித் தாயத்து வழிவளம்"

20 *P. V. M.*: 35; *Kuḍinilai*. 21 *Puṟam*: 276.

battle-field fighting a bull elephant, she felt happier than she did when she bore him, and the tears of joy she shed far exceeded the drops of rain that fall on the mount Vediram".[22] Here is a veritable 'mother of the warrior class' in one of her typical moods: "The mother heard that her son, who had gone to battle, had run away a coward, from the battle-field; she went to the field of battle swearing that she would cut off her breasts which suckled such a coward; but lo! when in the field she saw the mangled body of the dead son she was happier far than she was when she bore him".[23] Again Okkūr Māsāttiyār a poetess says: "Here is a veritable heroine: she rightly belongs to the warrior class. In a recent battle her elder brother was killed by an elephant in the field; her husband died fighting yesterday's battle; but to-day she sends her only son to the field of battle on hearing the war drums".[24] There is no doubt that these are all idealised pictures of life in a martial community; but they cannot fail to impress the student of the history of the *Saṅgam* Tamils with the rare war-like spirit which dominated the life of those peoples. A woman of such a nature was called *mūdil mahaḷ*[25] or *mūdil peṇḍu*[26] because she belonged to the warrior tribe which was the oldest in the land. This exhibition of extraordinary and frightful martial spirit is a situation according to Tolkāppiyar who designates it *maraṅkaḍai kūṭṭia tuḍinilai*. When it was clear that the war had started, "the mother weaned the son from the suckling breast (for he was but a child, then), put in his hand a spear, showed him the memorial stones of his war-like ancestors and sent him to battle". Clearly a case of exaggeration, but fully indicative of the temper of the women of the warrior community. It will not be charitable to say that those women derived *schadenfreude* in sending their relatives to sure death in battle-field. Even when a fair margin is allowed for poetic exaggeration, the core is bound to reveal a tough martial spirit among the war-like communities of ancient Tamiḻaham. Ponmuḍiār, referring to the warrior, says,[27] "it is

22 *Puṟam*: 277. 23 *Puṟam*: 278. 24 *Puṟam*: 279.
25 *Ibid.* 26 *Puṟam*: 19. 27 *Puṟam*: 312.

my prime duty to bear and bring him up, it is his father's duty to make him a virutous man (full of the martial virtues, no doubt); it is the duty of the blacksmith to provide him with a lance; it is the duty of the king to teach him how to conduct himself (in war). It is the son's duty to destory the elephants and win the battle of the shining swords and return (victorious)" : a fair apportionment of duties quite in keeping with the military tradition. It may seem strange that the women of these tribes are depicted as being as tough as the men themselves. But it was just a special tribal quality which was common to men and women of that tribe.

It can be inferred from the above that the section of society which lagged behind in civilization and in the training in the arts of peace was utilised for military purposes. The martial spirit was eulogised by the poets and the bards as heroism and valour; while the kings who evidently required their services whipped up their ferocious traits by liberal patronage, fulsome flattery and rather heavy potion of strong liquor;[28] this last piece of attraction was presented to soldiers, especially the favourites of the king, 'in goblets and gold' usually intended for royalty.[29]

It will be reasonable to hold that this Spartan trait was a peculiar characteristic of the *maṟakkuḍi* only but still their existence and the tradition they sustained largely contributed to warlike activities in the land.

This climate of feelings and opinions which was conducive to war was furthered by certain superstitious beliefs. The most important among them was that "the warriors who die fighting in the battle-field automatically pass into heaven". The 'Valhalla' of the Tamils was *Tuṟakkam*[30] and naturally every soldier aspired to a place there. In the case of kings it was very specifically laid down that only those who died in battle ever reach *Tuṟakkam*.

28 *Tol. Poruḷ* : 59 : *P. V. M.* : 175.

29 *Puṟam* : 289. 'மூதி லாள ருள்ளும் காதலிற், றனக்கு
முகந் தேந்திய பசும்பொன் மண்டை, இவற்கீ கென்னும்"

30 *Tuṟakkam* : Corruption of Svarga (Skt.). In this *Tuṟakkam* the hero was entertained to eternal pleasure by divine damsels: *Puṟam* : 287.

The belief was so strong that if a king died in his bed, his body was post-mortem laid on a bed of green grass by the Brahmins and cut in twain with a sword; the Brahmins would then pray for the soul of that king to go the way the souls of kings, who die heroically fighting in battle, go; this seemed to give that dead person a passport to *Tuṟakkam* and a status equal to that of a hero in the eyes of the world.[31] Even the common soldier believed that he must, if victory were not possible, at least die in battle to earn *Tuṟakkam*. "Even if a babe died or a mole was born, though they were not men, they were still put to the sword".[32] The possibility of going to *Tuṟakkam* was a great inducement to the soldiers to seek death in the field of battle. It gave an indirect impetus to warfare.

"Those that did not earn fame and glory in this world were cowards; and that was unspeakable shame".[33] Wounded soldiers refused to permit their wounds being attended to or stitched up; having come to the field of battle and probably lost the battle, they somehow wanted to earn glory and heaven by dying. Matrimonial alliances to strengthen dynastic ties, extend territories and augment one's power were quite common among the major kings and the *vēḷirs*, who were superior *vēḷāḷas*. It quite often happened, that when some king asked a *Vēḷ* (or another king) for his daughter's hand, the latter refused; and this led on to war.[34] This military situation is technically known as *mahaṭpāṟ kāñchi*. Women had been the root cause of many major wars in the past; but Draupadi's part in the *Mahābhārata*, Sita's in the *Rāmāyaṇa* and Helen's in the *Iliad* were slightly different cases from what is contem-

31 *Puṟam* : 93; *Aham* : 61. 32 *Puṟam* : 74.

33 *Maṇimēkalai* : 16.

34 K. A. N. : *H. S. I.*, p. 129. He says, "We need not suppose that the refusal of a king to give his daughter in marriage to another was as frequent a cause as the poets assert". The invasion of Pāri's Parambu by the Chēra, the Chōḻa and the Pāṇḍya, however, is a very important instance of the kind.

plated in the *mahaṭpāṛ kāñchi*. Abduction of girls led to war if the parents of the girls considered the abduction an insult to them. The situation known as *Pālai* in *Aham* is only abduction of a 'willing girl' (without the knowledge of the parents), an elopement, in fact, and it almost invariably was followed by a scuffle between the seducer and the bride's party. The scuffle might also become a large-scaled battle.

Lord Muruga, the *Kuṛiñji* chief, *par excellence*, carried away his Vaḷḷi and war followed. The god triumphed, no doubt, but He set an example. This is a love theme developing into a war But the real danger arises when a king has asked another for his daughter's hand an has met with an insulting 'no'. Then "that young girl is the cause of the ruin of the whole town, even as a small spark of fire destroys a whole forest."[35]

Kings of ancient days loved to be praised, i. e., flattered. The poets usually praised the valour of the king, listed his military achievements and depicted gruesome slaughter in the battle-field as glorious heroism. A special class of poetry known as *Kaḷavaḷi* particularly described the victorious field of battle and praised the king who won a brilliant victory. *Kalavaḷi Nāṛpadu* was such a poem written by the poet Poygaiyar in praise of the Chōḷa king Seṅganān. In later days *Paraṇi* was a class of poetry which praised the exploits of the victorious king in the battle-field in which he had slaughtered or captured at least a thousand elephants.[36] In later times i. e. the *Kaliṅgattuparaṇi* was such a poem written by the famous poet Jayaṅkoṇḍār in praise of Kulōttuṅga I. The *Saṅgam* kings, in short, loved to enjoy the game of war.

The Tamils honoured an institution known as *Naḍukal* which means 'the planted stone'; or *virakkal* (the herostone). In honour of the heroes who had fallen in battle a memorial stone or a sepulchral monument was set up. It was but a humble and simple stone generally planted on the roadside like the mile-stone,

35 *Puṛam*: 349.

36 *Ilakkaṇa Viḷakka Pattiyal*:

"ஆனை ஆயிரம் அமரிடை வென்ற
மானவ னுக்கு வகுப்பது பரணி"

perhaps; on that stone the name of the dead hero was inscribed, peacock feathers were laid as wreaths on it and garlands were placed on it.[37] Every important hero got 'this honour of getting a cenotaph raised for him. A maiden of the warrior class proudly said, "my father is in the stone, my husband fell in the field of battle, my brothers died fighting, my son died (killed by an arrow) in a combat with the enemy king".[38]

There was an elaborate but primitive ritual associated with the planting of this stone. An auspicious day was chosen for cutting the stone of required size out of a rock; arrangements were then made for the stone to be planted in its place; then the stone was bathed in the sacred water; it was then actually planted in the allotted place; and then the hero's name and achievements were inscribed on the stone. Then, he came to be considered divine and his praises were sung. In the *Vañjikkāṇḍam* of *Śilappathikāram*, the canto headings indicate[39] how Śeṅguṭṭuvan closely followed this practice even in the matter of setting up an idol for Kaṅṅagi and building a temple for her. It seems that though usually the stone was set up and then the achievements and the name of the hero were inscribed on it, it was common practice among people in the forests to reverse the process; i. e., to inscribe the name and achievements on the stone first and then set up the stone.[40] The *Kuṟaḷ* mentions this *naḍukal;* the typical warrior warns his enemies from approaching his leader, saying that 'many had stood before him and then stood as stones'.[41] After the traditional ceremony was over, the stone became a regular deity and it was worshipped even by the pedestrian peasantry.[42] It was also usual to plant the dead hero's spear or lance by the side of the hero-stones and recline on it his shield.[43] It was accommodated in a small area and above it a small

37 *Puṟam*: 264.
38 *P. V. M.*: 176.
39 *Śilap*: Cantos XXV to XXIX: கல்காண்டல், கால்கோள், நீர்ப்படை, நடுகல், வாழ்த்து.
40 *Tol. Poruḷ*: 60. Nach. Com.
41 *Kuṟaḷ*: 771.
42 *P. V. M.*: 252; *Puṟam*: 306.
43 *Aham*: 131.

canopy of cloth (which gave it shade) was put up.[44] The stone was set up under a large shady tree also. "These stones mocked the vanquished armies which fled by; the peasantry worshipped the deity of the hero stone; and if the stranger happened to be a bard he sang the praises of the fallen soldiers."[45] In the *Malaipaḍukaḍām*, it is stated that 'the hero stones, were set up only so that the world might know of the hero's greatness".[46] The sacrificial food was ceremonially offered to the stone at dawn and the offering was called *nāṯpali*.[47] It was customary for people who sought victory in war to worship the *naḍukal* to bless them with victory. The *naḍukal* standing as a memorial for heroism, became later a symbol of heroism and still later the God of victory capable of conferring victory on other aspirants.

It seems that this institution of *naḍukal* or hero-stone was in vogue till at least the 10th century A.D. In the Tamil and Kannada countries "where several inscribed hero-stones bearing dates in the 9th and 10th centuries and answering to the description given of them in Saṅgam Literature"[48] are found.

Generally, colourful or fanciful rituals seem to be part of an attempt to sustain interest in an institution or an ideal. Religion and nationalism are associated with rituals; similarly the institution of war was also associated with rituals and the *naḍukal* was an ancient Tamilian military ritual.

There was another institution peculiar to the *Saṅgam* Tamils. The kings, the major ones as well as the feudatories, maintained with great care a tree in the courtyard of their palaces, or near the *Manṟam* or some central place in the town or at some convenient or well-protected spot. It was a totemic symbol and was associated with the ruling dynasty from ancient times so that in all probability even the kings did not know why these particular trees were associated with them, their

44 *Puṟam*: 260. 45 *Malaipaḍu*: 386 to 396.

46 *Malaipaḍu*: 394 to 396. 47 *Puṟam*: 306, 329.

48 K. A. N.: *Cōḷas*, p. 73. M. Srinivasa Iyengar quotes the following epitaph (relating to 936 A.D.) in his *Tamil*

family and their town. It was believed that the tree had the power to protect the town; it was therefore called 'tutelary tree', a *kaḍimaram* or a *kāvalmaram*. The destruction of this tree was a most ominous event for the king as well as the state. If it was cut, it was tantamount to the king being defeated and driven out. If the enemy king tied up his elephant to the *kāvalmaram*, it was the biggest insult he could offer to the vanquished king.[49] Worship of the *kāvalmaram* is not heard of, but it is possible that it was part of a vast anthropological tradition in which can be included 'tree worship' like the worship of *Araśu* and *Āl* (the banyan) and the institution of sacred trees in temples. In the absence of reliable information about the origin of these trees, it is safe to give them a totemic origin. Very often the victorious ruler cut this tree and removed it wholesale from the place where it stood.[50] This tree was a powerful irritant and a standing invitation for war.

War breeds war, for violence breeds violence. In any contest, one party wins and the other loses but the vanquished neither forgets nor forgives.

"Victory breeds hatred, for the conquered sleep in sorrow".

He just waits for a favourable opportunity for him to reverse the verdict of the previous war. Much depends upon how the vanquished is treated after the war; but all accounts we get from the *Saṅgam* literature show that post-war clemency was not commonly practised; unforgettable personal humiliation used to be heaped upon the vanquished and that ensured a succession of wars.

It was an uncertain world; the need for making arrangements for security was much greater then; and the possibility of foreign invasions induced kings to be ever prepared for

Studies, p. 40.—"Prosperity! In the 9th year of King Parakēśari Varman who conquered Madura when cattle were lifted at Muttukūr by the Perumān Aḍigaḷ, Vādunavaran Varadan Taṇḍan having recovered them fell".

49 *Paḍiṟṟu*: 33.

50 *Vide supra*: 'The tutelary tree' Chapter IV.

war; it is quite possible that more careful kings wished to anticipate prospective aggression by inflicting an invasion on others. It is now easy to see why there should be so much reference to war and warlike qualities in the *Saṅgam* literature.

Conflicting opinions as to the extent to which warfare influenced the life of the *Saṅgam* Tamils are offered by different scholars. P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar says, "If by history is meant the story of the rise and fall of royal dynasties consequent on the slaughter of an immense number of human beings on the field of battle in the name of heroism ... then Tamil India is the happy country which has no history to recount up to 600 A. D."[51] If the implication is that the *Saṅgam* Tamils never indulged in warfare involving slaughter of large masses of men, the history of *Saṅgam* warfare which we shall soon study in detail will at once belie it.

Some scholars who have accepted the view that warfare was a major occupation of the ruling classes of *Saṅgam* Tamiḻaham, have however suggested a redeeming feature in the situation. They are supported by an observation made by Megasthenes the Greek ambassador in the court of Chandragupta Maurya: "It not unfrequently *(sic)* happens that at the same time, and in the same part of the country men may be seen drawn up in array of battle, and fighting at the risk of their lives, while other men close at hand are ploughing and digging in perfect security, having these soldiers to protect them". Nobody has taken this picture to be literally true. Smith, qualifying Magesthenes, draws another picture: "This pretty picture may be a little over-drawn, although we may accept as true the statement that in the India known to Megasthenes the fighting ordinarily was done by professional soldiers, who interfered little with the work of the harmless and necessary peasant. The fortified towns, too, as a rule, were protected by their gates and walls from the injuries of war, and only on rare occasions suffered the horrors of a sack. Thus it was possible

51 P. T. S.: *The Tamils*; opening sentence in the introduction.

for the Tamils, like the medieval Florentines and Pisans, to have their fill of fighting and still pay close attention to careful farming and lucrative trade".[52] V. R. Ramachandra Dikshitar however says, "The normal life of the people was never disturbed and arts and crafts continued to flourish irrespective of war or peace".[53] But it is necessary for us to reconcile the existence of the innumerable wars we learn of from our sources with the development of peaceful arts to very high levels of excellence which we find mentioned in the sources. V. Kanagasabhai gets very near the truth when he says: "It was only the men, trained to the profession of arms, who engaged in war, while the rest of the people resided within the walled towns, and followed unmolested their different callings. The poorer classes who lived in villages remote from the capital towns were exposed to frequent attacks from the neighbouring chiefs and suffered terrible hardships. Their cattle were carried away, their houses were burnt down, and they were driven out of the village or slaughtered if they offered the least resistance. The large population of the great cities such as Madura, Karūr and Kāvērippaṭṭinam enjoyed, however, almost perfect immunity from the horrors of war."[54] This is what made possible the peaceful pursuit of the fine arts in the land. Poetry and other refined arts were carried to a high degree of excellence; the dwellers in the cities at all events, enjoyed all the luxuries which wealth could purchase.[55]

This condition of restricting the ravages of war to obsolutely essential areas determined by the exigencies of war and preventing its spread to the other areas was made possible by the Tamils' view of what 'a just war' is. They had their own notions of 'war ethics' and tried to adhere to a certain moral code.

Generally the war started with a well-khown incident; viz., cattle-lifting. The incident was both a pretext and a justifi-

52 Smith: *E. H. I.*, p. 442.
53 V. R. R. Dikshitar: *War in Ancient India*, p. 72.
54 V. K.: *The Tamils — 1800*, p. 109.
55 Smith: *E. H. I.*, p. 442.

cation. The *Tolkāppiyam* gives it a significant name : *ātandōmbal*.[56] This means 'the protection of cows'. Cattle-lifting normally is treated as a crime for it is not different from theft. But it is treated in Tamil literary convention at least, as an act of 'protection' and a measure of 'safety'. Perhaps this was so in actual practice also. The idea is that the king and his men who wish to attack a neighbouring state wish to save the cows in that state from the horrors of an invasion and so actually steal them away; this is to be treated as an act of humanity and not as an act of malicious robbery. But the cattle that was so lifted was generally distributed among the followers of the invading chief. The protection is thus offered, first and foremost, to the cows because they were most 'essential for the economy' of the land, and were a 'harmless' species and because religion and tradition held that the cows are very sacred. They were 'incapable of taking care of themselves' so that a mere warning was not enough; they had to be saved. That is why the expression *ātandōmbal* (protecting the cows by taking them away) was used by Tolkāppiyar. This makes it clear that cattle-lifting was a useful preliminary to military engagements even in the days of Tolkāppiyar and that this ethical explanation for a military incident was quite familiar to him. This was a well-known practice among the people of most countries. But we are not aware of any people ever weaving this incident into their general pattern of military science as the *Saṅgam* Tamils did.

Protection of a similar nature was offered to other harmless non-belligerents also; but that was not achieved by lifting them but by issuing a warning to them. The *Puṟanānūṟu* gives a list of persons who are to be so warned. "Oh! Cows! peaceful and timid Brahmins! gentle women! diseased and sickly ones! Those that are not the parents of (worthy) sons! We are shooting our arrows quick

56 *Tol. Poruḷ* : 57. Nach Com. The Sanskritists call it gograhaṇa'; in the Mahābhārata it is mentioned : but the significance of cattle-lifting is different there. It is either simply an audacious piece of robbery or a clever ruse to draw the enemies out of their hiding.

into your forts and battlements; retire to your places of safety and protection."[57] It is strange that in this list, the cows should have been included; but possibly these 'cows' refer to such cattle as could not be lifted. The warning is to be construed as being issued not to the cows but to the owners of these animals. Nachchinārkkiniyar includes, "the coward, the man with dishevelled hair, the man with a feminine name,[58] the unarmed man, the man who does not bear equal arms," also in the list of such persons to be saved from the ravages of war. If these are to be fought, he adds that "they must be first warned and only then proceeded against". The same commentator is of opinion that removing the Brahmins and others also in addition to the cows from the arena is the most ethical procedure to adopt; the next best thing that the invader could do was to remove the cattle alone in a selfless spirit and protect them, but the third and the least desirable policy was to lift the cattle with a selfish motive and distribute them among one's own followers.[59] The *Śilappadikāram* mentions a large list of persons exempt from attack in the field of battle: (1) those that wear loose and long locks of twisted hair like the *sanyāsins;* (2) those that wear yellow and saffron robes like ascetics; (3) those who have smeared their body with holy ashes; (4) the ascetics of the Jain and Buddhist orders, (5) bards and musicians (vocal and instrumental); and (6) dancers.[60] It was quite an accepted ethical position that righteous warriors do not pursue their foes who have shown their heels.[61] Another text refers to "those who had let drop their clothes, those that fell down in a grazing posture, those who entered water, those who had cast away their weapons, those who stood still without any support" being exempted from attack in a battle-field.[62] The

57 *Puṟam* : 9.

58 Bhīshma, the *Mahābhārata* hero, took a vow not to fight his adversary who was in his previous birth a Woman'.

59 *Tol. Poruḷ* : 87. Nach. Com.

60 *Silap* : XXVI : 225 to 230.

61 *Puṟam* : 389 ; *Madurai* . 177 ; *Padiṟṟu* ; 90.

62 *Śiṟupañcha* : 46.

war that is directed against (1) those who are not heroes, (2) those who have taken to their heels, (3) the wounded, (4) the old and (5) the very young is known as *paḍaimaḍam* (ignorance in war).[63]

It is to be admitted that ancient Tamils exhibited a high sense of responsibility towards the innocent and defenceless elements in society and took all possible steps to ensure their safety: this was remarkable goodness. It is clear that the cattle were not usually restored to their pre-war owners but distributed among one's own friends and supporters. Even if it is true that these harmless but useful animals were not killed or allowed to be killed in the turmoil of war, it must be a significant advancement towards civilized war.

This clemency towards certain innocent but useful sections in society was not restricted to situations of actual war. When one felt that considerable damage is likely to be inflicted on a large community of persons, then one used to issue such kindly warning to those innocent elements in society. Kaṇṇagi commanded Agni, the fire God to consume all Madurai except (1) Brahmins, (2) ascetics, (3) cows, (4) chaste women, (5) old persons and (6) children.[64] The *Eyinar* class of robbers who generally robbed a whole town at midnight, also removed the cattle from the town and filled the *Maṇṛams* or public places in their towns with those cows;[65] though surely in the case of these robbers, cattle-lifting was not an act of mercy.

'Cowardice' as much as 'unfairness' comes in for harsh criticism at the hands of those who speak on military matters. In siege warfare, though it was considered ideal for the besieged to come out at once in the open and engage in battle with the attacking force, continued stay within the fort under a certain circumstance was permissible and was not considered cowardice; i. e. if the besieged felt that by that procedure he could wear down the enemy without loss to himself it might be considered to be part of his

63 *Puṛam*: 142. Com.
64 *Śilap*: XXI: 53 to 55.
65 *Śilap*; XII: 13.

military tactics. But if the besieged awaited the arrival of allied help and stayed in the fort, it was only second rate heroism. But if his stay inside the fort was due to helplessness or lack of courage, then it was first rate cowardice and 'unethical' from a military point of view.

The above remarks show that the Tamils of the *Saṅgam* age adopted a certain 'ethical' attitude to warfare. They called war, which conformed to those principles, a just or righteous war: *aṟappōr*. While it is true that there was not always much correspondence between theory and practice in Tamil warfare, and military theory had but perverted application in actual war, it is equally true that unrighteous or unfair war has never been advocated by the *Saṅgam* Tamils. The *Kuṟaḷ* states[66] that being defeated in a 'straight' fight against an elephant is much better than being successful in a 'hare hunt'; the commentator points out here that the statement must be taken to be uttered by a hero who is ashamed to pursue a defeated foe and throws himself against the enemy king. This state of affairs, it must be conceded compares favourably with the Sanskritic view on the matter expressed by Kautilya and Kāmaṅdaka. Kautilya classifies warfare as (1) *dharma yuddha* and (2) *kūta yuddha*. The former is righteous warfare while the latter is warfare by deceitful and other undesirable means. Kāmaṅdaka follows Kautilya and "does not deprecate unrighteous and unfair war, if the object of war is not to be defeated".

Though we have abundant evidence of practically ceaseless warfare in one part of Tamiḻaham or another, it is stated in certain texts that attempts were made to avoid hostilities if possible. The embassy on which Auvai the poet went from Adihaimān Neḍumān Añji of Tahaḍūr to Toṇḍaimān of Kāñji was a peace mission evidently intended to avert an impending war.[67] She probably achieved her objective by politely mentioning her king's prowess. Kapilar, who went from Pāri to the three invading crowned monarchs of Tamiḻaham told them that they

66 *Kuṟaḷ* : 772. 67 *Puṟam* : 95.

could take the whole land without fighting if only they begged it of Pāri;[68] probably it was not very diplomatic language to use; we know that Pāri was killed soon after and his *Parambu* was taken over by the invaders. But there was another kind of peace-maker; the most illustrious example of that type is undoubtedly Kōvūr Kiḻār. He was a self-appointed ambassador of peace. He tried to restore peace and justice in the land by softening rising passions and reconciling conflicting royal interests. He often tried to bring about a reconciliation between Chōḻa princes Nalaṅkiḷḷi and Neḍuṅkiḷḷi.[69]

But those who wished to and could fight and stood to gain materially by fighting must have far exceeded in number those, who aspired to peace and were prepared to strive for peace; hence the frequent wars. During war-time much normal, royal activity came to a dead stop; at least the bards who used to resort to the king's court for a sumptuous feast and liberal presents were starved for want of a patron. The patron, if he is engaged in battle, forgets everything else. So the bards prayed the kings to distribute their presents to them before they (the kings) repaired to the battle-fields.[70] The economy of the land was affected in this indirect way by war, for while on military duty the king could not be in his palace to support his dependants including the poets and the bards.

The belligerents normally carefully studied the relative strength of the concerned parties. They actually waited for a favourable opportunity for war, i.e., wanted the enemy to be off his guard. To put him on his guard was no doubt *aṟam* but they took care to see that sufficient notice was not given for the enemy to get fully ready. "Wait like a crane when you are dormant; but when the moment is opportune plunge in for a catch, like the wise crane."[71] But once war started it seems they insisted on fair and equal fighting and would disdain to take undue advantage of the enemy's weaknesses. It is necessary

68 *Puṟam* : 110.
69 *Puṟam* : 45.
70 *Puṟam* : 139.
71 *Kuṟaḷ* : 490.

to bear in mind that 'deceit' is different from 'cruelty'; both might be undesirable, but the former is associated with cowardice while the latter goes with inconsiderate brute force.

2. *The Theory and Practice of Warfare*

There was no dearth of wars in the *Saṅgam* age. The kings maintained the armies and the weapons necessary therefor. The art of war was then fairly advanced. Methods of attack and defence were many and well-defined, well-understood and well-practised, and the Tamils reduced to a system their ideas on warfare. The *Tolkāppiyam* gives[72] a detailed account of warfare from causes to results and reveals the inner workings of the Tamil military machine. The army no doubt was the mainstay of the royal might.

(a) The Army

The army is known as *paḍai* (that which destroys), and the word is used to mean also 'a weapon' and 'the act of destruction'. Accordingly the army was trained to destory. It was a vast force, was likened to an ocean,[73] and its destructive power was such that it was the very personification of fire.[74]

The army consisted of the infantry, the cavalry, the elephant corps and the chariot force.[75] But the order in which these divisions of the armed forces were known to the Tamils was: (1) the infantry, (2) the elephant corps (3) the cavalry, and (4) the chariot force.[76] This order is followed because the infantry is the conscious fighting force and is desirous of attaining fame or reaching heaven: the elephant corps comes next because of its strength and mad ferocity; the cavalry then because the horse is second only to the elephant in fighting qualities; the chariot is mentioned last because it cannot move without the horse. The *Kuṛaḷ* says that the victorious army which does not

72 *Tol. Poruḷ.*
73 *Siṛupāṇ :* 734.
74 *Madurai :* 734.
75 *Puṛam :* 4.
76 The classification that is familiar to the 'Sanskritists' is 1. *Rotha*, 2. *Gaja*, 3. *Turaka*, 4. *Padādi :* chariot, elephant, horse, man.

mind obstacles is the most important source of wealth to the king;[77] even though it might be itself very small, the army must have the courage to rally round the king when he is in distress. Such courage is possible only for the core of the traditional standing army of the king;[78] the quality of an army depends on the quality of the individual soldiers in the army; a whole army of cowards will melt in the presence of one brave warrior even as an army of mice will fall an easy prey to a serpent;[79] the effciency and competence of the army must be such as to enable it to oppose the very God of Death;[80] (a) the quality of fearlessness, (b) the determination to save the leader from anything dishonourable, (c) following the glorious tradition of the ancestors and (d) full confidence in the leader are the four real sources of protection to the army.[81] An army must be capable of so deploying itself as to be able to withstand the enemy's frontal attack.[82] Though an army might be somewhat deficient in courage or defence ability, it is essential that it should have a grand and imposing appearance.[83] It is also essential that the army should not be greatly reduced in its ranks, should not entertain feelings of hatred and should not be poor; otherwise it cannot succeed.[84] If the leader either dies or runs away, then the army feeling that there is none to lead it to victory will cease to function.[85] The army was such an important

77 *Kuṟaḷ* : 761.

78 *Kuṟaḷ* : 762; the commentator, relying on Sanskritic sources says: "The kings's army is of *Six* kinds: 1. Standing army (*ஊலப்படை*); 2. mercenaries (*கூலிப்படை*); 3. national militia (raised by voluntary enlistment) (*நாட்டுப்படை*); 4. guerilla army, (*காட்டுப்படை*); 5. allied army (*துணைப் படை*); 6. prisoners of war used as fighters (*பகைப்படை*) and of these the traditional standing army is the most important".

79 *Kuṟaḷ* : 763.

80 *Kuṟaḷ* : 765.

81 *Kuṟaḷ* : 766.

82 *Kuṟaḷ* : 767.

83 *Kuṟaḷ* : 768.

84 *Kuṟaḷ* : 769; "an army is reduced in its ranks and becomes poor if the army men are not paid proper wages; great hatred is caused by despotic and immoral behaviour of the king".

85 *Kuṟaḷ* : 770; the *Tolkāppiyam* mentions a military situation in

institution that it was considered the very 'person' of the king.[86]

The newly assembled army which had not yet tasted battle was called *kumarippaḍai* (the virgin army).[87] The army, naturally, had a commander-in-chief; he was called a *tānait talaivan*[88] or *paḍait talaivan*.[89] He was usually a superior *Vēḷāḷa* and he was honoured by the king, the honour being the conferment of *Mārāyam*. One important honour bestowed on the commander-in-chief was the title Ēnādi. The king conferred this honour by presenting to the recipient a ring called the Ēnādi ring. The commander-in-chief was assisted by other officials of the army called *tandira vinaiñar* (army officials). The commander rallied the army around the banner of the king if the king happened to fall in battle and he continued the fight under his leadership.[90]

which "the army leaders continue the fight to the end because their kings have been killed in battle."

'' செருவகத்து இறைவன் வீழ்ந்தெனச் சினஇயொருவன் மண்டிய நல்லிசை நிலை '' (*Tol. Poruḷ* : 72)

K. A. N. Sastri quoting *Puṟam*: 62 says, ''if a king was killed or even seriously wounded in the midst of the fight, his enemy gave up the struggle and accepted defeat''. (*Cōḷas*, p. 73). This is not a correct reading of the military situation mentioned in that poem (*Puṟam*: 62). It speaks of a battle-field in which all the belligerent forces had died fighting each other and the two opposing kings (who were the only warriors left on the field) fought and killed each other so that the field was clear and there was none to claim the victorious field. It was a case of the kings alone fighting each other personally after their armies had perished, and not a case of one the of armies accepting defeat at the hands of the other after one of the kings had been killed in battle or had fled. So, *Puṟam* : 62 relates to the military situation known as : ''வாள்வாய்த்து இருபெருவேந்தர் தாமும் சுற்றமும் ஒருவரும் ஒழியாத் தொகைநிலை''.

vide Tol. Poruḷ : 72 Nach. Com. In the *Puṟam* reference the expression ''உடன் வீழ்ந் தன்ரு லமரே'' (the fighting ceased immediately) seems to have misled.

86 *Silap* : XXV; 192, 193. 87 *Puṟam* : 294.

88 *Silap* : XXVI : 4.

89 *Silap* : V; 157—160, Aḍiyār. Com. — ' Definition of Eṉpērāyam'. 90 *Puṟam*. 314.

The infantry consisted of the brave warriors of the 'warrior community'[91] and the others specially chosen for their ability. The *Paradavar* of the southern regions were ferocious soldiers[92] who were were in great demand in the various armies of Tamiḻaham. It is said that non-Tamils (speaking diverse languages) also were recruited to the army.[93] The *Maṟavar* were originally robber-chiefs whose qualification for inclusion in the army was their cruel and ferocious nature; their delight in the sufferings of their victims, whom they shot down with their arrows, was such that they used to kill even those who had no money or property to part with.[94] The *Eyinar* mentioned in *Śilappaḍikāram* were a primitive type of highway mens, the name *Kaḷḷar* literally means, 'robbers'; they inhabited the more hilly and less fertile parts of the country and lived by banditry; they were, however, not soldiers of an organised army.[95]

The ideal warrior is described as one who does not retreat even one step.[96] The warriors were so brave that they did not care even if arrows fell on them like the rain of the deluge; even if the spears sparkled like bright fish over them, even if the elephants attacked them with their tusks, they cared not.[97] Before they started for battle, they drank deep and freely their toddy.[98] It was also habitual for them to take a lance in their hand, oil and part the tuft on their head, wear a white piece of loin cloth and march to the battlefield on hearing the war drums.[99] A description of the Tamil warrior is provided by Sōmadēva Śarma. "He had a tuft of hair at the centre of the head" *(kuḍumi)* "gold ear-rings, moustaches and sparkling white teeth and he used umbrellas of peacock feathers besides

91 *Śilap* : V : 55. "கடுங்கண் மறவர்"
*(*the foot soldiers of ferocious look*)*.
92 *Madurai* : 139—144. 93 *Mullaip* : 43.
94 *Kali* : 4 : 3 to 5.
95 V. R. R. Dikshitar : *War in Ancient India*, p. 41.
96 *Madurai* : 33. 97 *Puṟam* : 287.
98 *Madurai* : 393. 99 *Puṟam* : 279.

red painted wooden shields at his waist".[100] These brave soldiers were notable for a great quality : they were very courageous in the battlefield and were the first to lay down their lives, as they were always contemplating the impermanence of life. Such soldiers were called 'pulavar' i. e., those who had 'knowledge'.[101] They were also called *Sāṉṟōr* (the virtuous) on this account.[102] This frame of mind was developed probably to make them indifferent to death. A conscious development of such an attitude of sacrifice is different from one of instinctive obedience to enforced martial discipline. The soldiers seem to have received regular military training including horse-riding and target practice. The *Kōšar* or the *Tuḷu* warriors are described as learning the use of the shining weapons of war by throwing them at fixed targets.[103] Among the soldiers, the inseparable associates of the king who are described as having grown from infancy with the king (or the soldier tribe having grown from infancy with kingship as an institution) are said to be the most successful warriors who live by the sword.[104] Probably they corresponded to the Praetorian Guard of the Romans.

The pay of the warriors does not find specific mention. They must have received attractive emoluments from the king, otherwise the army would not have held together. It is suggested that the king made such considerable presents to his soldiers that they also could lead a life of luxury and patronage. The conferment of titles and honours also indicates royal favours. Parimēlaḻagar, commenting on *Kuṟaḷ* (679), says that the ranks of the army are generally reduced because of the king's illiberal allotment of funds to the army. Obviously poor or insufficient pay would have driven the soldiers away from the army. So the soldiers fought on the side of any one who paid most. This might

100 Quoted by V. R. R. Dikshitar : *War in Ancient India* pp. 183, 184.

101 *Paḍiṯṯu* : 65.

102 *Paḍiṯṯu* : 14; *Puṟam* : 312.

103 *Puṟam* : 169. "இளம்பல் கோசர் விளங்குபடை கன்மார் இகலின ரெறிந்த வகலிலை முருக்கின் பெருமரக் கம்பம் போல."

104 *Puṟam* : 24. "வாளின் வாழ்நர்".

apply to all ranks in the army except the traditional standing army and the prisoners of war. The mercenaries, naturally under conditions of competition must have received decent pay. But pay apart, authorised as well as unauthorised war loot must have greatly added to the wealth of even individual fighters. Before the war started, the king made grand presents to the soldiers and entertained them at a royal feast; he distributed the lifted cattle to his men. These were in addition to the wages usually paid to them in peace time. Normally the strength of the army may be presumed to have been equal to the traditional standing army.

The warriors wore the heroic anklet called *virakkaḷal*,[105] on which the heroic deeds of the wearer were inscribed. Among the leading soldiers, including the king and the commanders, the custom was to wear two kinds of anklets; one representing the philanthropic traits of the wearer and the other his heroism or victories.[106] The soldiers wore a kind of coat called *paḍam*,[107] *kuppāyam* or *meimmaṛai*;[108] they wore also sandals to protect their feet.[109]

The king was an integral part of the army; he generally rode the tallest elephant and was the very soul of the army. He led his army in person and was at its head.[110] He as much wished for a place in the *Tuṛakkam* as any other soldier and donned his coat and wore his sandals and exhibited great bravery on the field of battle. "The heroic king's hands were rough as he was holding the reins of the fiery steed heading towards the enemy's fort and as he was often bending the bow".[111] The kings wore their distinctive flowers which (as members of a particular dynasty) they used to wear. In addition to these flowers, the kings wore particular flowers on particular occasions depending on the military situation. The soldiers who beat the drum,[112] the commander-in-chief, the elephants or the horses which the kings rode were also found

105 *Puṛam* : 3.
106 *Padiṛṛu* : 34; *Kuṛun* : 7
107 *Perumbāṇ* : 69.
108 *Padiṛṛu* : 14.
109 *Perumbāṇ* : 69; *Aḍipudai Araṇam*. (அடிபுனைதயரணம்).
110 *Puṛam* : 169.
111 *Puṛam* : 14.
112 *Madurai* : 395, 396.

wearing these flowers. The Chēras e.g. wore the *panai* (borassus flabellifer) and the *tumbai* (leucas aspara) simultaneously when they went out to fight.[113]

Before going to battle, the soldiers and the kings too at times took terrible vows which they meant to keep. This act of taking a solemn oath was known as *vañjinam kūṛal* or *onṛumoḻidal*.[114] The Kōšars who are reputed as brave warriors are often spoken of as the *onṛu moḻikkōšar*.[115]

The army with all its ancillary parts generally functioned as a unit. The advane guard of the army was called *tūśi* or *tār*,[116] the rearguard being known a *kūḻai*.[117] The elephant corps formed a very important wing of the army and the king and other leading soldiers rode on elephants. It was customary to have long ropes or chains with bells attached to each end of them thrown across the back of the elephant so that when the animals moved, the bells tinkled and indicated in advance the elephant's movements [118] The elephant carried the flag on its back.[119] It was the king's flag bearing the king's totemic symbol on it. The elephant had a golden face-plate attached to its forehead.[120] These huge brutes when they rode out for battle wore the special wreaths and laurels which the king wore..[121] It was also usual to put on a kind of thimble called *kimpuri* to the sharp end of its tusks as an ornament and it was to be made of gold if the royal elephant needed one.

The elephant corps was a very highly valued wing of the land army; it stood in the midst of the expansive army like the navy in the ocean.[122] These animals, deadly and of terrific look often intoxicated with a liberal administration of toddy [123] strode about the battle-field destroying the soldiers, and for sheer strength they

113 *Puṛam* : 22. ''பொலந்தோட்டுப் பைந்தும்பை, மிசையலங் குஞைய பணைப்போழ் செரீஇ''
114 *Padiṛṛu* : 41.
115 *Aham* : 196.
116 *Śilap* : XXVI : 80.
117 *Puṛam* : 88.
118 Puṛam : 3.
119 Puṛam : 9.
120 Puṛam : 3.
121 *Śilap* : XXVI : 70, 71.
122 *Puṛam* : 13.
123 *Padiṛṛu* : III : 1 : 17.

had no equals.[124] They were used to violently knock against the strong gates of the fort and the massive bolt inside the gate of the fort was twisted out of shape by the onslaught and the gate was forced.[125] The driver of the elephant or the *pāhan* used the prod — called *aṅkuśam* or *tōṭṭi* — to drive it. The infantry men, sword in hand, surrounded and accompanied the elephant, probably because only the more important persons rode the elephant and they had to be protected by their body-guards. Verily, the elephant was the very ornament of the army.[126]

The horse which was next in importance to the elephant also had bells attached to it;[127] and it was specially selected for its speed and mobility;[128] and its mane was cut short to improve its appearance.[129] There were more horses than elephants in the army as is to be expected.

The chariots were drawn by horses.[130] They had long pennons waving at their top,[131] and were noted for their wheeling motion.[132] They rode swiftly into the ranks of the enemy. These chariots had bells attached to their sides all round; and these bells naturally tinkled when the chariots moved.[133] The tall chariot had on its deck a stand called *Koḍuñji* made in the shape of a large lotus flower, planted in the forepart, to which the rider used to hold fast while driving the chariot.[134]

124 *Madurai* : 43 to 52. 125 *Puṟam* : 14.

126 *Siṟupañcha* ; 7. "படைதனக்கு யானைவனைப்பாகும்".

127 *Paṭṭina* : 232.

128 *Madurai:* 48 to 52. 'Pari" meaning 'horse' also means 'speed'.

129 *Puṟam* : 387.

130 K. A. N.: *H. S. I.*, p. 128: "The army consisted of the traditional four arms-chariots (drawn by oxen)" etc. But Nachchinārkkiniyar commenting on *Tol. Poruḷ* 72, says that "the chariot could not move without the horse". In *Aham* (4) 'a prince returning from the battlefield in an chariot drawn by horse' is mentioned. Chariots draw by horses therefore seem to be the usual vehicles in war. *Vide* also *Puṟam* : 4; *Perumbāṇ*: 486–490.

131 *Puṟam* : 351. 132 *Madurai* : 48 to 52.

133 *Kuṟun* : 301 *Aham* : 4. 134 *Kuṟun* : 212; *Maṇi* : IV: 48.

A Chōḻa king possessed a large fleet of beautiful (or frightful) war chariots and had come to be famous on that account.[135]

The army so equipped brought wealth, territory and fame to the king by fighting and winning wars on land. It was often quite ably supplemented by the navy. The extensive maritime trade which the Tamils are known to have had with foreign countries on the east and on the west shows that they maintained a merchant navy. The vessels were called *kalam* or *marakkalam*. They had three types of ships — the small coastal craft for neighbouring trade and fishing, the medium ships and the ocean-going ships. The ancient naval tradition of the Tamils naturally was the foundation on which the Pallavas and still later the imperial Chōḻas won such glorious victories centuries later. It is known that the Chēras, the Chōḻas and the Pāṇḍyas were each served by a first rate port, namely Muśiṟi, Puhār and Koṟkai respectively. These ports must have been capable of accommodating even warships; and there are instances of contemporary Tamil kings and more particularly Imayavaramban Neḍuñjēralādan winning naval battles. Chēran Śeṅguṭṭuvan who was either a contemporary or a predecessor of Malaiyamān Tirummuḍikkāri is represented by Nappaśalaiyār as owning a navy which brought gold (probably in return for the commodities that were sold in foreign markets) and whose path no other vessels dared to cross.[136] The *Śilappadikāram* mentions Śenguṭṭuvan's victory over some insular enemies whose *kāvalmaram* was *kaḍambu* (anthocephalas cadamba).[137]

(b) The Weapons of War and the Armoury

The Tamil armies were quite well equipped with the necessary weapons of war; and there was a very large variety of offensive and defensive weapons. *Paḍai* is an expression which is used to denote the army as well as a weapon, but *paḍaikkalam* more precisely means a weapon of war.

135 *Madurai* : 752 "உருவப்பஃறேர் இளஞ்சேட்சென்னி".
136 *Puṟam* : 126.
137 *Śilap* : XXV : 187

Among weapons of destruction we find the following mentioned more prominently: (1) *vēl*: the lance or the spear; (2) *vāḷ*: the sword; (3) *vil*: the bow and *paḥaḻi*, *ambu*, *kaṇai* or *kōl*: the arrow. The *Tolkāppiyam* mentions[138] the lance or the spear especially and the *Kuṟaḷ* mentions it as the most deadly one used by the greatest warriors.[139] It is quite possible that the lance was given a superior status among the weapons for more than one reason. It was the weapon wielded by Lord Muruga, the favourite deity of the Tamils.[140] Lord Śiva's own supreme weapon of destruction was the trident—a variant of the spear. The *vēl* being thus associated with their prime gods and being mixed up with their religious rituals like *vēlan veṟi āḍal* it was quite natural that the *vēl* should have been given a paramount place in Tamil armoury.

But if we remember how the *vēl*, the *vāḷ* and the *vil* were used, it might perhaps help us to understand the rationale of the order of preference thought of by the Tamils. The hero using the arrow killed from a distance; the hero using the sword 'threw' it and killed the prey or enemy which need not be very near but cannot be very far off; but the warrior using the *vēl* generally wielded it in close combat. The Tamils attached the greatest importance to close combat and hand to hand fighting was deemed more heroic and courageous. The bow and the arrow were used to kill small prey like the hare while the lance was used to kill the elephant, the mightiest among the wild animals.[141] Hence the special importance given to the *vēl*. But it is quite obvious that in addition to the lance, the sword and the bow and arrow a very large variety of deadly weapons were in use; some of them were shot, some were hurled at the enemy and some were used to pierce. We hear of particular heroes specialising in the use of particular weapons; e.g., vēr-paḥṟaḍakkaip Perunaṟkkiḷḷi[142] specialised in the use of the spear; Karuṅgai Oḷvāḷ Perumpēr-vaḷudi[143] was a great swordsman and Valvil Ōri[144] was a famous archer.

138 *Tol. Poruḷ*: 76. 139 *Kuṟaḷ*: 552. 140 *Tirumurugu*: 111.
141 *Kuṟaḷ*: 772. 142 *Puṟam* ; 62. 143 *Puṟam*: 3.
144 *Puṟam* ; 152.

The lance and the sword were made of steel (*ehhu*) and so they were called *ehham*.[145] The lance and the spear were put into appropriate sheaths[146] even as the bunch of arrows had its quiver. It was quite eommon for these weapons of steel to be sharpened from time to time. "It was the duty of the blacksmith to make for the young warrior his lance".[147] But it is nteresting to note that the warriors themselves sharpened their iarrows, spears and swords; this process of sharpening was called *pahaḷi māittal*.[148] The arrows were aimed from such a distance that they had actually to be shot straight up into the air if they were to reach their targets and when they did so it was like a rain of arrows coming straight down from the sky[149] and they were strong, sharp and speedy enough to break the armour.[150]

There was a variety of arrow the pointed tip of which was put into a screw container; and so, that arrow was called *śurai ambu*.[151] Quite usually the twang of the bow-string terrorised the enemies,[152] not because of the noise it could make but because of the coming shower of arrows which the twang announced in advance. The bow string was called *nāṇ* and the point at which the arrow was placed on the string was known as *uḍu*. An expert archer was one who could shoot his arrows to reach and cross a *kūppiḍu* distance, i. e. a distance which is covered by a normal 'hallo'.[153]

The victorious soldiers raised their spears aloft in token of victory.[154] It seems that the spear was not a single blade but was made of two parts between which a parting was made due to constant use in war.[155] The sling or *kavaṇ* was no doubt a common weapon of destruction but it was used mostly in hunting.

Among the defensive weapons the most considerable was the

145 *Padiṟṟu*: 19; 24. 146 *Puṟam*: 323. 147 *Puṟam*: 312
148 *Kuṟun*: 12. 149 *Madurai*: 183. 150 *Puṟam*: 13.
151 *Kali*: 6. 152 *Kali*: 15.
153 *Malaipaḍu*: 421, 422. 154 *Puṟam*: 58. 155 *Puṟam*: 353.

shield generally called *Kēḍaham* provided with a handle.[156] It was also called *kiḍuhu* and was held in the left hand. As it was mostly made of leather, it was called *tōl* also.[157] It was occasionally also made of iron.[158] It was an ideal protection against the arrows and the shield on which the enemy arrows stood striking, looked like a 'target'.[159] The leather of which the shields were made was so tough and thick that normally the arrows could not pierce them. It appears that there was a variety of shield made of white leather.[160] The shield was provided with mirrors or pieces of looking glass on the inside. The exact purpose for which this mirror was fixed in the shield is not clear. It was perhaps to help the soldier to see for himself if he was properly accoutred before marching out to battle. Poets of the field of battle describe how in the field after the battle, hungry jackals and ghosts loiter about in search of suitable food (the carcasses) for them; and they love to look themselves in the mirror fixed in the shields.[161] The kind of shield called *palahai* (the plank-like, flat-surfaced defensive arrangements) seems to have been made of metal or wood and closely interspersed on the inside with bamboo sticks to serve as handles.[162] The shields were also provided with small bells attached to their ends.

Apart from this defensive equipment, there was the full armour which was the 'very last line of defence' for the footsoldier. It was called *meimmaṛai*[163] that which protects the body or *meipuhu karuvi* the device into which the body can get.

It was also called *kavacham* or *kavayam* and was pieced together or woven by means of links or iron meshes called *poṛi*.[164] A variety of armour made of the skin of tiger is mentioned.[165] The soldiers wore a kind of gloves called *kaikkavacham* or *kaichchāḍu* or *vambu* which protected at least the part of the hand from elbow to finger-tips.[166]

156 *Kaḷavaḻi* : 28. 157 *Puṛam* : 98, Com.
158 *Puṛam* : 15. 159 *Puṛam* : 4. 160 *Padiṛṛu* : 45.
161 *Kaḷavaḻi* : 28. 162 *Puṛam* : 345. 163 *Padiṛṛu* : 14.
164 *Madurai* : 740; *Puṛam*: 13. 165 *Puṛam* : 13.
166 *Padiṛṛu* : 19.

A traditional part of a hero's military equipment was the heroic anklet. Kings as well as humble soldiers wore the anklet; and on it were blazoned the name and achievement of the wearer.

The equipment ancillary to the war weapons included the scabbard into which a spear or a lance or a sword is put; it was called *uṟai* or *puliuṟai*,[167] probably because that sheath was made of tiger-skin. The quiver in which the arrows are kept in readiness was called *ambaṟāttūṇi*, literally meaning the container in which there is a perennial supply of arrows.[168]

The conch was also used in the battle probably to rouse the martial spirit of the soldiers or was used as a whistle.[169] It is well know that the conch is deemed one of the five weapons of Tirumāl along with the mace, the disc, the sword and the bow. The blow of the conch and the beat of the drum generally accompanied each other. The wardrum played a conspicuous part in the battle. It was a coveted object of capture in the field and so was carefully protected. The royal umbrella and the drum were not to be yielded till the last. Capture of the drum was synonymous with victory.

V. R. Ramachandra Dikshitar is of the view that the boomerang was known to South India and is called *vaḷaitaṭi*.[170] It may be at once stated that literature does not support this view; popular usage means only 'a straight staff with a metallic band at one end of it'.

The Tamils whose system of warfare was fairly advanced equipped themselves with a variety of weapons, as we have seen. The weapons, were all made either by the blacksmith or by the cobbler. The smithy was fully engaged in making and repairing fresh and damaged weapons of war.[171] The weapons were stood in an armoury which was obviously a secure part of the palace. Toṇḍaimān of Kāñchi had an armoury which the poetess Auvai was shown round. The armoury was called *paḍaikkalak koṭṭil*. The weapons were all greased, garlanded, decorated with peacock plumes and kept in a well-guarded place.[172]

167 *Puṟam* : 323. 168 *Paḍiṟṟu* : 24. 169 *Kuṟun* : 15.
170 V. R. R. Dikshitar : *War in Ancient India*, p. 112.
171 *Puṟam* : 312. 172 *Puṟam* : 95.

There is no mention in *Saṅgam* literature of supernatural warfare or any mythical or legendary references to impossible warfare, the like of which we come across in the *Purāṇās* or the *Itihāsas*.

V. R. Ramachandra Dikshitar in his *Warfare in Ancient India* says that India knew and practised aeriel warfare aud so on.[173] He observes that, "It can be safely concluded that the weapons, guns and cannon were popular in India at the least from about the commencement of the Christian era". But it is notable that this conclusion is not borne out by a single piece of evidence from *Saṅgam* literature which belongs to the early centuries of the Christian era; unless, of course, we might be permitted to equate arson with *Āgnēyastra*, hurricanes with *Vāyu Astra*, and floods with *Varuṇa Astra*. Clearly Dikshitar has been drawing too liberally on his imagination.[174]

(c) THE WAGING OF WAR

The *Tolkāppiyam* devotes a whole chapter, *Puṟattiṇai Iyal* to an idealized account of war; and at length explains the causes, the course and the results of war. Though in certain places, it might appear as if the picture is thoroughly idealized, there is no reason to doubt that Tolkāppiyar only tries to exhaust in his narrative, all possible military situations known to him, and it is not necessary that all these situations should occur in the course of every war or battle. Tradition has it that Agastya the original and master grammarian had twelve disciples of whom Tolkāppiyar was one; these twelve disciples jointly wrote a treatise on war and it was called *Pannirupaḍalam* as it contained twelve chapters, each chapter contributed by one. That text is no longer extant. The earliest extant work on the subject is, therefore the chapter on war *(Puṟattiṇai Iyal)* in the *Tolkāppiyam*. The ideas contained in the *Puṟattiṇai Iyal* are elaborated and in certain respects modified by a later work

173 V. R. R. Dikshitar: *War in Ancient India*, Chap. VII.

174 Reckless rationalisation of this kind has made sound historical research a farce among Indian historians of ancient India.

called *Puṟapporuḷ Veṇbāmālai* by Aiyan Āridanār, a Chēra prince who is deemed to have taken the *Pannirupaḍalam* for model. As we are concerned here with the *Śaṅgam* view of military matters mainly, we shall now proceed to see what the *Tolkāppiyam* has to say on the matter.

The *Tolkāppiyam* describes a typical war as follows : There are five stages or situations in war : *Vetchi, Vañji, Uḻiñai, Tumbai, Vāhai.*[175]

1. *Vetchi*

The first is the initial situation of the invaders (desirous of conquering and annexing another king's territory) deciding among themselves on the auspicious and opportune moment for initiating 'aggression'. They begin by removing the cattle from the enemy land with the ostensible object of saving them. There are many details in this operation which are but routine and functional details not affecting the main task of cattle-lifting. The lifting of cattle is also a warning of an invasion that is to follow. *Tolkāppiyam* includes cattle-lifting and recovery of cattle under the same military situation called *Vetchi* and says that it was usual for cattle-lifters and recoverers of cattle to wear the vetchi flower (ixora coccinia) as an emblem indicating the task on which they were engaged. The men who went out to lift cattle stayed in a neighbouring place (*pākkam*) to ascertain the omens to know if success would attend their

175 The *P.V.M.* on the other hand, mentions seven Puṟattiṇais : Vetchi, Karandai, Vañji, Kāñji, Nochchi, Uḻiñai, Tumbai, Vāhai and Pāḍāṇ. Of these Kāñji dealing with the evanescence of The material world, and Pāḍāṇ concerned with the situation of the reward-seeking poet praising the philanthropist may be deemed unconnected with war; but still we have seven tiṇais in the *P. V. M.* instead of the five in the *Tolkāppiyam.* These seven are supposed to be the Puṟam Counterparts of the Aham (seven) tiṇais : Kuṟiñji, Mullai, Marudam. Neydal, Pālai, Peruntiṇai, Kaikkiḷai. Tolkāppiyar includes the Karandai in the Vetchi and the Nochchi in the Uḻiñai. To the *P. V. M.* Karandai is the recovery of the lifted cattle and Nochchi is the defence of one's fortress.

expedition. Some old women sacrificed paddy with flowers and water to Gods and awaited the omens. The flight of a bird (Kāri : the black bird) also was deemed an omen. When the warriors lifted the cattle they took care to take the calves also with them.

2. *Vañji*

Prompted by love of territory, the aggressive king (it is presumed that it is natural and proper for a king to be aggressive) invades another's territory. Nachchinārkkiniyar holds that the invaded territory is only no man's land.[176] But it might easily be the enemy's land also. Committing and resisting aggression are but two aspects of the same military situation and go by the name of *Vañji* for those invaders and defenders wear the flower *Vañji* (bassia malabarica) to indicate their task. This situation relates to an engagement on the plains.

3. *Uḻiñai*

If the invader, instead of having to attack the enemy forces in open battlefield, is obliged to besiege a fort (natural or artificial) the situation is *Uḻiñai*, for the besiegers as well as the beleaguered wear the flower *Uḻiñai* (cardiospernum halica cabum).

4. *Tumbai*

If the besieged are successful in compelling the besieger to lift the siege and retire, the successful parties wear the *Tumbai* flower (leucas aspera).

5. *Vāhai*

This consists in securing a victory in battle and is common to all military victories, whether secured by aggressors or defenders. The victors wear the *Vāhai* flower (albizzia lebbek).

These major situations involve a large number of detailed actions which are explained in the *Puṟattiṇai Iyal*. We may note the more important and interesting among them. In Vetchi the institution of hero stones is described in detail. In Vañchi, setting fire to enemy land and property as part of invasion tactics is

176 *Tol. Poruḷ* : 62, Nach. Com.

mentioned as *Eriparandeḍuttal* (the widespread arson). This was accompanied by cutting the tutelary tree of the enemy and making the invading elephants and horses drink water from the protected tanks of the defenders. The king used to invite his warriors to dinner before actual commencement of hostilities to establish personal contact with his men. The original practice of the king actually dining with his men seems to have later on degenerated into a mere formality of distributing food to the soldiers on battle eve. The king then presented many gifts to the bards and the warriors and weapons to his soldiers.

In *Uḻiñai*, an interesting situation is that before the fort has fallen, a king, persuming victory, distributes enemy property (not yet in his possession) to one's own friends. Nachchinārkkiniyar cites the example of Rāma's gift of Laṅka to Vibhīshaṇa before Rāvaṇa's defeat. In Tumbai, many situations arising out of confused and close combat are described. When the king is caught unassisted and is surrounded by the enemies, a great hero hurries to the rescue of the king and drives away those who had surrounded him. At times the weapons of war are found superfluous and so discarded and hand to hand fight is resorted to. Another military situation, viz., total destruction of both the leaders, is also mentioned.

In *Vāhai*, *Tolkāppiyam* mentions the virtues (and assignments in life) of the (1) Brahmins, (2) Kings, (3) other communities and (4) ascetics and sages, and ends by making mention of the renunciation of worldly pleasures by kings.

The *Puṟattiṇai Iyal* also mentions that wise men instruct the victorious king in the high philosophy of impermanence of material life, youth, beauty and wealth; this situation called *Kāñchi* helps to deflate an arrogant victor. The flower appropriate to the situation was *Kāñchi* (trewia nudiflora). The last situation which is the natural culmination, viz. praising the virtues or greatness of the victorious and good king is called *pādāṇ*.

All these situations except *pāḍāṇ* bear a floral designation, *Vetchi*, *Vañji*, *Tumbai*, *Uḻiñai*, *Vāgai* and *Kāñchi* being names of

flowers.[177] It is conventionally mentioned that the participants in war wore these flowers or had badges cut like these flowers according to the situation. It is also quite possible that it was not mere convention, but a living practice.

Actual conduct of war by the Tamils during the *Saṅgam* age was perhaps not much different from this idealized picture. The king, when he decided on a military expedition, sent his ambassador to collect warriors for the army; the members of the martial community quickly responded and collected in large numbers.[178] Before the armies marched out, it was customary to bring out the sword in a ceremonial procession after bathing it in the direction of the battlefield in advance on an auspicious day as a token of march towards the battlefield. This is called the ceremony of *nāḷkōḷ*.[179]

The soldiers were then assembled at the beat of a martial drum, *taṇṇumai* and were directed to wear the flowers and garlands appropriate to their leader and to the military situation;[180] the kings and the generals, wore golden flowers, perhaps, while they ordinary soldiers wore floral designs of inferior metal. The king generally affixed the flowers to the armour of the army commenders.[181]

The king and the soldiers then took terrible vows; one of the vows was to the effect that he would not taste food before victory was won.[182] Most soldiers took the vow that they would never run away from the battlefield.[183] Terrible were the oaths pronounced and the wagers laid on his occasion; the Pāṇḍyan king Neḍuñjeḻiyan swore an oath of heroism and victory

177 The victorious Europeans wore the 'laurels' (the foliate of the bay tree); the barons of medieval England wore the white and red rose during the 'Wars of the Roses'. In the combat between Vāli and Sugriva, the combatants wore distinguishing 'garlands'.

178 *Puṟam*: 284. 179 *Tol. Poruḷ*: 68.

180 *Puṟam*: 289. The war drum called *śeruppaṟai* played an important part in these preliminary arrangements; *Puṟam*: 279.

181 *Madurai*: 737, 738. 182 *Puṟam*: 304. 183 *Puṟam*: 295.

on the eve of the famous battle of Talaiyālaṅgānam.[184] The *Kuṛaḷ* mentions the usual expressions of heroism made by soldiers on such an occasion: "If you dare to oppose our leader, you will perish in battle and will soon be hero stones."[185] This was a simple and common threat. "To such heroes all those are wasted days on which they do not receive battle-wounds on face and chest,"[186] and "the heroic anklet was worn in vain by those who did not intend dying in the field of battle."[187]

The *Śilappadikāram* gives[188] a clear account of the initial stages in the military movement towards the scene of battle. When the king marched out it was usual for him to take a large retinue of personal attendants and entertainers with him. The bards, and the courtiers were always there. Dancers and clowns followed him. These elaborate preparations, however, relate only to ideal conditions or to major battles undertaken by the crowned monarchs. Senguṭṭuvan's retinue, according to the *Śilappadikāram*, included dancing girls: 102; instrumental musicians: 208; clowns: 100; his army was very large and included 100 chariots, 500 elephants, 10000 horses and 20000 luggage wagons; there were a thousand uniformed officers to attend to civilian duties connected with the military establishment. Iḷaṅgo who gives an account of the smaller units does not furnish an idea of the strength of the Infantry forces or the number of army commanders. The general idea conveyed by this picture of numbers of persons unconnected with martial activities as such accompanying the king to the battlefield reminds one of the condition of the Persian army during the pre-Alexandrian days. On the eve of the battle, a sacrifice was made. It is described as gruesome human sacrifice. What was in fact at the beginning a terrible reality might have later become a mere formality consisting of a nominal sacrifice still called by its old name. The army led by soldiers clad in white clothes then moved on to battle.[189]

184 *Puṟam*: 72. 185 *Kuṛaḷ*: 771. 186 *Kuṛaḷ*: 776.
187 *Kuṛaḷ*: 777. 188 *Śilap*: XXVI: 128 to 140. 189 *Puṟam*: 291.

The war could be concluded by forcing a defeat on the enemy in a pitched battle or by forcing the gates of the fort. The pitched battles took place on the plains; these plains were called *ahanāḍu*. Only artificial forts were built there; for the natural defences provided by forests and hills were not available there.[190]

The army on its way to the field of battle committed many acts of challenge. The elephants and horses were made to drink the water in the guarded or protected tanks; these animals bathed in and muddied the water of the tanks in enemy territory.[191] This act was always provocative and was also intended to be such. There would always be some difficulty in choosing a battlefield; though the choice of a favourable field is naturally treated as part of strategy, it is considered that beating the enemy on terrain favourable to and chosen by him is real victory.[192] Attacking the enemy army in pincer movement was not unknown. A significant passage in the *Maduraikkāñji* describes the worry of the army so surrounded.[193]

The actual battle was a most bloody affair if the account we find in *Kaḷavaḻi Nāṟpadu* is to be believed. The elephant corps and the infantry did the most of the 'killing'. The foot soldier cut off with the sword the trunk of the elephant; descriptions of the battlefield give a gruesome account of the creeping trunk of the elephant wallowing in the river of blood below.[194] At times the warriors fought so furiously and in such close combat that they confused their own men with the enemy's; this confusion of battle was called *paḍai maḍam* and *tamar piṟar aṟiyā amar*.[195] The soldiers fought

190 *Tol. Poruḷ*: 64, Nach. Com. 191 *Puṟam*: 15

192 *Kuṟaḷ*: 498, 499; *Puṟam*: 78. 193 *Madurai*: 402, 403.

194 *Puṟam*: 19. In battle each warrior had his turn for fighting; *Puṟam*: 292.

195 *Puram*: 294. *Maḍam* conventionally means 'indiscriminate', though it literally means 'ignorant'; the inference being that 'wisdom' consists in 'discrimination'.

with weapons or with bare hands.[196] When defeat became inevitable, the royal umbrella was lowered and defeat was accepted.[197]

The king and his army stayed in specially constructed camp houses called *paḍai vīḍu, ahalaṛai* or *pāśaṛai*.[198] A *pāśaṛai* was at times as large as a regular town with all comforts provided for the king; it was like an improvised town and so was called *kaṭṭūr* (a built town).[199] It was in a fortified and elevated place with a watch-tower provided;[200] and it was usual to hoist the royal umbrella on the top of the *pāśaṛai*.[201] The outer walls of this camp were made of burnt bricks.[202] In this *kaṭṭūr* in a separate place a large tent was pitched for royal use.[203] This tent was called *paḍaṅgu*.[204] During the nights beautiful young maidens wearing their bangles and their hair done well (and sporting the short sword in their belt) attended on the king and kept up the burning lamps by feeding oil through long pipes into them whenever the oil got exhausted. Even at the hour when the bell (announcing the hour of retirement for the day) had rung, the coated and turbaned body-guards of the king roamed about the place guarding him. They were incorruptible though they had tasted the sweet wine. The time-keepers praised the king and announced the time by watching the clepsydra. The tent had an inner apartment in which the king reclined; it was parted from the rest of the tent by means of curtains hung from strong ropes; and the place was well guarded by 'the speechless Yavanas of strong build and frightful look who spoke the gesture language'. There the king reclined but got no sleep for he was awaiting the next day's slaughter.[205]

196 *Paṭṭina*: 70, 71. 197 *Puṛam*: 387.
198 *Paṭṭina:* 237; *Tol. Poruḷ*: 41.
199 *Padiṛṛu* : 68. 200 *Madurai* : 231. 201 *Puṛam* : 294.
202 *Perumbāṇ* : 405. "சுடுமணைங்கிய நெடுநகர் வரைப்பு". *P. V. M:* 113; *Maṇi* : III: 127.
203 *Mullaip* : 43. 204 *Mullaip* : 37-40 Nach. Com.
205 *Mullaip* : 53-64.

The war rarely came to an end after a day's battle. It was prolonged for more than a day. After the day's battle was over, the contending armies retired for the night, and did not engage in nocturnal battles; at least we have no record to that effect. The king in his sympathy for his warriors often wished to inspect the wounded soldiers. Then the commander of the armies carrying the *vēl* (decorated in the same flowers as were worn by the king) took the king round and showed him the wounded soldiers one by one. The white pearled umbrella following, the king with a smiling face enquired kindly after the soldiers even if it be at midnight. The kind words of enquiry and comfort uttered by the king served as balm for the wounds of the soldiers.[206] After the conquest also, the king lay gratefully meditating in his tent upon the armies which led him to victory and those that fell in the field of battle to the last doing their duty. While the king was thus engaged it is quite probable that the soldiery was helping itself to enemy property at its free will. The towns had not a wink of sleep while the army was in the neighbourhood.

The Tamils of the *Saṅgam* age knew that a buffer state was a protective arrangement against even a powerful enemy. In the absence of such protective facilities, artificial defensive arrangements were resorted to. Thick and impassable forests of some depth were put up as natural defences. The protective jungle was called '*miḷai*',[207] and had a carefully built system of fences. It was a kind of minefield full of obstacles. The *miḷai* consisted of tall and thick trees, so thick that 'even rays of light could not penetrate them'. The fortress itself had another and a nearer line of defence called *iḷai*. Between

206 *Neḍunal* : 177–187; *Tol. Poruḷ* : 63. Nach. Com.

207 *Perumbāṇ* : 126. Though a distinction between *Miḷai* and *Iḷai* was known (*Śilap.* XIV : 62) at times it was overlooked as in *Śilap.* XIII : 183, *Śilap.* XII : 24.

208 *P. V. M*: 88, 89.

the *miḷai* and the *iḷai*, the moat or the *ahaḻi* was constructed;[209] it was also called *kiḍaṅgu*. The moat was very deep and there were crocodiles and it was not easy to cross it even by a boat. But invading armies had to cross the moat only by boats; and those boats had faces like a horse, an elephant, or a lion.

The fort was called *iñji*, *purisai* or *ahappā*. The *ahappā*, strictly speaking, was the inner circle of the fort wall. The ideal fort was a natural one made by cutting the side of mountains. In such cases, the area enclosed by the walls of the fort was very large; but on the plains, as that facility was absent, smaller forts were built and were called *kuṛumbu*. The walls of the fort were as tall as the waters of the moat were deep. They were built of burnt bricks and overcoated with reddish and sticky clay;[209a] and so they looked reddish and like copper sheets when the warm sun shone on them. Poets have likened the walls of the fort to 'walls of copper'.[210] But it was not as if those walls were actually made of copper. The diminutive battlement on the walls of the fort was called *ñāyil*.[211] The special apartments in the walls of the fort from where arrows were discharged to rain on enemy forces were called *ēppuḻai*.[212] There were posts for observation called *Pārvaḻirukkai*[213] from where the soldiers in the fort could follow the movements of the enemy troops. There were usually two rows of walls for the fort, the inner one being known as *uḷmadil*. On the top ramparts of the fort the flag waved. The fort was protected by double gates which were closed from opposite sides. They were fastened inside by means of a strong and long beam of wood called *eḻu* or *kaṇayam*. These gates were forced usually by throwing the elephants against them.[214] The fortress was guarded by foreigners especially Yavanas who were experts in gatekeeping.

209 *Puṛam*: 341.
210 *Puṛam*: 37.
211 *Puṛam*: 21
212 *P.V.M*: 86.
213 *Puṛam*: 3.
214 *Puṛam*: 14: 3.

Near the flag flying at the battlement, there were certain curiosities displayed. A variety of cotton ball, the like of which girls play with, and dolls were allowed to dangle atop the fortress gate to indicate that the invaders were but 'women' (meaning 'unfit for war') and had better take away those playthings if they needed them.[215]

This was high provocation. A variation of this practice is to allow an anklet and a bunch of green leaves to be left dangling at the entrance to the fort.[216] This practice reminds one of a tradition recorded by the Chinese Traveller, Hiuen Tsang: "Whenever a general is despatched on warlike expedition, although he be defeated, he is not subjected to bodily punishment but only compelled to exchange his dress for that of a woman, much to his shame."[217]

There were many defensive devices for the besieged. Usually the beleaguered permitted the invaders to approach the walls of the fort quite closely so that the defenders could use their weapons to the fullest advantage. Adihaimān Neḍumān Añji of Tahaḍūr is said to have adopted that course of action against the invading Chēra army.[218] The fortress was provided with strange weapons of attack and defence. The 'mechanical bow' showered arrows on the soldiers trying to scale the walls; the 'monkey device' bit off the heads of the soldiers who had approached too near; the 'sling' let down a volley of stones; vessels containing boiling liquids (including melted copper and iron) emptied their contents on the heads of the enemy forces; iron forks pushed the invaders away from the

215 *Tirumurugu*: 68. V. R. R. Dikshitar has translated the *Tirumurugu* passage as follows: "A practice of the Tamils was to erect images of women with balls in their hands at the entrance to the King's palace" (*War in Ancient India*, p. 387). This translation is not true to the original which means, "the balls and dolls were left dangling at the gates (of the fort) for no enemy dared to cut them off."

216 *Paḍiṟṟu*: 53.

217 Beal, *Life of Yuan Chwang*, IV, p. 147.

218 *Tol. Poruḷ*: 62. Nach. Com.

fort; the 'mace' was used for dashing out the brains of attacking warriors.[219]

If the fortress fell in spite of these devices, hard was the fate of the besieged. The invaders quickly distributed among themselves the enemy property in the fort.[220] This is attempted to be justified by the theory that the field of battle and all that is to be found on it belong to the victors.[221] The victorious army when it entered the enemy's town or fort removed his flags and hoisted its own there.[222] The victor usually impressed his own emblem on the fortress gates of the enemy, having removed from there the enemy's emblem. The victorious kings, then joined hands with the professional dancers and danced the *tuṇaṅgai* dance on the field of battle, and the common soldiers danced the frightful *kuravai* to celebrate the victory.[223] Māṇguḍi Kiḻār praising the martial exploits of Neḍuñjeḻian of Talayālaṅgānam fame mentions his performing a 'field sacrifice' (*Kaḷavēḷvi*). It was a post-battle sacrifice to wash off the sin of killing.[224] Nachchinārkkiniyar mentions the details of this *vēḷvi* saying that in a large oven supported by the heads of the fallen foes, a big vessel containing blood was placed, into which the mangled corpses were thrown and boiled and cooked, and then the contents of this cauldron were offered to propitiate the Goddess of War; and he explains its rationale by equating it with the *Poṅgal* offering; i. e. just as, after harvest, the fresh grains are made into cooked food and offered to the Gods of prosperity, the booty and the relics of the battlefield were offered to Koṟṟavai, the Goddess of War. Then the surviving elephants and horses captured in the

219 *Śilap*: XV : 207 to 217; *Puṟam:* 177.
220 *Madurai* : 220.
221 *Puṟam:* 62; *Śilap*. XXVIII: 104; *Kali:* 86: 13,14.
222 *Kali*: 31: 24, 25. 223 *Paḍiṟṟu*: 57.
224 *Puṟam* : 372. A vēḷir girl who had not begotten a child was exclusively entitled to cook this gruesome broth : *Tol. Puṟat*. 21 Nach. com.

field were distributed among the bards and others. We come across instances of sacrifice in the battlefield elsewhere also, but it is usual for such sacrifices to be performed before the commencement of battle but in *Śaṅgam* literature it is mentioned as being performed at the end.

Setting fire to the enemy's land was very common and finds proud mention in the many laudatory poems of the *Śaṅgam* anthologies.[225] Whole villages were set fire to indiscriminately and the tongues of fire that shot up and the smoke that spread are designated *aḍā aḍu puhai*, 'the smoke that is not caused by cooking'.[226] The conqueror never stopped till he had completely routed the opposing hordes; his wrath was not subdued till he destroyed the enemy's city by arson.

The *Maduraikkāñji* speaks of the country-side being destroyed by fire;[227] even cultivated land and standing crops did not escape his malicious notice. The poet Karuṅkuḻalādanār praises Karikāl Chōḻa in the following terms: "You love to loot the enemy's country in the light of the conflagration started by you. As a result of your looting, the enemy's land is relieved of all good things".[228] If this were true, it indicates utter lack of humanity and consideration on the part of Saṅgam warriors and the cruelty and callousness that characterized their military tradition. It must be noted that if the kings did not relish this kind of activity the poets would not have praised them in those terms. The enemy's town was systematically looted;[229] and his land was distributed among the elders of his family by the conquering king.[230] After the initial destruction some kings reclaimed the land and regranted it to the old residents of the place, who were after all the rightful owners of that property.[231] The conquering king did not lack sycophants who praised his heroic deeds; they were a special class of bards, courtiers, called *Ahavalar* — so called because they *addressed* the king and praised his exploits; they were

225 *Kali*: 13: 1 and 2. 226 *Paḍiṟṟu*: 20.
227 *Madurai*: 126, 692. 228 *Puṟam*: 7. 229 *Paḍiṟṟu*: 49.
230 *Paḍiṟṟu*: III *Ten-Paḍiham*. 231 *Paḍiṟṟu*: 69.

rewarded with horses.[232] The defeated enemies, too, were much to their shame and chagrin compelled to sing the praise of the victor and to obey his behests.[233]

The brave warriors who had secured the victory for the king were appropriately rewarded; the king reviewed and rewarded the army;[234] the sweet wine *Kandāram* was reserved for their use.[235] The loot in the enemy's territory was distributed among the soldiers; the enrichment of the king's followers was naturally in direct proportion to the impoverishment of the enemy.[236] The victorious soldiers were rewarded with 'golden flowers' (the flowers that never fade) by the king. Tax-free lands were distributed to heroes.[237]

A strange practice is mentioned in connection with post-battle treatment of the enemy's land. The victor ordered his men to plough that land with a team of donkeys and sow white millets and horsegram there.[238] "The destruction effected was so complete that the land which the war horse trod upon never more could be ploughed; the land trampled upon by the elephants lost all fertility; the land ploughed by the donkey needed no protection any longer; bandits flourished there and arson was widespread".[239] The drinking water in the tanks was defiled by the war elephants and the horses.[240]

232 *Paḍiṟṟu* : 43.

233 *Madurai* : 72; the laudatory poems which the three crowned monarchs of Tamiḻaham were said to have sung in praise of the Kalabhra aggressor are quite in keeping with this tradition – *vide Tamil Nāvalar Charitai*.

234 *Aham* : 127. 235 *Puṟam* : 258.

236 *Puṟam* : 12. 237 *Puṟam* : 297.

238 *Puṟam* : 15, 392. *P.V.M.* : 120; *Śilap* : XXVII : 225, 226. Scipio Africanus who at the end of the third Punic War, ordered not only the destruction of Carthage but also ordered the site where the great city stood to be thoroughly ploughed up, reminds one of this practice. Probably this ancient Tamilian practice had something to do with this perpetration at Carthage which could have been a Phoenician practice and so traceable to eastern Mediterranean Proto-historic times.

239 *Paḍiṟṟu* : 25. 240 *Puṟam* : 15.

The tutelary tree of the enemy which was held sacred by him was cut off as an insult to the vanquished and as an indication of victory. Śeṅguṭṭuvan destroyed Paḻayan's *vēmbu* (Margosa) tree and "transported it in a huge vehicle drawn by elephants which were yoked to the carriage by strong ropes made of the twisted hair of the women of the enemy land".[241] Kaḻaṅgāikkaṇṇi Nārmuḍi Chēral defeated the chieftain Nannan (the ruler of Pūḻi land) and cut down his *vāhai* (albizzia lebbek) tree.[242] The tutelary tree was felled by applying the axe (*naviyam*) to the root of the tree.[243]

The victorious king tied his elephant to the stump in the *Podiyil* or the common meeting place of the town. The king drove his chariot and horses right through the rich cornfields.[244] Pāṇḍyan Palyāgaśalai Mudukuḍumi Peruvaḻudi is praised in two poems by Neṭṭimaiyār who draws a gruesome picture of the horrors perpetrated by that king in the field of battle.[245] Though the poems are intended to be laudatory the poet plainly hints at the king's excesses and the *Puṟam* (15) pointedly asks whether the lands he had destroyed were more numerous, or the sacrificial halls he had built were more numerous. It seems that the pious king famous for the many sacrificial halls he had built, also had performed many a *kaḻavēḻvi*. The inference is that men famed for their religious bent can be extremely cruel also. But it is possible to suppose that *Mudukuḍumi* built the sacrificial halls in the evening of his life to atone for the military excesses committed in the forenoon of his illustrious career, just as Choḻan Śeṅgaṇān is reported to have done[246] or as Aśoka is known to have done. Iḷaṅgo gives us a hint in this connnection. Māḍalan, the respected Brahmin addressing Śeṅguṭṭuvan who had returned from a victorious North Indian campaign, admonished him for not having stopped *maṟakkaḻa vēḻvis* (sacrifices of the battlefield) and for not

241 *Padiṟṟu*: V: Ten-*Padiham*. 242 *Padiṟṟu*: IV: Ten-*Padiham*.
243 *Puṟam*: 23. 244 *Puṟam*: 15.
245 *Puṟam*: 12, 15.
246 *Tiruttoṇḍar Purāṇam*: *Kōchcheṅgaṭ Chōḻa Nāyanār Purāṇam*.

having begun the *aṟakkaḷa vēḷvis* (the vēdic sacrifices of the sacrificial hall) even after he had ruled for fifty years. The four achievements of the Pāṇḍyan Neḍuñjeliyan were (1) his elephants had muddied and defiled the sources of drinking water of the enemy; (2) having consumed food from the rich fields full of green vegetation, he had destroyed the rest which might be useful to the enemies (the real owners of the field); (3) the surrounding garden in which the tutelary tree stood suffered terribly from the axe; (4) extensive territories were set fire to; and the huge conflagration mocked the small fires in the domestic kitchen.

As if the horrible list is not enough, the poet ominously adds that the king is capable of "these and many other such things". Appropriately enough, the king was styled "He that had the strength of the destroying Kāladēva".[247] Such harassment of the enemy's land led to continuous woes and wailing; that land was like a 'motherless child".[248]

Little mercy was shown to the prisoners of war, especially the leaders, though Śeṅguṭṭuvan seems to have released his north Indian royal prisoners. But he had subjected them (Kanaka and Vijaya) to considerable humiliation earlier compelling them to carry stones.[249] Imayavaramban Neḍuñjēralādan who conquered the Yavanas 'bound their hands behind them and poured *Ney* (clarified butter) on their head and walked them along".[250]

Chēran Poṛaiyan[251] who defeated the chieftain Mūvan pulled out his 'hard and pointed teeth and planted them in the fortress gates of the port of Toṇḍi.[252] Even kings were taken captive, occasionally, as is evidenced by the capture of 'Yānaikkaṭ chēy Māndaran Chēral Irumpoṛai' by Neduñjeḻian; and the capture of Kaṇaikkāl Iṛumpoṛai by Chōḻan Śeṅgaṇān Women too were taken prisoners and made part of the victor's domestic establish-

247 *Puṛam*: 23. "கால முன்ப." 248 *Puṛam*: 4.

249 *Śilap*: XXVII: 50, 51. 250 *Padiṛṛu*: II Ten-*Padiham*.

251 Pinnattūr Narayanaswami Iyer, the editor and annotator of *Naṛṛiṇai* holds that this Chēran Poṛaiyan is the same as the Chēran Kaṇaikkāl Irumpoṛai.

252 *Naṛṛiṇai*: 18.

ment. These prisoners bathed in the tanks and lighted a perpetual lamp in the *podiyil* and prayed to God probably to secure their own deliverance and to save the souls of their dead husbands.[253]

The sense of vanity of the victor induced him to inflict a variety of studied humiliations on the helpless and defeated enemy: (1) the crown of the defeated kings furnished the gold for the anklet of the victor;[254] (2) the handle of the enemy'e royal umbrella was soon converted into the *Talaikkōl* of the dancers in the victor's land;[255] (3) the wood in the enemy's tutelary tree was the raw material for a fresh war drum to be made for the victor.[256] These humiliations no doubt laid the foundation for further wars.

It is mentioned that after the victorious returned from the field the sword (to which the king owed his victory) was bathed and garlanded in a purificatory ceremony called *vāḷ maṅgalam*. There is mention in the *Puṟanānūṟu*[257] of the ceremony being gone through in respect of the spear (*vēl*) also.[258]

It happened once in a way that the kings stayed in the conquered territory for some time trying to reclaim and reform the land largely destroyed by the war.[259]

The above account ought to make it fairly clear that the military expedition of an ambitious king was a vast game of destruction and humiliation and proud celebration of victory.

The *Saṅgam* Tamils took a fairly simple, straight or unsophisticated view of war; they delighted in it and waged it fully. They believed that war was (*a*) prescribed practice for

253 *Paṭṭina*: 246 to 249. Nachchinārkkiniyar commenting on this passage says that this practice of compelling female prisoners of war to do service at the Podiyil was indulged in because it was felt that it would add to the glory of the king!

254 *Puṟam*: 40. 255 *Silap*: III: 114, 115.

256 *Padiṟṟu*: 43. For continuation of this practice of humiliating the captured enemy, see K. A. N. : *Colas*, p. 254.

257 *Tol. Poruḷ*: 91. 258 *Puṟam*: 332.

259 *Kali*: 26; Nach. Com.

the kings, *(b)* necessary to enable them to augment the royal domains, *(c)* necessary to introduce good government according to their lights, on territories not so well governed, and that it was waged, *(d)* to earn fame, glory and in the alternative heavenly bliss. The idea that it might be wrong to wage war or that war might be superseded by conference did not occur to them. They raised war, like any other activity in life, to its proper religious level and had a goddess of war *Koṟṟavai*. They worshipped that goddess and when they had waged a war they felt that they had discharged a noble duty.

3. *Some Celebrated Battles*

There is mention of certain very important battles fought during the *Saṅgam* age. These battles must have been momentous and led to certain political changes in the land; but we hear of little more than the names of certain battles, while in certain other cases we are told about the participants in the war and the circumstances leading to it also.

One of the earliest battles mentioned[260] is the one between the Chēra king Kuḍakkō Neḍuñjēral Ādan[261] and the Chōḻa king Vēṟpahṟaḍakkai Peru Viṟaṟkiḷḷi.[262] In this battle, the armies on both sides are reported to have perished leaving the two kings alone on the field; the kings then decided to fight it out between themselves and in a bloody personal combat they killed each other; so that there was none to claim victory in the field of battle. This battle is an early indication of Chēra-Chōḻa feuds and is described by the poet Kaḻāttalaiyār an eyewitness.

Karikālan, the most renowned among the early Chōḻas is reported[263] to have fought a great battle at Veṇṇi or Veṇṇil. The Chēra king Peruñjēral Ādan who was then fought by

260 *Puṟam:* 62.

261 Meaning: The 'Great Chēra Ādan, King of the Westerners'.

262 Meaning: 'He that is famous for great victories won by the strong hand of many lances.'

263 *Puṟam:* 65.

Karikālan must have been an elder member of the Chēra family during the reign period of Imayavaramban Neḍuñjeralādan or must have been a predecessor of his. In the ensuing battle at Veṇṇi,[264] a Pāṅḍyan prince also participated,[265] but Karikālan won a complete victory; we do not know what happened to the Pāṇḍyan king or to the eleven Vēḷirs who were his allies against Karikālan.[266] But the Chēra ruler Peruñjēral Ādan sustained a wound on his back and so was smitten with shame; he decided to end his life by starving himself to death. Kaḷāttalaiyār, and a native poetess of Veṇṇi[267] have mentioned this battle. The Chēra, it seems, did not admit defeat or run away from the field of battle but accidentally sustained a wound on the back; it was believed that even such an accidental wound on the back or the wound caused by a transfixing lance must be deemed to be a matter of great shame. The Kuyattiyār of Veṇṇi praised this defeated Chēra who set such a value on houour as a really greater hero than the victor himself.[268] After this decisive defeat was inflicted on his enemies Karikālan must have felt free to embark on the great constructive activities for which he is rightly famous.

On another occasion at a place called *Vāhai*[269] the fearful presence of Karikālan's army seems to have driven nine minor princes from the field of battle in which they had planned to fight him.[270]

A fierce battle between Miñili[271] and Āy Eyinan is described by Paraṇar in more than one place in *Ahanānūṟu*. The provocation happened thus. Nannan, ruler of Koṅkānam invaded Punnādu in the West Coast. Āy Eyinan promised to

264 This place has been identified with Kōvil Veṇṇi, a village fifteen miles to the east of Tanjore.

265 *Puṟam:* 143 to 148. 266 *Aham*: 246.

267 *Veṇṇi Kuyattiyār*, meaning a potter woman of *Veṇṇi*.

268 *Puṟam*: 66.

269 *Vāhai Paṟandalai*: ''வாகைப்பறந்தலை''. : the battlefield of Vāhai.

270 *Aham*: 125. 271 '*Nimili*' is a corruption of this word.

help and protect the land so invaded; Nannan was assisted by his friend Miñili. The battle was fought in the field of Pāḻi.[272] Āy is said to have employed war horses of great speed and Miñili employed many a tall chariot. It was a fierce battle in which after most of the warriors on either side had been killed, Āy also perished. This Eyinan was a great lover and protector of birds,[273] and when he fell the birds wheeled in the sky with their wings widespread and protected him from the heat of the sun.[274]

Kaḻaṅgāikkaṇṇi Nārmuḍi Chēral invaded the Pūḻi land of Nannan, defeated him in battle, cut at the root the Kaḍambu tree which was his *kāval maram* and had it dragged along by wounded elephants. He is said to have stayed in the conquered country to establish law and order there, for he must have felt that prior to the invasion, that country was despotically ruled by Nannan; it is possible that this feeling was the provocation for this battle.

Seṅguṭṭuvan's war against Paḻayan is an example of a terrible and cruel war. Probably he was a descendant of the Paḻayan of Mohūr mentioned in *Ahanānūṟu*.[275] Paḻayan was defeated, and probably killed; his *kāval maram*, the margosa tree was cut at the root and placed in a cart drawn by elephants harnessed to the carriage by ropes made of the twisted hair shorn from the head of the women-folk of Paḻayan's land. On another occassion he is said to have defeated a confederacy of nine members of the Chāḻa royal family in the battle of Nēri Vāyil.[276]

One of the most famous battles fought during the *Saṅgam* age was perhaps the siege and reduction of the Tahadūr fort[277] by Peruñjēral Irumpṟoai and the consequent defeat of Adihaimān. Adihaimān was a famous hero who sent Auvai on an embassy to the court of the Toṇḍaimān at Kāñchi; he achieved a distin-

272 *Aham*: 396; "பாழிப்பறந்தலை".

273 *Aham*: 142, 181; he probably managed a bird sanctuary.

274 *Aham*: 208; the Poet's fancy must have mixed up the two facts of Eyinan's love for birds and the vultures hovering in the sky in expectation of a feed in the field of battle.

275 *Aham*: 251.

276 *Silap*: XXVIII: 117.

277 Dharmapuri, Salem District.

guished victory over the chief of Kōvalūr and was praised by Paraṇar therefor. He is reported to have once conquered seven chieftains. But such a hero was helpless against the determined and planned attack of Peruñjēral Irumpoṛai. The military march of the Chēra army from the Chēra capital of Vañji to Tahadūr and the actual battle are said to be recounted in detail in a martial epic called *Tahadūr Yāttirai*.[278] When Peruñjēral Irumpoṛai attacked Tahadūr it is said that Adihaimān did not come out of the fort into the open to fight the invader. Probably he was heavily outnumbered. Peruñjēral Irumpoṛai has often been praised for this rare exploit.

Neḍuñjeḻian, the young Pāṇḍyan prince who won a coalition of enemies in the famous field of Talayālaṅgānam has earned great glory on that account. His exploits have been extolled in the *Maduraikkāñji*.[279] When he ascended the throne at an early age the neighbouring rulers and their friends thought that it was an excellent opportunity for them to conquer the Pāṇḍya land and they actually invaded his territories. But the young king was more than a match for them. He was determined to hit back; and before he started he swore a terrible oath; he drove his enemies out of the Pāṇḍya land and engaged them in battle at Talayālaṅgānam[280] in the Chōḻa land. He engaged, in addition to the Chēra and Chōḻa kings five minor princes: Titiyan, Eḻini, Erumai ūran, Iruṅgō Vēṅmān and Porunan. This coalition sustained a heavy defeat in the battle. The Pāṇḍya king took the Chēra Yānaikkaṭ Chēy Māndaran Chēral Irumpoṛai a captive and imprisoned him. This great victory led to Neḍuñjeḻian's general ascendancy over Tamiḻaham. He annexed to his

278 The scope and size of this work are not clearly known as the entire work (but for some stanzas here and there) is lost. This was composed by Ponmuḍiyār, Ariśil Kiḻār and a few others, who were surely contemporaries of the events mentioned therein.

279 *Vide* also *Puṛam*: 19; *Aham*: 36, 175, 209.

280 Identified with a village of almost the same name: தலையாலங்காடு (Taḻaiyālaṅgāḍu), eight miles to the North-west of Tiruvārūr.

kingdom the Miḻalaikkūṟṟam of Vēḷ Evvi and the Muttūr Kūṟṟam of the older Vēḷs.

Ugra Peruvaḻudi was the famous Pāṇḍya king who directed the collection of the 400 longer Aham Poems into an anthology called *Ahanānūṟu* or *Neḍuntogai*. He waged a great war against Vēṅgai Mārban of Kānappēr Eyil[281] which was a main fortress surrounded by a large number of smaller forts.[282] "His victory was so decisive that Vēṅgai Mārban lost all hope of recovering the fortress even as the blacksmith who pours water into the red-hot iron wheel cannot recover that water".[283]

Another great battle which finds exhaustive mention was the one fought between the Chōḻa king Śeṅgaṇāṇ[284] and the Chēra king Kaṇaikkāl Irumpoṟai. It seems from the colophon to stanza 74 of *Puṟanānūṟu* that in that battle Kaṇaikkāl Irumpoṟai was taken prisoner, and perhaps put in chains.[285] He was then thrown into the prison house at Kuḍavāyil by the victorious Chōḻa. The sequel is interesting. The Chēra king was rather ill treated by the prison-guards who delayed giving the royal prisoner even water to drink. Unable to bear this dishonour the Chēra refused the water supplied late and fainted away.[286] It is learnt that Poygaiyār, a poet from Toṇḍi patronised by the Chēra Kaṇaikkāl Irumpoṟai praised Chōḻan Śeṅgaṇāṇ and his victory over the Chēra describing the battle field in gruesome detail; the flattered Chōḻa released the Chēra who then regained his throne.[287] The *Kaḷavaḻi Nāṟpadu* gives a most graphic picture of the destruction on this field of battle.

281 Identified with Kāḷa'yār Kōvil in the Ramanathapuram District.

282 *Puṟam* : 21. 283 *Puṟam* : 21.

284 Tradition has it that this *Śeṅganān* is the same as Kōchcheṅgaṭ Chōḻa Nāyanār mentioned in *Tiruttoṇḍar Purāṇam*.

285 The expression *Paṟṟukkōṭpaṭṭu* suggests this possibility.

286 *Puṟam* : 74.

287 *Vide* the concluding sentence written at the end of the last stanza of Kaḷavaḻi Nāṟpadu and the reference in Tamiḻ Nāvalar Charitai.

This great battle was fought at Kaḻumalam,[288] a town in the Chēra country.[289] *Aham*–44 gives us a clue as to why this battle of Kaḻumalam was fought. It would appear that Paḻayan, a Chōḻa feudatory fought Nannan, a Chēra feudatory and after destroying the enemy's military camps was himself killed. The Chōḻa king wanting to wreak vengeance on the Chēra forces fought the Kaḻumalam battle successfully and took the enemy king captive. As it is clear that this momentous battle was fought only at *Kaḻumalam* the expression *Pōrppuram* used in the colophon under *Puṟaṇānūṟu* (74) merely means 'the battlefield'; later the honorific suffix *Tiru* was added to it by those who thought that *Pōrppuram* referred to a town.

It is not as if the Tamil kings fought their battles only within Tamiḻaham. They were occasionly involved in war against aggressive neighbours in the North, especially the Vaḍugars. If there is a substratum of history in the Ceylon Chronicles it would appear as if the Chōḻas were engaged in military operations in that island also. Karikālan, Āriyappaḍai Kaḍanda Neḍuñjeḻian, and Śeṇguṭṭuvan are said to have gone beyond Tamiḻaham into the North to defeat their Āryan foes. Imaya Varamban Neḍuñjēral Ādan once conquered the Yavana colonists and treated them cruelly. Śeṅguṭṭuvan is said to have fought and won a naval battle against those of the Kaḍambu totem. These vanquished Kaḍambus were perhaps pirates on the open sea obstructing lucrative commercial traffic between Rome, Egypt and Tamiḻaham.

The Chōḻa 'Pōr(a)vaikkōpperunaṟkkiḷḷi' was the son of Chōḻa Tittan of Uṟaiyūr. Once this Pōr(a)vaikkō quarrelled with his father (for what reason is not clear) and proceeded to fight a great wrestler 'Mukkāval Nāṭṭu Āmūr Mallan'[290]. Though it is possible to believe that it was only a wrestling arena, in which these two combatants met for a trial of strength there

288 *Aham* : 44.
289 *Aham* : 270; ''நற்றேர்க் குட்டுவன் கழுமலம்''
290 *Puṟam* : 80.

is no reason to say so definitely. Anyhow in that field a personal combat between Pōr(a)vaikkō and Mallan occurred. Pōr(a)vaikkō put his foot on Mallan's chest and so bent him that Mallan's neck and legs were broken in two.

Then Sāttantai the poet remarks: "whether Tittan-Pōr(a) vaikko's father—be friendly to him or not, let him come and see his victory over the 'invincible' Mallan". The implication is that if Tittan was friendly to his son he would be happy at his son's victory; if not he would be frightened by his son's valour. This contest means that personal combats between leaders of the armies were not uncommon. Iḷampūraṇar and Nechchinārkkiniyar show this instance, however, as an example of victory in a wrestling match, 'Mal Veṉṟi'[291] and nothing more.

A few famous sieges are frequently mentioned in *Puṟanānūṟu*; Uṟaiyūr which was once besieged by Chōḻa Neḍuṅkiḷḷi, was defended by Nalaṅkiḷḷi a scion of the same Chōḻa family. The besieged would not come out and fight bravely. Kōvūrkkiḻār the kindly poet anxious to end a fratricidal war addressed the[292] besieging king and the beleaguered king and asked them to end the hostilities for it would be a veritable shame on their ancient house to indulge in such a war. Quite possibly the poet's words were wasted on the warlike princes. Again at Āvūr Neḍuṅkiḷḷi was besieged by the same Nalaṅkiḷḷi and the same Kōvūrkkiḻār addressing Neḍuṅkiḷḷi advised[293] him either to come out and bravely fight and die like a valiant warrior or like a prudent prince open the gates of the fort to the superior enemy. In a third battle at Kāriyāṟu, Neḍuṅkiḷḷi was killed in battle. That event gave that prince the title 'Kāriyāṟṟuttuñjiya Neḍuṅkiḷḷi' (he that perished at Kāriyāṟu). Nalaṅkiḷḷi however led a successful military career. Once he defeated, the Pāṇḍya king or his chieftains and destroyed seven forts there and inscribed the tiger emblem on the gates of the forts there. This place has been identified with Eḻupon Kōṭṭai or Eḻuman

291 *Tol. Poruḷ:* 71. Iḷam. Com.; *Tol. Poruḷ* Nach. Com. 75.
292 *Puṟam*: 45. 293 *Puṟam*: 44.

Kōṭṭai in the Ramanathapuram District. This brilliant king's later days were spent in peaceful and humanitarian activities; the need for changing his martial ways to more peaceful ones was impressed upon him by the great poet of Uṟaiyūr—Mudukaṇṇan Śāttanār.[294]

The siege of Pāri's Parambu by the combined forces of the Chēras, the Chòḷas and the Pāṇḍyas is a classic example of great heroism, dark treachery, and unstinted loyalty. The best of Tamil virtues and the darkest of their vices are alike brought out in this war. Pāri's Parambu land consisted of the Parambu hill and three hundred adjoining villages;[295] which had all on several occasions been gifted away to his poets and bards; the three crowned monarchs of Tamiḻaham had individually asked for the hand of Pāri's daughters which request Pāri proudly declined. The angry monarchs then besieged his hill; the number of elephants and chariots they deployed on this occasion was such that each big tree in the surrounding gardens had an elephant tied up to it. But they found it difficult to reduce Pāri's Parambu. Kapilar the famous poet an intimate friend and court poet of Pāri told the invading monarchs that they could not conquer the Parambu land in straight and honest battle; there was only one way of doing it and that was to go and beg it of him. This arrogant advice must have greatly put out the aggressive monarchs. Kapilar organised the defences of the Parambu and ensured in a strange manner a steady supply of food for the inhabitants of the Parambu. He had trained a large number of parrots and other birds to fly out to the rice fields in the morning and return to the fort later in the day with ears of paddy. This way food reached the inmates of the fort from outside though the fort itself was heavily besieged.[296] After a prolonged siege, it is said, the invading monarchs reduced the fort having brought about the death of Pāri in a treacherous way; how exactly it was achieved

294 *Puṟam:* 27 to 30. 295 *Puṟam:* 110.
296 *Aham*; 78, 303.

is not known. Perhaps the besieging monarchs took Kapilar's advice. But Pāri died, the Parambu fell and the monarchs took possession of it. Kapilar led Pāri's daughters out of the Parambu to safer places. It seems this was the only occasion on which the three crowned monarchs of Tamiḻaham among themselves agreed to attack a common enemy.

Pliny was aware of the great dangers involved in the maritime trade which India and Rome were developing then. The Arabian sea and especially the South Indian coastal area was infested with pirates and the western merchants thought that it was necessary for them to take precautions to protect their crew and cargo. Pliny (whose book on geography was published in A D. 77) remarks: "At the present day voyages are made to India every year, and companies of archers are carried on board, because the Indian seas are infested by pirates." Later, elsewhere he says, "Muziris is not a desirable place of call, pirates being in the neighbourhood who occupy a place called Nitrias; and besides it is not well supplied with wares for traffic." The Peutingerian Tables (which were composed in A.D. 222) state that the Romans maintained two cohorts at Muziris for the protection of Roman commerce. These references make it fairly clear that during the first few centuries of the Christian era the western coast of India was undoubtedly infested with pirates. There is no reason to suppose that at any time later until modern times piracy completely vanished. Seṅguṭṭuvan's naval adventure therefore must have been a war against these pirates who might have included a large number of the Kaḍambus who are mentioned as one of the four martial tribes by Māṅguḍi Kiḻar.[297]

297 *Puṟam*: 335.

CHAPTER VII

LAW AND JUSTICE

1. *Introductory*

THE CONCEPT of law and the institutions and administration of justice in the *Saṅgam* age were quite naturally and widely different from our present day ideas about them. Oriental ideas of law and justice have evolved on mostly different lines from western ideas due to historical reasons; but it is not impossible to find occasionally some resemblance between them. Still Natural Law, Customary Law, Common Law, Statute Law, International Law are all terms which go back either to Roman history or to Anglo-Saxon history and have very little to do with the history of any part of India of the past. This is to a large extent due to the peculiar social organization in India which made Indian political institutions very different from their opposite numbers elsewhere.

In ancient India, 'law' was not 'made' except in so far as the notions of 'right' and 'wrong', (deeply rooted in society and usually traced back to certain sacred texts known to the Sanskritists as the *Dharmaśāstrās* and to the Tamils as *Nūl)* were *interpreted*, and interpretation naturally and in course of time changed the content of these notions; otherwise no 'legislation' (i. e. 'making or unmaking of laws') was known or permitted. A certain rigidity in these matters was unavoidable in view of the peculiar social organization based upon caste and all that meant. Priviliges and obligations were recognised and expressed, and were expected to be assured or enforced by the king whose manifest duty it was to maintain the social order intact. All law consisted in such maintenance of the long established status; any attempt to subvert the 'prescribed' social order was a fundamental crime; and deserved the highest punishment while other crimes passed unnoticed or escaped with a nominal penalty. As the king was the person likely to be most affected by any subversion of the social order, he

naturally took care to see that nothing of that kind happened. Armed with the sacred authority of the unwritten law of the land and with the physical force of the army the king maintained 'law' and 'order' in his kingdom, gracefully if possible and despotically if necessary,

To those who are accustomed to contemplating the virtues of an egalitarian social order the legal situations of a society, based on differences and ordered to be perpetuated by 'caste' (*Jāti*) as well as 'stages' in life (*Āśrama*) might appear to be quaint if not unjust and cruel. But dogmas will not help in these matters. The legal institutions of the ancient Tamil world are to be understood from the angle relevant to them.

The king was the repository of all secular power and he was, therefore, the source of justice. He meted out justice with the help of such men as he thought fit for the job. Apparently there were law-courts in the urban and in the rural areas; the king in the capital town or his agents elsewhere presided over these courts. complaints were heard and enquired into and cases were decided; There was litigation and the litigants resorted to these courts. Orders of punishments or acquittals based upon these decisions were carried out; and the *Śaṅgam* Tamils had most of the simpler paraphernalia required to maintain a judicial system. In fact, as J. B. Bury said in another context, 'the justice which the king administered was really arbitration'

It may be at once stated here that ideas of any kind of international law were unknown to them unless, of course, we include mere trade and warfare in international *political* relationship; i.e., philosophy of foreign relationship based on the art of diplomacy was unknown. The *Śaṅgam* Tamils, as is well known, plied an extensive trade with foreign countries and quite often waged war with their northern neighbours,[1] the chieftains in the neighbouring islands,[2] or with the colonising Europeans[3] as well as among themselves.[4] No commonly accepted rules of international

1 *Paṭṭina* : 276, "வடவர் வாட". 2 *Śilap* : XXVIII : 135.
3 *Padiṟṟu* : II Ten-*Padiham*. 4 *Puṟam* : 36, 44, 45, 62, etc.

behaviour restrained them in their military excesses except such rules as each belligerent chose to lay down for himself. Free movement of subjects from domain to domain seems to have been automatically permissible, so that international problems like citizenship rights never arose. The sending out of embassies[5] was an international act but that had not then the same significance as it has to-day for permanent embassies were unknown then. While abundant information about wars reaches us through the *Śaṅgam* poems and epics, we hear nothing at all about any treaties being drawn up or agreements made; but we do hear of the simple practice of imposing heavy war-indemnities, personal and humiliating punishments on defeated foes, tributes being extracted and territory being annexed or restored. We have the strange instance of a Chōḷa king defeating a feudatory of his (for his failure to accompany the king on a hunting expedition), pulling out his teeth and planting them in a castle gate at a place called Veṇmani;[6] defeated foes — erst-while rulers in a foreign land — were treated with disgusting cruelty;[7] so from the available information, it is impossible to infer that the Tamil kingdoms of the *Śaṅgam* age felt the necessity for *'the institution of a well organised foreign office'*.[8]

While the financial arrangements provided for the collection of tolls and customs duties, we do not know on what basis the duties were assessed; and whether tolls were collected only when merchandise crossed the boundary line of one kingdom into that of another or if they were levied on a different basis.

As for municipal law, these were but the royal proclamations made public by beat of drum; the proclamations announced the wishes and intentions of the king. Consequences of the resistance to royal authority were so severe, that order and discipline enforced themselves easily.

5 e.g. the Pāṇḍyan embassies to Augustus; or the function of *Dūtar* as described in *Kuṛaḷ*, Chap. 69. 6 *Aham:* 211.

7 *Paḍiṯṯu*: II—Ten-*Paḍiham*; *Śilap*: XXVII: 4.

8 V. R. R. Dikshitar; *Studies*, p. 248 — Italics mine.

2. *The Court of Justice*

There was a court of justice. In the capital town it was the *avai*[9] and in the villages the *manṟam*[10] served as the public place where simple justice was meted out. We have no evidence to show that "there were special officers appointed to perform the duties of judges and magistrates."[11] It seems that the courtyard of the palace where the king's official court (what may be called the '*durbār* hall" or the 'hall of audience') met, served also as a court of justice. The entrance to the palace was the entrance to the court also; and at the entrance to the palace there was the bell of justice. Much is heard of this bell. The account of Manu Niti Kaṇḍa Chōḷan who found his son guilty of calf-slaughter and sentenced him to death, had such a bell hung at the entrance to his palace; the prosecuting cow rang the bell of justice and apprised the king of his son's guilt.[12] Kōpperundēvi, the wife of Pāṇḍyan Neḍuñjeḻian recounting her fateful dream mentioned that she saw the bell of justice wildly ringing;[13] though the bell was there, when Kaṇṇagi approached the gates of the palace she forgot to utilise it in her extreme sorrow,[14] but called on the palace guard to convey a personal message to the king.[15] It is noteworthy that in that instance, the king did not insist on any formality but at once ordered the plaintiff to be ushered into his presence.[16] These references show that the Chōḻa as well as the Pāṇḍyan palaces had this arrangement; the bell seems to have been found necessary, for normally the palace guards would not allow strangers and unauthorised persons into the palace.

9 *Vide supra* (Ch. V). 10 *Vide supra* (Ch. V).

11 V. K.: *The Tamils*, 1800, p. 111.

12 *Tiruttoṇḍar Purāṇam*: *Manu Niti Kāṇḍa Purāṇam*, St. 27; *Śilap:* XX: 53 to 55.

13 *Śilap:* XX: 10. 14 *Śilap:* XX: 24 to 29.

15 V. K.: *The Tamils* 1800, p. 111.

16 *Śilap*: XX: 45. Possibly the purpose of this bell was only to enable aggrieved parties to contact the monarch over the heads of corrupt and obstructing doorkeepers and palace guards.

At the capital town, the king personally presided over the court of justice. The *Śaṇgam* literature or any other of our sources of information does not furnish any evidence to show that the king ever appointed certain officials, to act as judges in these courts. It would be risky to argue from later practices, for though the core of many later institutions like the law courts, the panchāyats and foreign affairs could be traced back to the *Śaṅgam* age, they were all in such a formative stage that no definite averments can be made about them. There was a body of learned men of high character, learning and integrity attached to these urban courts of justice; and it was their duty to function as judicial advisers to the king. A significant expression in *Paḻamoḻi*, i.e. *Urai Muḍivu Kāṇāṇ Iḷamaiyōn*[17] referring to the young king Karikālan explains that *urai* means "the arguments of the plaint and defence' and *urai muḍivu* means judgment, and that it is the duty of the king to deliver the judgment, having listened to the arguments of his wise counsellers. The court of justice, i.e. the royal court where it assembled for judicial purposes, was called *aṟakkaḷam*. Later commentators translated this expression into *Dharmāśanam*.[18] The learned judicial advisers were called collectively *aṟaṅkūṟu avaiyam*[19] or *aṟakkaḷattu andaṇar*.[20] The latter expression is explained by the older commentator on *Śilappadikāram* as *dharmāsanattuk karuttākkaḷ*, i.e. 'those who act in the *aṟaṅkūṟu avaiyam*'. There is no indication that all these advisers were invariably brahmins, as we are told by some scholars.[21] The *Maduraikkāñji* refers to the presence in the law court of ministers of the *kāvidi* rank, and it is known that the *kāvidi* title was bestowed on 'Vēḷāḷars' of superior rank. Further there is a definition of the word *andaṇar* in the *Kuṟaḷ* which is helpful in this context : "Andaṇar are men of justice for they are equally just and kind to all"[22] It seems that the

17 *Paḻamoḻi:* 24.
18 *Śilap:* V: 135 Aḍiyār. Com.
19 *Ibid.*
20 *Śilap:* XXII: 8.
21 V. R. R. Dikshitar: *Studies*, p. 214.
22 *Kuṟaḷ* 30.

word *andaṇar* means only men of kindly disposition and the *Kuṛaḷ* stanza referred to here clarifies the point why the judicial advisers were called *andaṇar*; they (the *andaṇar*) were men of justice for in them we find: (1) *aṛam*, the legal acumen required to distinguish right from wrong; (2) *śemmai*, fairness or justice[23] and (3) *taṉmai* kindly or charitable disposition. That is why the judicial advisers who were expected to have (1) the legal acumen (2) a sense of fairness or justice and (3) a kindly or charitable disposition came to be called *andaṇar*; the caste denomination *andaṇar* is a derivative from this original meaning. Hence it appears that while the kings chose or were expected to choose only men of high character, knowledge and integrity, even in theory it was not necessary that the judicial *avai* should be exclusively Brahmanical.

The available evidence shows that most of the kings were advised by quite competent men.[24] The court at Uṛaiyūr or Uṛandai—one of the capitals of the Chōḻas was very famous for its never-failing justice.[25] The court of justice was called *avai* or *avaiyam*.[26] It was not different from the usual hall of audience and to clarify the distinction the epithet *aṛaṅkūṛu* (i.e.: those that expound law) was added; the men of law and justice debated or pleaded the causes brought before the king. But the king decided the cases. 'Impartiality' was a much prescribed virtue to a judge and to a legal adviser. A stern warning is issued to the court against discriminating between the rich and the poor in the matter of justice.[27] We know of cases in which the king passed judicial orders without consulting the *avai*, but instances of the *avai* judging cases in the absence of the king are not known as far as the *Saṇgam* litērature is concerned.

"அந்தணர் என்போர் அறவோர் மற்றெவ்வுயிர்க்கும்
செந்தண்மை பூண்டொழுக லான்."

23 This is why just rule was called *Seṅkōl*.

24 *Madurai* : 492; *Aham* : 93 25 *Puṛam* : 39; *Naṛṛiṇai* : 400.

26 *Śilap* : V: 135, (the suffix 'am' does not add to the meaning of the word).

27 *Paḻamoḻi* : 206.

The suit was called *kuṟai* and the justice meted out was called *muṟai*.[28] Great importance was attached to judicial impeccability. The poets declared that the 'penance of the sage', 'the chastity of the wife', and 'the regularity of the monsoons' depended on the king's justice.[29] A witness was a *kari* or a *kariyan* and a piece of evidence was also *kari*.[30]

All those who felt they had a legitimate grievance resorted to the court. It was usual for disappointed lovers to claim their brides in a law court.[31] In case the law court found that the lover was entitled to his beloved girl, the court itself arranged for the marriage, and the marriage was celebrated in the public hall or *maṉṟam*. The *maṉṟam* or the *avai* was competent to suggest to the lover that he should pay a price for the girl whom he wished to marry.[32]

The public generally believed that age and experience were necessary qualifications for judges;[33] the *Chōḻa* king Karikālan, who ascended the throne at an early age, appeared as the judge in the court; the litigants, or perhaps the judicial advisers, felt that the youth of the king might act as a bar on his judicial efficiency;[34] the shrewd young king noted this, retired from the court, soon came back wearing a grey wig (which made him appear to be an old man) and tried the case to the satisfaction of his critics. He wished to prove that his brains were in his head and not in his wig.[35] This anecdote—whatever

28 *Perumbāṉ* : 443, *Kuṟaḷ* : 386; Pari. Com.

29 *Kuṟaḷ*: 543; Pari. Com.; *Maṇi*: XXII: 208, 209: *Śilap*: XXVIII: 207, 208.

30 *Śirupañcha* : 10.

31 *Kuṟun*: 276; *Kali*: 139, 140: *Naṟṟiṇai*: 90, 400.

32 *Nālaḍi*: 237. 33 *Aham*: 90.

34 The words 'Senate', 'Council of elders' etc. indicate the same idea.

35 *Paḻamoḻi*: 93, *Porunar*: 187, 188: *Maṇi*: IV: 107,108. K. A. N. Sastri gives a different interpretation to the *Porunar*. reference; he says, "adults set aside their feuds while they entered the sabha, which might mean either that they got their disputes

be its authenticity—suggests these conclusions: (1) the king tried the cases personally; (2) the judicial advisers or the concerned litigants had the courage to doubt the wisdom of a too youthful king; (3) the king had the good sense to try to accommodate to their wishes and not to take offence at it; (4) that hereditary traits must be given due recognition; i.e. king's son makes a better king than any other person's son; and (5) the last point is an indirect way of accepting the implications of the caste system. Among the *avaiyattār* there were also persons of ministerial rank holding the *kāvidi* title which was perhaps bestowed on them in recognition of their special knowledge of *aṟam*. These men could distinguish between good and evil; watch the king's temperament; but wouldn't be in a hurry to speak out their mind; and would never swerve from the path of mercy and justice; by reason of their virtues, they earned a deserved reputation.[36] These men, it seems, while on duty wore a kind of wig; just as lawyers now wear, a black gown.[37]

The existence of these advisers does not mean that the king never ignored them, never failed to consult them or never rejected their advise when tendered. If the king did not heed them, there was no formal or constitutional remedy against that royal attitude. In fact when Neḍuñjeḻian ordered the execution of Kōvalan, there was neither trial nor judgment, neither consulation nor advice; it was simply an arbitrary order. When Kaṇṇagi drew the attention of the king to the injustice, the king quickly remonstrated saying that it was not wrong on the part of a king to order the execution of a thief, forgetting, however, that the charge had not been

adjudicated or laid private quarrels aside for the discharge of common duties". (*Cōḷas*, p. 70). But Nechchinārkkiniyar says that the king overcame the objections of the objecting elders, and ruled wisely. That the poem is intended to praise Karikālan is the point in favour of Nachchinārkkiniyar.

36 *Madurai:* 496 to 500.

37 *Madurai*: 494; Nach. Com. however, says that it was not the judicial adviser but only the ministers bearing the *Kāvidi* title who wore the wig.

formally proved in a court of law.[38] The consequent punishment to the king was self-imposed; when the king was the offender, the king alone could punish the offender. In the confusion following the proof of miscarriage of justice, the king died of remorse; and so in this case, at least, the person who gave a false complaint, i.e. the goldsmith, was not punished. Be that as it may, it is very interesting to note that the succeeding king mass executed a thousand other goldsmiths presumably for the crime of belonging to the caste or profession to which the guilty belonged; or was it a case of human sacrifice to appease the gods?

The case of Kulaśēkhara Pāṇḍyan, a king who cut off his own offending hand was also an instance of self imposed penalty.[39] This means that if the king's nerves were sufficiently strong and conscience sufficiently dormant, he could be as unjust and despotic as he pleased. The existence of the *andaṇar* was again, no guarantee against injustice or cruelty. Nannan, the chieftain of Palkuṇrakkōṭṭam, imposed capital punishment on a young girl for eating a wasted mango fruit from the royal garden. The king insisted on the girl being executed though her parents offered to pay him indemnity in the shape of eightyone elephants and a gold statue weighing as much as the accused.[40] But it is noteworthy that this strange royal behaviour was strongly resented by cultured and sensitive men. Many generations later, a Tamil poet Peruntalai Sāṭṭanār, once met two princes Iḷaṅkaṇ-ḍirakkō and Iḷavichchikkō but out of affection embraced the former but he would not touch the latter. The latter asked the reason for the discriminatory treatment; the poet explained saying that Iḷavichchikkō was the descendant of the cruel Nannan and so deserved to be kept at a distance.[41] The sense of revolt against unrighteousness was so strong among them that later generations knew of the tyrant only as 'Nannan, the woman killer'[42]

38 *Śilap:* XX: 61 to 65. 39 *Kuṛaḷ:* 547, Pari. Com.
40 *Kuṛun*: 292.
41 *Puṛam* : 151. 42 *Kuṛun* : 292.

There was litigation of both kinds, civil and criminal; but we hear more of crimes and punishments therefor than civil suits arising from disputes relating to property etc. Though there must have been disputes arising from ownership of property details about such cases are lacking, probably because they are always less sensational and also perhaps there was no opportunity to mention them. By and large criminal suits seem to have been a more common affair.

Kaṇṇagi's plaint to the Pāṇḍyan king related to a murder case. Cognisable and non-cognisable offences must have all been under the immediate jurisdiction of the king as we do not hear of a contrary practice. There was no time bar for filing cases in the *avai*; e. g. in the story of Kōvalan, the anklet was stolen by the goldsmith long before Kōvalan arrived at Madurai; but actually he accused Kōvalan of theft much later to the king; the cause was not barred by passage of time. In the case of Manu Nīti Kaṇḍa Chōḻan, though the cow had filed the suit immediately after the cause of action had occurred, it was much later that the king could discover the criminal; the time taken to do so was no bar for punishment. The procedural point about limitation by lapse of time is mentioned in a stanza in *Paḻamoḻi*[43] which says: "A long time ago the prince had committed the crime; but still when the king came to know the truth, he meted out stern punishment", and uses the expression "after much time had elapsed". The conclusion is also given: "There is neither old age nor youth for suits or justice".[44] But in both the cases referred to above, the causes were criminal causes; one was theft and the other was murder.[45] Normally, the law of limitation applies only to civil causes. We do not know what 'law of limitation' applied to 'civil' transactions in the *Saṅgam* age.

The trial in the *avai* was a simple affair while in the *manṟam* (i.e. the village court) it was simpler. When the parties to a suit had

43 *Paḻamoḻi*: 93. 44 *Ibid.*

45 Murder: i.e. 'calf-slaughter' was a combination of 'infanticide' and 'cow-killing' each of which was a major crime.

fild their case, the witnesses were called in and after their depositions were heard (or recorded) the advisers consulted the law on the matter and advised the king who had the final say in the matter. The parties as well as the witnesses were called upon to depose on oath.[46] A particular method of swearing is often mentioned; that is by touching the foot of the king and by pronouncing a formula of oath.[47]

We hear much about witnesses. It was generally held that virtuous men do not give false evidence.[48] The story has it that there was an ogre in Puhār which killed and ate false witnesses.[49] It was a sin to utter falsehood and a greater sin to tender false evidence; and it was a crime in law also. Perjurers would be punished by their tongues being cut off.[50] It was not only a piece of perverted or false evidence that was wrong but non-submission of relevant evidence in the possession of a witness was equally wrong.[51] In spite of much pious platitude about the 'sinfulness of giving false evidence', there is a remark in the commentary on the *Iṟaiyanār Ahapporuḷ*,[52] which says that, "a person who had witnessed a man behaving improperly towards a stranger's wife must refrain from speaking the truth; for if he does not so refrain the guilty man will lose his head". This is rather strange advice to witnesses. But Vaḷḷuvar on this point might help to clarify the position. He says: "Truthfulness consists in refraining from uttering harmful words".[53] While we know that perjury was looked upon with strong disfavour, we do not know if false complaints to a court of law were also similarly punished. But a false litigant, no doubt, ran the risk of losing his life by the ordeal; so at least those people believed and that should have been sufficient to deter flippant accusations.

45 T. V. M.: *S I. Polity*, p. 203.

47 This was called *Aḍitoṭṭu Chūḷuṟal*; *Śilap*: XII: *Vēṭṭuva vari* stanza commencing *Tuḍiyoḍu Siṟupaṟai*.

48 *Kuṟun*: 184; *Kali*: 34: 10. 49 *Śilap*: XV: 78.

50 *Śiṟupañcha*: 9, "கொடுங்கரி போவான் நாச்சாம்".

51 *Naṟṟiṇai*: 196.

52 *Irai*; *Ahap*; *Sūtram* 1, com. 53 *Kuṟaḷ*: 291, 292

The *Kuṛaḷ* naturally deals with the royal justice in the chapter on *Seṅkōnmai* or 'righteous government'.[54] The sceptre or the *Seṅkol* was the visible emblem of royal justice. It stands for impartiality and other virtues of justice, that is *muṛai*. So righteous government to the *Saṅgam* Tamils meant only correct or straight justice. "If the kings' subjects were guilty, the guilt must be first made out; then, unmindful of any personal or other considerations, and taking an impartial view, the proper and appropriate punishment for the offence must be discovered; and the justice accordingly must be meted out".[55] "The King must be easily accessible to those who seek his justice; he must take pains to study their case; he must then do justice, accordingly, to them: A king who does not do so, will descend to a low level and ruin himself".[56]

The trial was by the examination of witnesses and analysis of the law and the facts of the matter; but occasionally also by a system of trial by ordeal. This latter system was wellknown in ancient days in many countries of the world and in South India it persisted even in much later days.[57] Trial by ordeal of water and ordeal of fire were familiar practices in the English judicial system of the early medieval period. This system was in vogue in the *Saṅgam* age for the trial of civil cases also. A particular method of trial by ordeal[58] was to call upon the plaintiff[59] to thrust his hand into a pot containing a cobra. If the cobra bit him, he was guilty and he was sentenced: if the cobra did not bite him, he was found innocent and was acquitted. In a civil litigation it was about the nonpayment of a loan that the plaintiff (i.e. the creditor) was asked to undergo the ordeal. Many unfortunate creditors must heve either lost their money if they did not resort to the law court or lost their lives by snake poison if they resorted to the law court; so that

54 *Kuṛaḷ* : chap. 55.
55 *Kuṛaḷ* : 541.
56 *Kuṛaḷ* : 548.
57 T. V. M.: *S.I. Polity*, pp. 223 to 225.
58 *Paḻamoḻi* : 57.
59 In the particular instance quoted in *Paḻamoḻi* : 57, the plaintiff was a creditor who demanded his money back.

Muṉṟuṟai Araiyar, the author of *Paḻamoḻi* wisely recommends that loans are not to be given.[60]

Kings, when faced with extremely difficult legal or similar situations, used to have recourse to extra-judicial devices; they would appeal to God for divine inspiration which might give them the right lead. They would fast and pray for a solution. In the case of a commentary for the Iṟaiyanār Ahapporuḷ the king could not arbitrate between the greatest among his poets and scholars. So the king as well as the poets sought divine help in the matter of securing a competent judge. The commentator on the Iṟaiyanār Ahapporuḷ says[61] that the prayer was answered and one Rudra Śarman, a young boy, five years old appeared, as the judge. Such an arbitrator was called a 'Kāraṇikan'. To believe that the *Śaṅgam* kings and thinkers had abiding faith in divine agencies, it is not necessary to accept all the supernatural events mentioned in the sources. The king was the supreme magistrate, but he occasionally acted as a policeman and detective also. The old practice of kings going about the streets of the capital city, especially during nights, in disguise, was not unknown to the Tamil kings. A Pāṇḍyan, by name Kulaśēkara, is reported to have been in that habit. Once, while going about the streets in disguise, he overheard a Brahmin[62] who was leaving for Benares soon, reassuring his wife (whom he was leaving behind) that she could stay behind without fear, for the Pāṇḍyan king was so righteous that unprotected people would all be protected by him. The king appreciated the loyal and grateful sentiments of the Brahmin and made it a point of honour to watch the Brahmin's house thereafter. One night, he heard some masculine voice inside the house. Unwittingly and not suspecting that the Brahmin had returned from his pilgrimage, he rapped on the door of the Brahmin's house with the laudable object of offering protection to the Brahmin house-wife if needed. But at once he realised the irony in the situation; but it was too late. The next day the king took the advice of his judicial advisers as to what punishment

60 *Paḻamoḻi* : 211, 212. 61 *Iṟai Ahap* : *Sūtram*. 1, Com.
62 By name Kīrandai, meaning 'the father of Kīran'.

was appropriate to a person guilty of such an action; the advisers, not knowing who the accused was, said that the proper legal penalty was to cut off the offending hand. The king at once whipped out his sword and cut off his own hand. The story no doubt, goes on to say that in the place of the hand that was cut off, a golden hand appeared. Probably it means that the king wore an artificial gold-gilted hand in the place of the old one.[63] This incident shows the practice of the king's nocturnal police functions, as also the sense of selfless righteousness generally exhibited by the ancient Tamil kings.

3. *Crime and Punishment*

IN THE *Śaṅgam* age crimes were not unusual, if we believe our sources. Cutting off the udder of a cow, bringing about a forced abortion of a woman and killing of Brahmins[64] were considered to be serious crimes. No doubt Vaḷḷuvar considers ingratitude as the most heinous crime;[65] but ingratitude unless it be breach of contract is not punishable by formal law.

Kōvalan who was accused by a goldsmith of theft of the queen's anklet was summarily executed by royal command. Evidently the cause was very expeditiously disposed of as the king was a party to it for the stolen property belonged to the queen.[66] A similar case was the instance of a chieftain called Nannan of Palkuṉṟakkōṭṭam ordering the execution of a young girl for the fault of having picked up and eaten a wasted mango fruit which was being washed away by a stream from the royal garden. This was interpreted as theft, and hence the severe punishment. It is noteworthy that in this case also the stolen property was royal property. But it is certain that punishment for theft was invariably decapitation.

63 *Kuṟaḷ*: 547; Pari. Com. *Śilap*: XXIII 42 to 52; *Paḻamoḻi*: 120.

64 *Puṟam*: 34; 'Pārppārttappiya' is explained by the old commentator of Puṟam as 'Pārppāraippiḻaitta' i. e. "those who did wrong to Brahmins"; but *Tappiya* also means 'killed' as in Puṟam: 74; and this meaning suits the *Puṟam* 34 reference also better.

65 *Kuṟaḷ*: 110. 66 *Śilap*: XVI: 150 to 154.

Neḍuñjeḻian, the Pāṇḍyan king, who ordered the execution of Kōvalan, said "It is no injustice to kill a thief".[67] It is not certain if decapitation was the punishment only for thieves found with the stolen property, though in the case of Kōvalan it happened to be so.[68]

Adultery was considered a serious crime; while prostitution of a professional nature was not objectionable. Mādhavi and other born courtesans carried on a merry profession. But adultery came in for harsh punishment. The award was capital punishment for that crime.[69] It is elsewhere stated that if the adulterer fell into the hands of the relatives of the woman, his leg would be cut off.[70] Courtesans or prostitutes guilty of lapses in professional etiquette were punished. They were disgraced. They were made to come round the law-court carrying seven bricks on their heads and then they were driven away.[71]

It seems that a certain severe corporal punishment, namely, bathing the guilty one in a huge quantity of brick-powder, was commonly meted out to adulterous women.[72] There is also mention of how the mother of Āputtiran was adulterous and she went on a pilgrimage of Kumari[73] to wash off the sin; it is suggested that she went away in fear of the severe secular penalty awaiting her.[74]

If a girl complained to the *avai* that her lover, who, premarital, had ravished her, now refused to take her to wife, the *avai* after ascertaining the truth of the accusation from 'knowledgeable witnesses' punished the offender by binding him to a three-pronged, frame and belabouring him and also by unloading on his head a large quantity of burnt cowdung.[75]

67 *Śilap*; XX: 64, 65. 68 V. K.: *The Tamils*, 1800, p. 111.

69 *Nāladi*: 81.

70 *Nāladi*: 84, probably this was an unauthorised infliction by interested persons who might have taken the law into their own hands.

71 *Śilap*: XIV; 146, 147. 72 *Peruṅgadai*: I: 36: 155.

73 Cape Comorin. 74 *Maṇi* : XIII : 4 to 7.

75 *Aham*: 256.

Spies of foreign lands or enemy states were summarily executed.[76] Theft of royal property even if it was private property of the king was considered to be theft of government property and such theft was most severely punished. Nannan whose punishment of the young girl has been already mentioned, was offered eighty-one tuskers and a statue in gold of the weight of the accused girl; still he insisted on executing her.[77] It seems the offer of gold statues weighing as much as the accused was a usual way of indemnifying the king of the loss to his property.[78]

Negligence about trust property entrusted with one was a serious lapse. A reference in *Śilappadikāram* to Mādari's (the cowherdess's) bewailing her inability to protect Kōvalan and his wife who were her wards in Madurai entrusted to her care by Kavunti Aḍigaḷ is expression of contemporary opinion about the sanctity of entrusted property.[79] It was considered proper that entrusted property should be returned the moment the owner claimed it back[80] but we do not know what penalty was prescribed for refusal or inability to return entrusted property.

The claim mentioned in the *Taḍuttātkoṇḍa Purāṇam*[81] made by Lord Śiva on Sundaramūrty Nāyanār that the latter was the bounden slave of the former and the judicial procedure the claim had to go through are indicative, no doubt of a later practice;[82] but such a procedure, namely, filing the suit in the *avai*, the *avaiyattār* perusing the relevant documents and noting down oral evidence and the statement of the plaintiff and the defendant and finally expeditiously despatching the suit—could be at least

76 *Puṟam*: 47; colophon.

77 *Kuṟun*: 292.

78 *Peruṅgadai*: I: 40: 371 to 373.

79 *Śilap*: XXIX: 'Dēvandi Araṟṟiyadu'.

80 *Paḻamoḻi*: 17.

81 *Tiruttoṇḍar Purāṇam*: *Taḍuttātkoṇḍapurāṇam*. Sēkkiḻār, the author of Tiruttoṇḍar Purāṇam was a contemporary of Kulōttuṅga Chōḻa II.

82 T. V. M.; *S. I. Polity*, p. 215, 216.

in its beginning or formative stages believed to have existed in the *Saṅgam* age.

In the field of royal civil jurisdiction, non-payment of land revenue or the taxes was naturally considered a civil offence and accordingly punished. Those who wanted relief from such payments had to pray for such relief and obtain it.[83]

Certain offences like failure to hand over to the king finds like treasure troves, etc., were punished with imprisonment. A Brahmin by name Dakshiṇāmūrty appropriated a treasure trove which by right belonged to the Pāṇḍyan King Neḍuñjeḻian. This offence was punished with imprisonment.[84]

Maṇimēkalai was thrown into a prison by royal order. The prison, in that text, is described as "the prison house where punishments are meted out to erring persons".[85] It is not clear whether imprisonment was considered a punishment in itself or whether the prison house was treated as a secluded place where harrowing corporal punishment might be leisurely dealt out to the criminal unobserved by the public,

Espionage by foreign agents was considered an offence and the king could order summary execution of spies; Iḷandattan a poet was mistaken to be a spy by the Chōḻa king Neḍuṅkiḷḷi and was about to be executed but was rescued in time by the wise intercession of the poet Kōvūrkkiḻār. This was not a case of treason,[86] but only espionage, for the offence of treason cannot be committed by persons other than the king's own subjects while espionage is done by foreign agents.

Killing of even suspected criminals by cruel methods was not uncommon. The Chōḻa king Kiḷḷivaḷavan ordered the two children of Malaiyamān (his enemy) to be trampled upon by elephants and this execution was to take place near the 'manṛam' the seat of justice. Kōvūrkkiḻār, again it was who fought for a worthy cause and rescued the children from a

83 *Puṛam*: 35; colophon.
84 *Śilap* : XXIII : 103. 85 *Maṇi:* XIX: 42, 43.
86 V. R. R. Dikshitar: *Studies*, p. 218.

cruel death.[87]

The criminals,, when apprehended were ordered to be arrested by the *kāvalāḷar*, the police. From the stray instances of the kāvalāḷar themselves executing the accused[88] mentioned in the *Śilappadikāram*, it would be risky to conclude a general practice. When the case had been disposed of in a manner satisfactory to the court and the litigants, the punishments to the guilty must have followed; but whether the losing party was obliged to indemnify incidental losses and expenditure to the winner of the suit is nowhere mentioned.

The punishment awarded for crimes in the *Śaṅgam* age, therefore included decapitation, mutilation of the offending limbs of the body, torture and imprisonment and imposition of fines payable mostly in kind. Generally the punishment was of a type very much in evidence in Hammurabi's code of laws and much denounced by the 'Sermon on the Mount' namely, of the 'eye for an eye' or 'tooth for a tooth' variety. The punishment meted out to his 'guilty' son by Manu Nīti Chōḻan was of this type. It is in this context that it would be interesting to find out how far this king was justified in being entitled *Manu Niti Kaṇḍa* (i.e. he who respected Manu's dharma). From the story it is seen that Manu Nīti Chōḻa's system of justice followed rather the Hammurabian code than the Code of Manu. Manu prescribing the penalty for slaughter of bipeds, quadrupeds, etc., says : If a man is killed, his guilt will be at once the same as (that of) a thief; for large animals such as cows, elephants,camels or horses half of that'', ''for injuring small cattle the fine (shall be) two hundred *paṇas*;...''[89] So if the Chōḻa had any intention of following Manu, he would have fined his son two hundred *Paṇas* and not taken his life. So it is difficult to agree with the view that 'punishments were equitable and mild'.[90] They were probably based on 'law and custom' though to put even that down as a universal proposition may be saying too much; but that cannot mean that the penalties were mild. That generally in the

87 *Puṟam:* 46. 88 *Śilap:* XVI: 211, 212.

89 *Manu* : Dharma Śāstra :Buhler (Tr). — VIII : 296, 297.

90 V. R. R. Dikshitar : *Studies*, p. 221.

ancient and medieval world and in England till the days of the reform of the Penal Code punishments were far too severe and at times even barbarous is no argument to prove the 'mildness' of the Tamil Saṅgam penal provisions.

Culprits used to confess to their guilt only in the law-court; they would never truthfully admit their guilts before others; for if they did so those others would severaly punish them for the guilt. From this it can follow that (1) even confession in the court was followed by prescribed punishment duly awarded by court and (2) confession outside the court led to unauthorised and extremely severe punishment by those who took the law in their own hands.

It is also possible that a certain order of crimes, was punished with 'being consigned as galley-slaves' and compelled to work the pearl fisheries at Koṛkai. The *Periplus* says that those fisheries were worked by condemned criminals [91]

The Tamils had their own notions about crimes and punishments. They felt that punishment was necessary; the impirsonment and other inflictions were more punitive than reformatory; and they believed that it was not wrong for a king to punish his offending subjects; for "it is only like removing the weeds from a flourishing corn field".[92] Punishing evil doers for protecting the subjects was not a stigma but a duty of the king.[93]

It was proper for a ruler to judge according to what he considered was just and if by that standard after impartial enquiry he discovered guilt, he was to punish the guilty according to the magnitude and nature of the guilt. This was just punishment.[94] Parimēlaḻagar, the commentator taking his cue from the Sanskritists explains 'serious offenders' as 'those who are guilty of *(a)* arson, (*b*) murder by poisoning, (*c*) assassination, (*d*) theft, (*e*) robbery, *(f)* looting and (*g*) adultery;[95] and in another context says that, 'punishment of offences" (*Kuṟṟam Kaḍidal*) mentioned in the *Kuṛaḷ*[96] is of three

91 Schoff. *The Periplus of the Erythraean sea*, pp. 40-47.

92 *Kuṛaḷ*: 550. 93 *Kuṛaḷ*: 549.

94 *Puṛam*: 10.: "நீமெய் கண்ட தீமை காணின்
ஒப்ப நாடி அத்தக வொறுத்தி".

95 *Kuṛaḷ*: 550: Pari. Com. 96 *Kuṛaḷ*: 549.

kinds; *(a)* torture, *(b)* imposition of fines, and *(c)* decapitation; and that in ordinary cases the first two methods of punishment were to be abopted and in the case of the seven criminals mentioned above, the last method of punishment was to be inflicted. It is difficult to say if different penal provisions were applied in the case of persons belonging to different castes; Kōvalan, the merchant was ordered to be killed for 'stealing' while a Brahmin who was suspected of having appropriated a treasure trove rightfully belonging to the king was only jailed. But, in fairness, it must be said that Neḍuñjeḻiyan, the Pāṇḍyan king was not aware of the caste or community to which Kōvalan belonged, at the time the guards were authorised to kill the thief.

It is said that the ancient Tamils, as in general the ancient and medieval Indians, believed that 'by nature men were bad and prone to commit crimes' and it was only the fear of punishment by the king that deterred them from doing it.[97] This seems to be largely borne out by whatever evidence we get from the *Śaṅgam* sources on the subject.

There has never been a uniform or agreed opinion among jurists, psychologists or criminologists on the adequacy of any punishment for any offence. The only standard by which moral or social values can be assessed or applied by any one is one's own or the most reasonable of one's own contemporary opinion. Judged, therefore, by the standards set by the most informed of modern opinion, *Śaṅgam* punitive arrangements or generally their ideas about crimes were far from mild, or paternal or reformatory. We know that the Mauryan polity was distinguished by a very harsh penal code, though of course some scholars will make it appear that even the Mauryan penal code was fairly mild;[98] but mostly in the ancient days the tendency was to make punishments rr on the side of severity rather than on the side of leniency.

4. *Prisons*

Prisons were a part of the judicial administration in the *Śaṅgam*

97 T. V. M.: *S. I. Polity*, p. 236.

98 V. R. R. Dikshitar: *Mauryan Polity*, p. 160 ff.

age. The prison was called *śiṟai* or *śiṟaikkōṭṭam*.[99] There were prisons to accommodate ordinary criminals as well as prisoners to hold defeated captive kings. Chēramān Kaṇaikkāl Irumpoṟai was taken prisoner and put in a prison at Kuḍavāyiṟkōṭṭam[100] by the Chōḻa king Seṅgaṇān. It was possibly a special prison for royal captives; but the prisoners there do not seem to have been properly or courteously treated by the prison warders. It is stated that the royal prisoner asked for water to drink and the warders were not in a hurry to oblige him; the Chēra king felt annoyed and insulted and refused to take the water subsequently offered. In this case it is mentioned in the poem attributed to the Chēra king Kaṇaikkāl Irumpoṟai that he was "held in chains like a low dog".[101] The practice of keeping prisoners in chains, therefore, seems to have been common.[102] The prison guards at Kuḍavāyil Kōṭṭam had also perhaps special instructions tobe particularly insolent and offensive in theiṟ behaviour towards the royal prisoner; the Chēramān refers to them as *kēḷal kēḷir*[103] the 'unfriendly servants'. It seems the 'Kuḍavāyirkōṭṭam' was a prison at either Kumbakōṇam or Kuḍavāśal a place near it. As there is a mention of a well-guarded treasury at Kuḍandai, which is a curruption of 'Kuḍavāśal' or 'Kuḍavāyil' it is probable that this jail also was there and was equally well guarded.[104]

From these statements about royal prisons we can only infer the nature of the treatment normally afforded to 'common' prisoners in the jails of the *Saṅgam age*. We hear of another great prince taken

99 *Śilap*: XXIII: 103 *Kuṟaḷ*: 57: 1.

100 *Puṟam*: 74 — Colophon.

101 *Puṟam*: 74: 3.

102 *Nāladi*: 122: 1. 103 *Puṟam*: 74:4

104 K. A. N. Sastri: *Cōḷas*. p 72. "The Chēra Kaṇaikkāl Irumpoṟai was detained by Seṅgaṇān in a prison which from its name Kuḍavāyir Kōṭṭam is sometimes taken to have been in Kumbakōṇam or a smaller place, also near it, now called "Kuḍavāśal". But in the same book, in p.51, he has translated Kuḍavāyir Kōṭṭam' as the 'west gate prison'. Probably the latter is his view. 'Kuḍavāśal' is to the South-West of Kumbakōṇam. Vide also f. n. 77, chap. VIII.

captive and imprisoned. Yānaikkaṭ Chēy Māndaran Chēral Irumpoṛai was the Chēra prince imprisoned; and Talaiyālaṅgānattu Chēra Venṛa Pāṇḍyan Neḍuñjeḻian captured him and it is recounted as an act of great glory and heroism that the captive prince made good his escape from the Pāṇḍya prison and crowned himself king in the Chēra land.[105]

General amnesty for all prisoners was ordered by the king on special occasions. The birthday of the king was usually such an occasion. In the *Maṇimēkalai* there is mention of the prison in Puhār being pulled down and converted into a place fit for ascetics to live in;[106] evidently *Maṇimēkalai* with her Buddhist leanings naturally advised the king to abolish the prison-house there. The Pāṇḍyan king Neḍuñjeḻian ordered the release of prisoners and the writing off of tax arrears on the occasion of the promulgation of a law of surrender of treasure-troves.[107] On the occasion of the building of a temple for Kaṇṇagi Chēran *Seṅguṭṭuvan*, similarly granted revenue remission and ordered release of prisoners.[108] It appears from the available information that generally revenue-remission and general amnesty were jointly ordered by the kings.

105 *Puṛam:* 17 106 *Maṇi:* XIX: 157.
107 *Silāp:* XXIII: 126 to 129. 108 *Silap:* XXVIII: 203 to 204.

CHAPTER VIII

REVENUE AND FINANCE

1. *Land Revenue*

ACCUMULATING WEALTH was considered a desirable pursuit, especially for a king.[1] Money is always needed to run government; and collection of revenue for meeting governmental expenditure was understood to be necessary and was well organised. Many varieties of taxes were known and collected and out of them the king incurred his private and public expenditure; a number of officials were commissioned by the king to look after the revenue affairs. It was felt that the levy of these taxes must be equitable and according to 'custom'. 'Unjust' or 'unusual' taxation, the demand of 'forced gifts' etc., were considered iniquities; and they constituted despotism—*koḍunkōnmai*. The poet wisely observes: "when a despot rules the land it is more unfortunate to be rich than to be poor; for the despot does not and in fact cannot fleece the poor, but can and is likely to squeeze the wealth out of the rich".[2] They knew that acquisition of wealth or revenue by unfair means ruins the revenue as well as the collector i.e the king.[3]

The kings demanded and obtained many varieties of taxes. The commonest and possibly the most considerable single source of revenue was 'land tax'. It was called *iṟai*;[4] or *kaṟai*;[5] tributes paid by the feudatories and war booty collected from recently conquered foes were *iṟai*;[6] tolls and customs duties were *ulgu* or *śuṅgam*.[7] The duties to be paid to the king were generally known as *kaḍamai*[8] or *paḍu*, *paḍuvadu*[9] (one's, i.e. the

1 *Kali*: 149:8, 9. 2 *Kuṟaḷ*: 558. 3. *Kuṟaḷ*: 660.
4 *Śilap*: XXVI: 52. 5 *Śilap*: XXVIII: 204.
6 *Śilap*: XXV: 36. 7 *Perumbāṇ*: 80: Nach. Com.
8 *Śilap*: XXIII: 127: Aḍiyār: Com. 9 *Puṟam*: 17–6.

king's share). *Vari*[10] was also a generic term meaning income i.e. revenue. Extra demands or forced gifts were called *iravu*.[11]

The *Saṅgam* Tamils expected an equitable taxation policy to be adopted. The poet Piśir Āndaiyār, addressing Pāṇḍyan Aṟivuḍai Nambi, said, "If a king understands the principles of sound Public Finance, he will become greatly rich and the country will prosper; if the king is surrounded by flatterers who do not know impartiality and take taxes 'killing loyalty' (i.e. driving the people to a state of disloyalty), then he will neither himself prosper nor allow the world to prosper; even as, if an elephant is fed in an orderly manner, the required food can be supplied by the produce from one *mā* of land: but if the beast were just let loose into a vast agricultural field (even if it be hundred fields) more grain will be damaged by the wild walk of the animal than it would ever eat."[12] He does not say what provoked him into giving that bit of his mind to the king; nor do we know if the king observed the sound fiscal policy contained in the poet's advice. But it is clear that the wisdom of well-regulated moderate taxation and the folly of 'killing the goose that lays the golden eggs' were fully understood.

It was considered that unfair methods of taxation would even lead to the loss of the kingdom; for the subjects would flee the kingdom unable to bear the iniquity of the taxation.[13] There is no reason to suppose that these principles were not generally approved of and acted upon by the kings of the land.

A well known unit of territory yielding tax was a *vāṟiyam*; *vāri* meant tax.[14] An officer in-charge of collecting the tax from that unit of land was called a *vāriyar*. *Vāriam* later became a general

10 Veṇba subjoined to *Porunar*.

11 *Kuṟaḷ* : 552 ; these were 'requests' while the other regular taxes were 'demands'.

12 *Puṟam* : 184.

13 *Kali* : 26—20. "ஆறின்றிப் பொருள் வெஃகி".

14 *Vāri* : *Varuvāi*; income or revenue : *Padiṟṟu* : II ten and V-Ten-*Padiham* — *Vari* which is a well-known Tamil equivalent of 'tax' is only another form of *vāri*.

term for service and we hear of royal servants like *aśva vāriyar*.[15] It is reported that the Chēra king Seṇguṭṭuvan gifted away the whole of the *vāri* or revenue from *Umbarkkāḍu* to the poet Paraṇar.[16]

It is regularly mentioned in the commentaries to the *Saṅgam* texts that the rate of land revenue was 1/6 of the produce of the land. It is notable that the earliest Tamil work which mentions this rate is the *Puṟapporuḷ Veṇbā Mālai*.[17] Parimēlaḻagar in his commentary on the *Kuṟaḷ* (43) says that the revenue payable to the king was 1/6 not of the produce of the land but of the total income of a subject.[18] So the 1/6 becomes a kind of tax on all kinds of incomes and ceases to be merely land revenue. The *Kuṟaḷ* text itself does not mention the rate of taxation.[19] The anonymous commentator on the *Puṟanānūṟu* however mentions the dues to be paid to a king as 1/6 of the subject's total land-yield.[20] The commentator on the *Kuṟaḷ* bases his contention on the fact that the poet has prescribed (1) the manes, (2) the gods, (3) the guests, (4) the relatives and (5) oneself as the five unavoidable claimants, and in this order of priority, to the other five parts of one's income: for after these have been spent the remaining 1/6 is to be paid to the king. V. R. Ramachandra Dikshitar holds that after paying 1/6 to the king, the remaining 5/6 was to be distributed to the persons prescribed; but Parimēlaḻagar broadly indicates that the revenue payable to the king is the last charge on one's income and

15 *Śilap* : V : 54.

16 *Paḍiṟṟu* : V. Ten —*Paḍiham*.

17 *P.V.M.*: 179.

18 *Kuṟaḷ* ; 43.:

''தென்புலத்தார் தெய்வம் விருந்தொக்கல் தான் என்றுங்கு
ஐம்புலத்தா ரோம்பல் தலை''.

19 V. R. R. Dikshitar : *Studies*, p. 209 : The *Kuṟaḷ* says how one should distribute his income remainning after the payment of the recognized one-sixth to the king". He quotes *Kuṟaḷ* (43) to support this statement. But Kuṟaḷ (43) does not mention any rate of taxation; it only says that six persons have proper claim over a person's income. There is no suggestion that these claimants receive equal share. So the King's share could easily be more or less than 1/6.

20 *Puṟam* : 17 ; even here the text does not mention the rate; it says only 'Paḍuvadu' (படுவது) : that which is due.

not the first charge.[21] For revenue remission could be sought for but not exemption from one's responsibilities to his Manes or one's gods; though troublesome relatives could be got rid of with some difficulty, it was not expected that one should do so.

Bishop Caldwell observes, "the established practice throughout this part of the peninsula (i.e. the extreme south) has for ages been to allow the farmer 1/2 of the produce of his crop for the maintenance of his family and the recultivation of the land, while the other 1/2 is appropriated to the Sircar";[22] but V. Kanakasabhai is quite confident that "1/6 of the produce from land was the legitimate share of the king".[23]

But one searches in vain for a plain reference to the 1/6 rate or any other rate in *Saṅgam* literature. Probably later writers and commentators were thinking of contemporary or recent practices or of the rate suggested by Manu.

Anyway, the general belief is that 1/6 of the land yield is by no means enough for any government; but it must be remembered that land revenue was only part of the total revenue. It included many other kinds of revenue like tolls, tributes, presents etc.; and that must have been quite enough for the king, when private income was fairly high and public expenditure could not have been very high. Further, though the tax payable to the king was only perhaps 1/6, the agriculturist was in all probability called upon to incur in addition the necessary local expenditure on temples, etc. So that the burden experienced by the cultivator, must have been much more than 1/6. Water cess payable to the king for water supplied for agricultural purposes, though mentioned by some scholars finds no corroboration in contemporary literature.[24]

21 *Kuṛaḷ* : 43; Pari. com; in practice, however, this ideal must have been honoured in the breach..

22 *I. A.* : XLV : p. 36.

23 V. K. : *The Tamils*, 1800, p. 112. But K. A. N. :*Cōḷas*, 71. "We have no means of determining precisely the king's share of the produce of agriculture".

24 V. K. : *The Tamils*, 1800, p. 112. His observation seems to be corroborated by a remark in the copper plate grant made

There were special occasions on which remission of tax was ordered. When the king was in great distress of mind because of any act of unwitting injustice perpetrated by him, he ordered tax-remission.[25] In this case the wording in the text almost suggests that what the king ordered was 'writing off of tax arrears' and not a general 'tax-remission'; for the text reads : *kaṟaippaḍu mākkaḷ kaṟai viḍu śeimin* : 'Remit the tax in the case of those from whom tax is due' (i.e. is in arrears). This was done either as a compensation for the ill-treated subjects or a self-imposed penalty, a token of repentance. Tax-remission was granted on occasions of special importance like the building of a famous temple or the king's victory over his enemies.[26] Revenue remission was prayed for by the subjects on occasions. *Puṟanānūṟu* mentions how Veḷḷaikkuḍi-nāganār an agriculturist prayed to the king Chōḷan Kuḷamuṟṟattu Tuñjiya Kiḷḷi Vaḷavan for revenue remission in the following terms:

"... Let all thy victories
Be the toiling ploughman's gain
Kings get the fame, whether rains fail or copious flow
And lack the praise : such is the usage of the World.
If thou hast marked and known this well
Reject the wily counsels of malicious men.
Lighten the load of those who till the soil;
The dwellers in the land protect. If thou do this
Thy stubborn foes shall lowly bend beneath thy feet".[27]

It seems from this that if rains failed or if the harvest was not satisfactory or if anything untoward—act of God—happened, then the king was usually and ultimately held responsible for those unusual happenings; so to save his own name, the king was to hasten to relieve the people of their distress. The language used

to the Jewish colony on the West coast by the Chēra King Bhāskara Ravi Varman : "We have exempted him from paying the land tax and water tax". (V. K.: *The Tamils, 1800* p. 61).

25 *Śilap* : XXIII : 127. 26 *Śilap* : XXVIII : 204.
27 *Puṟam* : 35; G. U. Pope's translation.

in the colophon "Paḷañ Śeikkaḍan Viḍu" leads one to suppose that what Veḷḷaikkuḍināgaṇār prayed for and obtained was either remission of the arrears (of land revenue) due on his lands,[28] or was a case of relief of agricultural indebtedness ordered by the king. If the latter import is permissible, it is open to us to conclude that wiping out of agricultural indebtedness or a moratorium of some kind by royal command was not unusual even in those days.

It was competent for the king to assign tax-free lands to certain persons or institutions. Such lands were called *puravu* or *iṟaiyili nilam.*[29] At times whole villages (though usually they were small ones)[30] were granted tax free to persons of the king's choice. The grant of five hundred villages to a single person on a single occasion was an extremely rare case. Tax-remission did not always mean total remission of taxes; temporary or permanent reduction in the tax assessed in the usual manner also constituted tax-remission. Nachchinārkkiniyar is of the view that while granting tax-free land the king took a specifically mentioned amount even from those assessees; only it was a nominal amount.[31] This was perhaps to ensure that the king's right to levy tax was not abjured or that the ownership is not to become absolute. Villages granted as gift (involving tax-freedom) to Brahmins were called *Brahmatāyam.*[32]

2. *Other Sources of Revenue*

The royal treasury was replenished with income from more sources than one:

Nachchinārkkiniyar mentions the following sources of revenue for a king: (1) recovering the stolen property from the thieves (obviously when owners of property could not be traced); (2) taking 1/6 (presumably of land-yield); (3) taking tolls; (4) taking a (nominal) fixed sum from Brahmins while granting tax-free land to them; (5) taking the enemy's land as a result of war; (6) taking the property of another when the owner leaves no heir to succeed (i.e. escheat) or there are no Brahmins to take as gifts; (7) earning

28 K. A. N. : *Cōḷas*, p. 40.
29 *Puṟam* : 297 ; 330. 30 *Puṟam* : 297. "இறைக்கொள்"
31 *Paḍiṟṟu*: II Ten—*Padiham*. 32 *Ibid*.

wealth by tradidg if the other sources of income did not yield enough money (i.e. state trading); and (8) levying fines on law-breakers.[33] Nachchinārkkiniyar, seems to hold the view that normally the revenue paid by a subject to a king was land revenue and that was calculated at 1/6 of the land yield; he also suggests that a king is not debarred from trade and commerce if financial exigencies needed such a step.

We have the *Kuṟaḷ* statement[34] that the king's revenues were derived from (1) *uṟu poruḷ*, (2) *ulgu poruḷ*, (3) *onnārtteṟu poruḷ*. Item 2 is 'customs and tolls', on imported and exported commodities, item 3 is 'war-booty and tributes' paid by defeated rulers. *Ulgu* means *śuṅgam*[35] or tolls. But item 1 is subject to some controversy as to what Vaḷḷuvar meant by *uṟuporuḷ*. Parimēlaḻagar the commentator on the *Kuṟaḷ* takes *uṟuporuḷ* to mean 'treasure-troves and escheats'[36] while some scholars hold that it means 'land tax'.[37] This latter interpretation is based on the view that *uṟuporuḷ* means 'Wealth that is one's due' i.e. land revenue for a king. But in *Śilappadikāram* we hear of Neḍuñjeḻiyan giving up his right to 'treasure-troves'.[38] It means the kings were enjoying this right to 'treasure-troves'; and Vaḷḷuvar who is enumerating the less known sources of royal revenue would have only thought of some sources other than land. It has also been held *uṟuporuḷ* means 'income from mines'[39] but in the entire range of our available sources we have no other mention of 'mining' or 'tax on mining'. *Śilappadikāram* mentions[40] two kinds of income *iḍu poruḷ* and *paḍu poruḷ*. *Iḍu poruḷ* is presents or gifts and *paḍu poruḷ* is treasure trove. *Paḍu poruḷ* liter-

33 *Tol. Poruḷ* : 73 : Nach.—Com.

34 *Kuṟaḷ* : 756.

35 Some scholars derive *ulgu* from the *sulka* (Skt.) i.e. a fee; *vide Kuṟaḷ* : 756, footnote by V. M. Gopalakrishnamachari.

36 *Kuṟal* : 756; Pari. com.

37 K. A. N.: *Cōḷas*, p. 96, (f.n. 17).

38 *Śilap* ; XXIII : 128, 129.

39 V. R. R. Dikshitar : *Studies*, p. 209.

40 *Śilap*; XXIII : 128.

ally is an equivalent of *uṟu poruḷ* and so it seems Vaḷḷuvar, by *uṟu poruḷ* meant only treasure-troves.

The sources of income mentioned in the *Kuṟaḷ* quoted above yielded income, according to Parimēlaḻagar, clearly over and above the usual 1/6 of the landed yield.

Tolls and similar duties were levied not only on imported and exported commodities; pedestrians and others crossing from one area of royal domains into another had to pay tolls or *ulgu*; and a fee was levied for ferrying passengers across rivers in boats. It is believed that these tolls were generally levied in advance.[41] Passengers travelling by vehicles or boats, therefore, paid, *ulgu* or *āyam* to the king's officer and *kūli* to the driver of the vehicle or the boatman. *Ulgu* was leived on bags of pepper which were being transported in carts from town to town.[42] So internal transit duties on merchandise moving from place to place were also a source of revenue.[43]

It has already been noted that some tax other than agricultural was paid in kind; the cowherds of Madurai are reported to have paid into the royal household their milk products according to a pre-arranged order. This was other than land revenue; most cowherds and shepherds did not pay land revenue for probably they owned no land, and the payment in kind was perhaps in lieu of it.

Frobably the customs and tolls were the next in aggregate size to land revenue. Tamiḻaham had an extensive trade with places like Rome and Egypt i. e. Yavana in the west and Burma, and Kaḍāram (Málaya) and Java (Yava), etc., in the east.[44] The goods imported and exported were of such variety and in such quantities that even a nominal toll must have fetched considerable revenue to the king. It is clearly stated that there was a band of customs officers, in the fort of Puhār, who applied themselves to their official duties diligently and without rest, and collected the tolls.[45]

41 *Paḻamoḻi*: 60. 42 *Perumbāṇ*; 80, 81.
43 *Śilap*: XVII: 7. 44 'Kaḍāram' is 'Malaya' (Khedda).
45 *Paṭṭina:* 118 to 137.

The tributes brought in by defeated foes and by feudatories were regularly flowing into the royal treasury; these were brought in person by the feudatories or the fallen foes and they presented themselves early enough in the morning at the palace. The beat of a drum called *kālai murasu* announced their arrival.[46] Stipulated numbers of elephants and large quantities of paddy, measured by the *ambaṇam* were tendered to the king.

These tributes being compulsorily demanded and obtained were different from presents made to the king by his 'grateful subjects'. It was customary fore the people seeking audience with the king to take presents with them. The quality and the quantity of these presents naturally varied with the status of the person who sought audience. The *Silappadikāram* gives[47] a long account of the large number of presents given to the Chēra king Seṅguṭṭuvan by the hill tribes of Koṅgu Nāḍu. In this particular instance, the presents included (1) ivory tusks, (2) fan whisks of the deer's hair, (3) honey, (4) sandal-wood blocks, (5) pepper, (6) coconuts, (7) mangoes, (8) jack fruit, (9) garlick, (10) sugarcane, (11) arecanut, (12) flowers, (13) plantain fruits, (14) lion cubs, (15) tiger cubs, (16) elephant calves, (17) apes, (18) bears, (19) mongooses, (20) turkeys, (21) peacocks and (22) parrots, etc. These presents were intended to signify the loyalty of those subjects to the king[48] and constituted a real source of royal revenues.

Though it might he supposed that normally the revenue derived by a *Saṅgam* king under the various heads of (1) land revenue, (2) tolls and duties, (3) treasure troves and escheats, (4) tributes and (5) presents must have sufficed for his expenses, it may be admitted that abnormal kings or abnormal times were also possible; and 'extra-revenue' came to be demanded. These demands known as *iravu*[49] in *Kuṛaḷ* are generally translated as 'benevolences';[50] but

46 *Silap*: XXVI 52, 53.

47 *Silap* : XXV : 37 to 54. 48 *Silap* : XXV : 56.

49 *Kuṛaḷ* : 552; It may be argued that *iravu* is not a technical expression for 'extra-demand for revenue' but merely means 'requesting'; it may be so, but it is used here and hereafter

'benevolences' are 'forced loans' while what some 'despotic' *Saṅgam* kings occasionally demanded was not 'a forced loan' but a 'forced tax'. Obviously loans are repayable while taxes are not. It is extremely doubtful if any *Saṅgam* king ever took a loan (forced or otherwise) from his subjects; it can be presumed that the idea of 'public debt' was simply unknown to them.

Kings who demanded such 'extra-taxes must have been rare. The wise men of the land warned such kings, and warned the people against such kings. The *Kuṛaḷ* says: ''A sceptred king imploring a gift is like a robber with a spear in hand crying 'give'.''[51] It is interesting to note that a Chōḻa king Nalaṅkiḷḷi in a poem in *Puṛanānūṛu*[52] indignantly denounces ''those unchivalrous kings who beg of their subjects for taxes other than those due to them''. It is clear that the rulers as well as the ruled were quite aware of the consequences of irregular and novel demands on the subjects' purse. Iḷaṅgo plainly calls this 'misrule or tyranny'.[53] It has been rightly observed that ''this is in clear contrast to Kautilya's maxim on *praṇaya* (benevolences)''.[54] A king who excessively taxes his people even for the purpose of doing good to them later is a despot or a tyrant; for his action is not different from 'feeding the cock with its own comb'.[55]

The kings must have derived some revenue by way of fines paid by criminals found guilty. There seems to have been a practice by which those that offended the king presented him with gold statues weighing as much as themselves.[56] There is mention of offer of such an image together with many bull elephants to a king on one occasion.[57] Such receipts also must thave augmented the royal income.

as if it were a 'technical term' for the sake of convenience in designating that form of fiscal demand.

50 K. A. N.; *Cōḻas*, p. 67.

51 *Kuṛāḷ* : 552. 52 *Puarm* : 75 53 *Śilap* : XXV : 102.

54 K. A. N.: *Cōḻas*, p. 67 55 *Paḷamoḻi*: 329.

56 *Perungadai* : I: 40: 371, 372. 57 *Kuṛun* : 292.

3. *Royal Expenditure*

A peculiar feature of the royal financial system was that while the subjects could be obliged to pay their taxes at the point of the sword, the king could not be compelled to spend his revenues in any particular manner; i. e. while the king could demand, the subjects had to pray. Budgetary provisions regularizing public revenue and public expenditure were therefore unknown. It was a common feature of all ancient polities. But, it is fair to assume that the kings generally spent a part of their revenues for the benefit of the people, though most of the wars they fought were personal or dynastic and had nothing to do with the welfare of the people and those wars were paid for by the kings out of the royal treasury.

The royal expenditure was determined by the king himself. The cost of maintaining a fairly crowded palace at a standard of living far above that of the average subject must have been an important item of expenditure; and so far as personal comforts were concerned the king could never have felt any want; and he could be depended upon to keep his relatives and friends also above want.

Good and chivalrous kings undertook public works of permanent importance, of their own accord or on representation from their subjects. Irrigation work—the laying out of a channel system for continuous supply of water to the wet fields, especially in the Chōḻa land, must have been a major concern of the king. We know how the Chōḻa king Karikālan raised the embankment of the Kāviri and cut down the woods in the Chōḻa land, beautified and improved Uṟaivūr and increased the importance of Puhār as a leading commercial centre.[58] All this must have cost him much and he should have freely drawn from the treasury. But there is a hint that Karikālan recruited the services of his feueatory chieftains on a more or less compulsory basis and they too must have contributed towards meeting the cost of these public works.[59]

Kuḍa Pulaviyanār addressing Talaiyālaṅgānattu Neḍuñjeḻiyan said:[60] "If you wish to become famous or to triumph over

58 *Paṭṭina:* 283 to 289.

59 *Kaliṅgattupparaṇi:* VIII: 197. 60 *Puṟam*: 18.

your enemies, note this: The human body cannot flourish without water—and those who feed the body are those who give life to the body; food means land and water; once land and water are granted, then body and soul are also granted. If the land is such that after sowing, the peasants have to look upwards to the clouds helplessly waiting for the rains to fall, we have no use for the king. Those that provide irrigation facilities "(thereby arranging for a perennial supply of water for the agricultural fields)" are those that carve out a name for themselves in this world." This was an advice and a demand. How the king reacted to this is not known to us.

The king must also have given up some revenue by tax-remissions, exempting some people from payment of taxes[61] and by giving up some royal prerogatives like the right to appropriate treasure-troves.[62] Quite a large part of his money must have been spent on the frequent wars; this this expenditure also can be justified if the wars can be proved to be protective wars intended to save the subjects from foreign attack or even the subjects in a neighbouring state from intolerable misrule.

Extremely liberal patronage of poets, bards, minstrels, dancers, singers, actors, buffoons etc., oftentimes verging on waste must have been a huge source of expenditure if the colophons under the *Padiṟṟuppattu* decads and other traditional accounts of royal patronage are to be taken to be literally true. The maintenance of the civil and military establishment must also have meant a continuous source of expenditure; and on charity the kings must have spent a large sum of money.

Construction of temples and such other institutions of public importance was undertaken by kings who aspired to fame; Seṅguṭṭuvan undertook a serious military adventure to construct a temple for Kaṇṇagi.[63] The kings were also interested in celebrating feasts and festivals in honour of the Gods: e.g. in Puhār it was a special

61 *Puṟam*: 35. 62 *Śilap*: XXIII: 128, 129.

63 *Śilap*, *Vañjikkāṇḍam*; though it is quite probable that the war booty in that context far exceeded the expenditure on the expedition.

responsibility of the Chōḷa kings to see to the successful celebration of 'the festival of Indra'.[64] The Pāṇḍyan kings in particular are known to have patronised for a long period of time an academy of poets, called the Tamil *Śaṅgam*.[65] All these cultural activities which were deemed to be the special responsibilities of the king must have been constant and growing items of expenditure for the *Śaṅgam* kings.

In the absence of state-sponsored or state-aided education communications, medical or health services, the royal expenditure must have been restricted to the items of expenditure mentioned above. The distinction between private domestic royal expenditure and public expenditure was not understood; and how the royal revenues were spent could not be enquired into. In short, there was no 'audit'. The king's servants must have been held responsible to the king as to how they spent his money; but the king was certainly not responsible to his tax-payers or bound to explain to them his expenses.

Under these circumstances, i.e., palace expenditure, royal gifts and war expenses forming a major portion of the king's expenses, the revenues detailed above must have sufficed.

4. *Methods of Collection, Treasury*

There is no detailed description of any official arrangement for the collection of land revenue; but it is known that tributes[66] and presents[67] were naturally brought to the treasury and people waited to pay them into the treasury; but these were of a different category from land revenue. For presents were voluntarily given and tributes were almost punitive in their nature and did not constitute the mainstay of the royal revenue. The land revenue was the very foundation of the royal finance and if all the assessees brought their revenue to the palace, more intricate problems of managing the vast crowd of assessees and accounting would have been caused than

64 *Śilap: Indira Viḻavūr Eḍutta Kātai,; Maṇi; Viḻā Aṟai Kātai.*
65 *Iṟaiyanār Ahapporuḷ* : Note on *Sūtram* 1.
66 *Śilap* ; XXVI : 52, 53. 67 *Śilap :* XXV : 37 to 55.

mere arrangements for the collection of tax. Further, it is on record that the tolls levied in the custom house (at the harbour) were collected by officials appointed for the purpose.[68] But Megasthenes has a statement: "The country in the extreme South is ruled by a Pāṇḍya queen whose territory consists of 365 villages each one of which *brings* its revenue to the state treasury on an appointed day." It is wellknown that Megasthenes has handed down to posterity many observations of an unreliable nature, largely because he was an alien and could not easily understand Indian conditions or practices quite clearly; but his observation quoted above is partially corroborated by a practice mentioned in the *Śilappadikāram*[69] which says that the leading members of the cowherd community *brought* to the palace by prearranged turns their accustomed revenue in the form of milk and milk-products in which they traded. This might suggest that certain types of payments (either in kind or in cash) into the royal treasury were *brought* there by the assessees; but a good part of the revenue must have been collected by local officers appointed for the purpose.

We hear of a revenue official *Aḻumbil Vēḷ* who was in charge of revenue matters in the days of Chēran Seṅguṭṭuvan;[70] he was perhaps assisted by revenue accountants called *āyakkaṇakkar*.[71] *Āyam* means 'tolls' and *āyakkaṇakkar* were those who maintained accounts about tolls. But it is not right to dogmatise on this matter, for in the particular context coming to us from the *Śilappadikāram*, these persons are entrusted with revenue work (either collection or remission); but in those days, it is most reasonable to suppose that all officers were just servants of the king; and the king could not be expected to put a restraint on himself in the matter of ordering any of his servants to do any kind of official work; and especially when specialized work and department organization or the portfolio system or other modern devices in

68 *Paṭṭina:* 120 to 131. 69 *Śilap:* XVII· 7.

70 *Śilap:* XXVIII: 205; 'Aḻumbil' was the name of a place *vide Aham:* 44.

71 *Śilap:* XXVIII: 205.

administration could not have been known, it is safe to presume that any competent man in whom the king confided was asked to be in charge of executing the mandates of the kings.

Kāvidi was the title of honour bestowed on certain favourites of the king; they are mentioned as more or less regular attendants in the king's court. In a particular context in the *Śilappadikāram*[72] the commentator explains a *Kāvidi* as *Variyilār* which as has already been pointed out can mean 'a tax-collector' on the analogy of *Paḍaiyilār* meaning 'army men' or simply and more naturally as those who were exempted from payment of taxes and hence honoured by the king. But in any case to say 'evidently the *Kāvidi* was the finance minister"[73] is to stretch the imagination beyond the point strictly warranted by the text *Karaṇattiyalavar* mentioned as one of the '*Eṇpērāyam*' has been identified with a revenue official whose duties are not clear.

In the case of tolls levied from inland traders, naturally in view of the fact that the persons who were to pay the tolls were going from place to place, the tax collectors or the *āyakkārar* must have been stationed in particular places on the high roads, near fords and near market places. In the case of customs tolls *Paṭṭinappālai* gives us an account of how these duties on imports and exports were levied and collected in the harbour of Puhār. The goods arriving at the harbour were neatly packed and the tiger seal of the king of the Chōḻa land was impressed on the packets; and "when the goods left the harbour the active customs officials levied the tolls honestly and diligently on both kinds of goods, viz., imports and exports".[74] Here too it is clear that the customs tolls were collected by officials specially appointed therefor.

The following advice is tendered by Munṟuṟai Araiyar to the king's revenue collecters in the matter of collection of taxes: "Never allow arrears of taxes to accumulate; if that is done, though it might be that later on those taxes can be collected there is a limit beyond which taxes cannot be collected. So if it

72 *Śilap*: XXII: 9 note. 73 T. V. M.: *S. I. Polity*, p. 180.
74 *Paṭṭina:* 130, 131.

is necessary to collect the grains at the threshing floor itself, do so".[75] This advice means that (1) at times arrears of taxes were allowed to accumulate, (2) the practice of taking delivery of the revenue in kind at the threshing floor itself was in vogue and (3) that 1/6 or any other fraction due to the king could be deducted first; the mention of its being the last charge was but a formula of 'ideal' distribution of one's earnings but was not always practised in fact.

Taxes were to be collected without harassing the people; the tax collectors are advised that 'taxes should be collected in such a manneer that the assesees may never feel the burden of tax, just as the bees suck away the honey from the flowers".[76]

As the governments of Tamiḻaham in those days had arrangements for collection of revenues, they must have maintained a treasury also. Generally the treasury was in the king's own palace under heavy guard. The large presents which the kings made to visitors to his court could have been promptly and easily made only if the treasury was near at hand. As it was clear that the kings spent out of the treasury for their expenses also, the treasury must have been located in the palace itself. But there seems to have been at least one instance of a public treasury maintained in a place other than the capital of the kingdom. "The victorious Chōḻas deposited the treasure (revenue collections) given by the subjects in a well-guarded place in Kuḍandai".[77]

5. *Mint, Coinage, Weights and Measures*

We have very few extant coins of the *Saṅgam* age. In spite of barter being the prevalent method of transfer of commodities, metallic currency was not unknown. For we have mention of in-

75 *Paḻamoḻi* : 333. 76 *Paḻamoḻi* : 242

77 See page 128 of K. A. N.: *H. S. I.* and page 67 of his *Cōḻas*. He treats 'Kuḍandai' as 'Kumbakōṇam'. But 'Kuḍandai, is a corruption of Kuḍavāyil or Kuḍavāśal, a small place near Kumbakōṇam; that this is so is made clear by an observation made by the commentator Pērāśiriyar in his gloss on Sūtram 392 of *Tol. Poruḷ* — The corruption of 'Kumbakōṇam' into 'Kuḍandai' is a modern variation.

digenous coins of particular shapes and bearing particular names. Their familiarity with the Roman currency at least must have persuaded them to think of metallic currency as a more feasible medium of exchange of goods. The coins which we find were not manufactured in a royal mint, functioning permanently as an institution; particular goldsmiths, employed for the purpose minted the coins. The coins, surely, must have been of uniform weight; we do not know if they bore any legends. But in as much as we know that the practice of affixing or engraving the royal emblem (the bow, the fish or the tiger) on royal or public property was wellknown it will be reasonable to suppose that those coins were minted with the royal dynastic emblem impressed on them. A few specimens of early Tamil coins are known and these bear only the Pāṇḍyan figure of the carp or the ashtamangalam symbols.

The Tamils knew and used the Roman gold and silver coins of the days of Augustus and his immediate successors for they exported their commodities to Rome in exchange for commodities as well as for Roman currency. The volume of trade between Tamiḻaham and Rome now grew to such an extent in the early centuries of the Christian era that the Yavanas were maintaining a kind of mint in which they struck Roman coins for use by the local settlement of foreign merchants.

Exchange of commodities through the medium of metallic currency does not seem to have been in common vogue in the *Saṅgam* age; and "metallic currency entered only in transactions of foreign commerce".[78] But the Tamils were not unaware of metallic currency of some form. It seems that gold, copper and lead were the only metals used for making those coins. *Kāṇam* was a kind of gold coin which was probably very small in size. The poet Ariśil Kiḻār received a present of 900,000 gold *kāṇams* and sovereign rights on the Chēra land from the king Perunjēral Irumpoṛai famous for his Tagaḍūr victory;[79] and the poetess Kākkaipāḍiniyār Nachcheḻḻaiyār received 100,000 gold *Kāṇams* as present from her patron Āḍukōṭpāṭṭu Chēralādan; that poetess received

78 K. A. N.: *Cōḷas*, p. 89. 79 *Padiṛṛu* : VIII Ten—*Padiham*.

not only the coins but also a large quantity of solid gold.[80] The poet Rudraṅkaṇṇan received, 1,600,000 *Pons* (gold coins) for his *Paṭṭinappālai* from Karikālan.[81] These *kāṇams* and *Pons* referred perhaps to the same coins. Neither the shape nor the weight of these coins can be ascertained now. The exchange rate between foreign coins and Tamil coins has not been mentioned anywhere.

There was another coin called *Kāśu*. It seems it was of the size of a margosa fruit and of the shape of a lotus bud. Women used to wear these solid gold beads around the neck.[82] But the use of the word *kāśu* is significant; for in later days it generally meant any metallic currency and the smallest bit of copper coin in particular.[83] In the *Saṅgam* age the gold beads served as coins. It is clear that gold was one of the earliest metals known to the Tamils; and 'iron' was called *pon* just like gold.[84] Silver was known to them[85] but it has always been called *veḷḷi* i.e. 'a white metal' and rarely *veṇ pon*.

The land tax collected by the king's revenue officials was either in kind or in cash. The customs officials who collected *ulgu* on imported and exported commodities probably collected only cash.

Regular weights and measures are necessary to a commercial community. They involve a knowledge of counting in terms of multiples and in terms of fractions. The Tamils used the word *eṇ* to denote numerals as well counting; and they had their counting beads. They were the *Kaḻaṅgu* or *Kaḻaṛchikkāi*.[86] *Aḷavai* meant a unit of measurement.

They could count from one to thousand, and for numbers above thousand they repeated the process of counting up to a thousand. It is supposed by the Sanskritists that *āyiram* is a corruption of *sahasram* in Sanskrit; it is doubtful if it is so; for the Tamils who

80 *Padiṟṟu*: VI Ten — *Padiham*.
81 *Kaliṅgattupparaṇi*: *Rājapārampariyam*: 198.
82 *Kuṟun* 67; *Naṟṟiṇai*: 274.
83 *Kāśu* becomes 'cash' in English.
84 *Puṟam*: 14. 85 *Puṟam*: 390.
86 *Padiṟṟu*: 32; 7 to 9.

could count from one to 899 must have known 900 also; and the name for 900 is *toḷḷāyiram* (meaning the reduced thousand). But they, like the English, had no single expression for 100,000. *Nūṟ-Āyiram* was invariably used instead.[87] The expression *Kōḍi* for ten millions was also known to and used by the *Saṅgam* writers,[88] though it was not a Tamil word. They had other terms to denote 'very big numbers'; their value, however, is difficult to ascertain; *Veḷḷam*,[89] *Āmbal*,[90] *Tāmarai*[91] stood for very large numbers. Aḍiyārkku Nallār mentions *Pallam* as representing a huge number.[92] They had their fractions, too.

Mukkāl : 3/4
Arai : 1/2
Kāl : 1/4
Araikkāl : 1/8
Viśam : 1/16
Kāṇi : 1/64
Mundiri : 1/256

The last two fractions find mention in the *Nālaḍiyār*.[93] The Tamils denoted 'Zero' by *Pāḻ*.[94]

Mā[95] and *Vēli*[96] were measures of land to the Tamils very early.

100 *Kuḻis* : 1 *Mā*
20 *Māṣ* : 1 *Vēli*

1 Kuḻi was an area in depth enclosed 10 ft.^{2} × 2½ ft.

The grain from the field was measured in 'Ambaṇam' a measure which had probably a large cubic content for we are told that subordinate chieftains paid their tributes of grain measured in

87 *Tol. Eḻuttu* : 471.
88 *Kuṟaḷ* : 377: 639 "கோடி, தொகுத்தார்க்கும் துய்த்தலரிது.".
89 *Paḍiṟṟu* : 21; *Madurai* : 22. 90 *Paḍiṟṟu* : 63.
91 *Tirumurugu* : 165; Nach. com; *Tol. Eḻuttu* : 393. Nach. com.
92 *Śilap* : IX : 54—94. Aḍiyār. com.
93 *Nālaḍi* : 346. 94 *Paripāḍal* : III : 77.
95 *Puṟam* : 184: *Porunar* : 180. 96 *Porunar* : 246.

Ambaṇam [97] The *Paḍiṟṟuppattu* commentator equates *Ambaṇam* with a *Marakkāl* which is four Madras measures. *Nāḻi* was a much smaller measure equal to one *uḻakku* or two *Āḻākkus*. They had a measure of time called *Nāḻikai*, because *Naḻikai* was and is equal to 2/5 of an hour or 1/60 of a day, representing the time taken for *Nāḻi* or two *Āḻakkus* of water to drip down from the *Nāḻkai vaṭṭil*, or the hour-glass. Usually, the grain measure was called *Nāḻi* and the time measure *Nāḻikai*. It is suggested that a normal average Tamilian consumed food prepared from a *Nāḻi* or two *Āḻākkus* of rice.[98] Therefore the present equivalent of *Nāḻi* and *Āḻākku* could not have been different in the *Saṅgam* age. *Tūṇi* and *Padakku* were also cubic measures, which were used for measuring horse-gram and other grains:

1 *Tūṇi*: 4 *Marakkāls*.
1 *Padakku*: 2 *Marakkāls*.[99]
(1 *Marakkāl*—4 Madras measures or 1 *Ambaṇam*).
1 *Marakkāl*: 1 *Ambaṇam*.
1 *Marakkāl* or 1 *Ambaṇam*: 32 *Āḻākkus*.

The cubic measures used for measuring grain were of the shape of a wine cask with a 'broader waist' with slightly narrow bottom and top; and they were tightened and fixed by metallic bands.[100] Many articles of trade which were not measured in the cubic measures were measured in balance called *Tulākkōl*; commission agents, *taragar* wandered about the bazaar streets of Madurai with balance and *ambaṇam* in their hands and offered to accurately measure commodities for buyers and sellers.[101]

Gold (bullion) was measured in *ṭulām* which was also known as *kā*[102] in the Saṅgam age. The coin called *pon* is referred to as 'the solid pure *pon*.'[103] Possibly the coin, *pon*, was a small quantity of solid gold. The relationship between *tulākkōl* meaning balance, and *tulām* a measure of gold is not clear; possibly *tulākkōl* was a

97 *Paḍiṟṟu* : 66. 98 *Puṟam*: 189.
99 *Nāḷaḍi*: 387. 100 *Śilap*: XIV: 208. 101 *Ibid*.
102 *Paḍiṟṟu*. VI Ten—*Paḍiham*. 103 *Kaṭippśum Pon*.

goldsmith's balance originally. *Tulām* is a Sanskrit word meaning 'balance'. A smaller measure of weight was a *toḍi* which was an equivalent of a *palam*; and ¼ of a *toḍi* was a *Kahsu*.[104] *Kaḻañju* was a unit of measuring gold.[105] The statement that "*pon* was coined gold of the full weight of 1 *kaḻañju*",[106] was true of the *Saṅgam* age also.

The Tamils of the *Saṅgam* age had a system of linear measurements also. The shortest linear measurement known to them was called *Aṇu* (அணு); and the table was:[107]

8 *Aṇus:* 1 *Tērttu*
8 *Tērttus:* 1 *Immi*
8 *Immis:* 1 *Eḷ*
8 *Eḷs:* 1 *Nel*
8 *Nels:* 1 average thumb *(peru Viral)*
28 average thumbs *(peru Viral):* 1 *Muḻam.*

[*tērttu* is a hair's breadth; *immi* is a very small grain. *Eḷ:* sesame grain; *Nel:* paddy grain; *Muḻam:* cubit; *Aṇu:* literally means atom.][108]

It is significant that the Tamil expression *parippu* means 'speed' or the rate at which distances are covered in unit of time.[109] A popular unit of distance was a *kūppiḍu*[110] or a distance equal to that which is covered by a normal 'hallo'.

104 *Kuṟal:* 1037.
105 *Puṟam:* 11–13.
106 K. A. N.: *Cōḻas*, p. 613.
107 *Śilap:* III: 100; Aḍiyār. com.
108 *Śilap:* III: 100. Aḍiyār. com.
109 *Puṟam:* 30.
110 *Malaipaḍu:* 421, 422.

CHAPTER IX

ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

1. *Introductory*

Compared with modern times, the *Saṅgam* economy was simple and in fact mostly self-sufficing. The people were industrious and they believed in living well, if possible by earning wealth. The need to own wealth was frankly admitted for 'this world is not for those who have no wealth'.[1] No doubt, there were, as there now are, the very rich, the very poor, and an intermediate class. The extreme opulence of some classes of people[2] as well as the extreme poverty of some other classes[3] are both clearly portrayed in contemporary literature. While it is possible that there may be some exaggeration about the riches of the wealthy, no exaggeration about the poverty of the poor could have been attempted. The very rich were perhaps the kings and those that surrounded them and managed to earn their favour by fulfilling their desires or by bestowing fulsome praises on them.

As always, a vast majority of persons with demanding stomachs and silenced voices whose last meals were dim memories and the next ones hopeless dreams, went about trying to solve their personal problems of food, clothing and shelter as best they could. The

1 *Kuṟaḷ* : 247.

2 The wealthy were such that they 'scared away the hens from the courtyard where grains were spread for drying by throwing their precious earrings at them' (*Paṭṭina*: 23).

3 The poet Peruntalai Śāttanār, approaching the exiled king Kumaṇan of Mudirai Hill, described his poverty in moving terms to him, saying "when his child unable to extract even a drop of milk from its mother's prematurely dried up breasts, piteously looked up at the mother, the mother looked at him (her husband, the poet) with tears in her eyes and he had come to the king for a favour". (*Puṟam*: 164).

picture of poverty depicted by some poets is harrowing. The exaggerated picture of prosperity is probably true of the capital cities, the palace and the commercial centres; the hyperbole comes in both for the sake of poetry and for the sake of the patron.

Wealth did not mean then what it means now, in view of the fact that standards of living were different; and apart from certain basic luxuries opportunities for novel expenditure were rare. The rich, at least most of them, spent a part of their wealth on charity; the king's philanthropic disposition set the example in this matter. The poor, more numerous as always, were either the farm and casual labourers or the wandering minstrels. Society, as it was then organized and was functioning, knew how to bridge this gap between two clearly different economic levels. It was not closed by state organized attempts to abolish poverty or to expropriate the rich; for such methods were not known then; it is quite possible that even if they were known, they would have been discountenanced as blasphemous, for that would amount to meddling with the natural and divine arrangement of the social order. They felt the division of social groups into the rich and the poor as not only a natural condition but as a desirable condition.[4] No man was always rich and no man was always poor; riches and poverty came round and round by turns, like the wheels of a chariot.[5] In fact Vaḷḷuvar is quite plain on this matter: he says, "A world devoid of beggars would be so monotonous that it would be like a society of dancing wooden puppets".[6] In short, they solved the problem of destitution by private or royal gifts of varying degrees of munificence. The tradition of Tamiḻaham inculcated the virtue of charity in the minds of the people. The situation satisfied the rich as well as the poor; the former derived spiritual comfort (which they *perhaps* needed) and the latter obtained the material benefits (which they *certainly* needed). It was quite a satisfactory system; and was in consonance with the generally prevailing simple social arrangements; and seemed to avoid undue disturbances in society.

This does not mean that poverty was not felt or resented; on the other hand, realistic description of the effects of poverty is

4 *Kuṟun*: 137. 5 *Nāladi*: 2. 6 *Kuṟaḷ*: 1058.

available in abundance in the *Saṅgam* literature.[7] But they did not feel, that poverty was the consequence of social mismanagement, maldistribution of wealth, etc., but believed that it was the product of the past actions — *tīvinai* (sins) — of man and so inevitable.[8] Vaḷḷuvar also thought so, but he was so impatient with poverty that he cursed the creator who instituted poverty in this world. Tamiḻaham of the *Saṅgam* age believed that poverty could be mitigated only by the sympathy and charity of friends and patrons. Though perhaps in most cases, the chief motive force for charity was not sheer humanitarianism but a desire to earn 'undying puhaḻ',[9] it is relevant that the desired ends of charity were in the meanwhile secured.

The common people were mostly agriculturists (or cowherds, hunters and fishermen) or manufacturers or traders. The distinguished few were the priests and the servants of the most distinguished one — the king. The professional and the mercenary soldiers, the highway robbers and the wandering minstrels and the bards formed the other sections of society. The dress, food and other habits of and even names borne by, these people in different parts of the country (the coastal, the agricultural, the pastoral, and the hilly) were determined by their environment and they were greatly attached to their native localities, large movements of people form place to place being rare events.

The king was the owner of the territory over which he ruled; that is how Pāri could gift away all the Parambu to the suppliant bards. He was at the prosperous end of the economic scale. The other end was peopled by totally indigent persons like the bards who had no material possession whatsoever in this world and had not tasted the pleasures of property. In between them there were many grades of persons in different levels of economic prosperity. It was, however, generally believed that income derived from one cow was not enough to lead even a moderately happy life; it was contemptuously called *Ōrān valśi Śiṛil Vāḻkkai* (the miserable life of owning but

7 *Puṛam*: 376; *Nānmaṇi*: 30; *Kuṛaḷ*: 1041.
8 *Kuṛaḷ*: 270; *Nālaḍi*: 31. 9 Puhaḻ: fame.

one cow). The cowherd community counted cattle as wealth; while among agriculturists the number of ploughs was the standard of measurement of wealth. A poet in *Kuṟuntogai* speaks of *Ōrēruḻavan* (a peasant with one ploughshare). Of course there were the ascetics who voluntarily gave up the pleasures of this life, as also the affluent householders who considered it their duty to support the weaker ones in society.

No clear idea of the strength of the population of Tamiḻaham of those days can be formed, for obviously census operations were not thought of then. But the land could not have been sparsely populated for we hear of many poets — a large number of them known to be contemporaries; large armies, busy markets and a whole army of officials — the spies alone numbering a thousand in the days of Seṅguṭṭuvan. There is nothing to prove that the large cities of Madurai and Puhār were not very populous. Probably there could not have been a city as large as modern Madras. We hear of a society engaging in multifarious activities spreading over the whole of South India. The present population which is the result of 150 years of *Pax Britannica* and advanced and modern medical science must not however be taken to be any standard for determining the population of two thousand years ago. The rate of growth of population from the *Saṅgam* age to the 17th or the 18th centuries was not as much as the rate of growth during the past two centuries. It is notable that the elder Pliny remarks that the most populous city Palaesimundus (unidentified) in Taprobane (Ceylon) had a population of 200,000. Pliny was writing in the first century A.D.

Food being an essential fact of physical life agricultural operations, fishing and hunting were the major occupations. The textile industry, house-building, planning and building of towns, forging of weapons and other avocations provided the necessaries, comforts and luxuries of life, but they were only of secondary importance. Yet a considerable body of persons were engaged in industries and commerce (both inland and foreign). The major towns like Puhār, Uṟaiyūr, Vañji, Toṇḍi, Muśiṟi, Madurai, Kāñchi, etc., absorbed most of these manufactured goods; and industry was naturally encouraged by a rising demand in foreign markets. Shipping and

other allied industries like harbour-building and warehouse-construction etc., were developed to sustain this foreign trade of which we find elaborate mention in contemporary native and foreign sources.

But it was mainly an agricultural economy, industry being subordinate and ancillary to it and confined generally to urban areas; weaving was, as it even now is, perhaps the most common part-time occupation for the farmers and a regular full-time one for many others.

Transfers of property were common. Gifts are frequently mentioned. Gifts generally of movable property like cattle and at times of immovable property like land, to persons like poets and bards and to institutions like temples were in vogue. Assignment of tax-free villages to Brahmins[10] was a special gift. Gifts were considered, as even now, they are irrevocable.[11] When absolute rights in land were made over (involving an exemption from payment of any taxes), it was called *muṟṟūṭṭu* and when cultivable land was so made over it was known as *pāṭṭaṅkāl*.[12]

The market place was known as *āvaṇam* and because it is a centre of transactions, all instruments witnessing transfers of property also came to be called *āvaṇam*.

Mortgages of immovable property and pawning or pledging of movable property were quite common. We are told how a patron pledged a sword to get money to entertain his bard with; and the bard himself pledged his lute to help his patron;[13] These transactions were known as *paṇayam*.

Debts went by the name of *taniśu*.[14] People in those days, as always, borrowed with pleasure and were loth to repay;[15] and it was enjoined as a healthy rule that one should not borrow from co-tenants (or members of the same family) for they would worry for repayment.[16] A simple type of transaction which house-wives generally indulged in was called *kuṟi edirppai*, i.e. taking on loan a

10 *Padiṟṟu*: II Ten-*Padiham*. 11 *Kuṟun*: 349.
12 *Kali*: 111: 4. 13 *Puṟam*: 316. 14 *Paḷamoḻi*; 98.
15 *Kali*: 22. 16 *Paḷamoḻi*: 98.

fixed quantity of a particular commodity promising to repay the same quantity of the same commodity at a future date;[17] it was an interest-free loan of commodities. Whenever a person proposed to lend money on the security of movable property[18] he also made enquiries about the details of the borrower's movable property. The creditors were naturally anxious about the money owing to them and they were found loitering about the gates of the palaces of the patrons who promised to pay off their debts.[19] These transations naturally led to civil litigation.

Accounting of some sort was known to them; we hear of accountants—*kaṇakkars* like *āyakkaṇakkar*. But in humble households accounts of continuing transactions were maintained by making symbolic marks (dots or lines) on the wall in simple Crusoe-fashion.[20]

The more or less continuous state of warfare in the country must have had its adverse effect on the economy of the land. It was only the basic simplicity and elasticity of the entire economic structure that saved the land from the ravages of these ruinous wars; and even so, large numbers of people must have felt the aftermath of the battles; for incendiarism and indiscriminate destruction[21] of all enemy-property were usual features of the *Śaṅgam* warfare.

While agriculture, trade and warfare undoubtedly flourished, the fine arts (like poetry, music, and dancing) were liberally patronized.[22] The general economic condition of Tamiḻaham in the *Śaṅgam* age could not have been very unsatisfactory in view of the usually righteous attitude taken towards popular problems by the kings and the chieftains in the land.

2. *Agriculture*

The chief industry of Tamiḻaham has always been agriculture, an esteemed profession.[23] In whatever occupation others might be engaged, they must all depend finally on the farmer;[24] even

17 *Kuṟaḷ:* 221. 18 *Kali*: 108. 19 *Puṟam*: 156.
20 *Kuṟun:* 358. 21 *Puṟam:* 4. 22 *Śilap*: *Araṅgēṟṟukādai*.
23 *Kuṟaḷ*: Chap. 104 or *Uḻavu*. 24 *Kuṟaḷ*: 1031.

the ascetics will become helpless if peasants do not till the land.[25] No other profession is as fundamental as agriculture.[26] Vaḷḷuvar, mentioning the fertile land as a necessary feature of an ideal state, says: "That alone is entitled to be called territory (*nāḍu*) which yields wealth unsought for".[27]

The Pālār *(Pālāṛu)*, the Pennār *(Peṇṇaiāṛu)*, the Kāviri, the Vaigai and the Tāmraparṇi—to mention only the larger among the Tamil rivers—sustained the fertility of the land; the wealth yielded by the delta regions was supplemented by the other wealth of the forests and the pastures, the mountains and the sea-coasts; but agricultural land was the foundation on which the economy developed. The land was fertile and the agriculturist was an active and hard working person; and so there must easily have been self-sufficiency in the matter of food; rice and millets then, as now, were the staple food. The fertility of the land especially in the Chōḻa kingdom, finds proud mention in contemporary literature. Āvūr Mūlaṅkiḻār in a short poem addressed to Kiḷḷi Vaḷavan says, "The land is so fertile that a tiny piece thereof, where a cow-elephant might rest, can produce enough food to nourish seven bull-elephants."[28] The fertility of the land even in hilly areas like the Palkuṛakkōṭṭam[29] was such that "the sesame crop was so healthy and full-grown that a handful could contain no more than seven grains of sesame".[30] Even without ploughing, merely sowing deep in turned sod made mustard grow in great quantities.[31] In a fairly fertile farm, a *vēli* of land produced a full thousand *kalams* of paddy[32] and that was the cultivation target aimed at by ambitious agriculturists.

25 *Kuṛaḷ*: 1036.

26 Raising urban labour to the level of farmyard labour was a later innovation introduced by the 'Industrial Revolution': Bharati: "உழவுக்கும் தொழிலுக்கும் வந்தனை செய்வோம்".

27 *Kuṛaḷ*: 739.

28 *Puṛam*: 40; "ஒருபிடி படியுஞ் சீறிடம்
எழுகளிறு புரக்கு நாடுகிழ வோயே".

29 Roughly the land lying between Tirupati and Tiruvaṇṇāmalai.

30 *Malaipaḍu*: 102 to 106. 31 *Malaipaḍu*: 122, 123.

32 *Porunar*: 246 to 248., *Puṛam*: 391

Agriculture was carried on in almost every part of the land; somewhat more in the delta areas than elsewhere. The chief product i.e. paddy has been largely supplemented by millets and other varieties of corn. The land has always been very rich in its yield of coconuts, plantains, sugarcane[33] and cotton. The part of the country fit for agricultural operations was called *Marudam* in the conventional and four-fold division of land in Tamiḻaham. The agriculturists were the *Uḻavar* and their women the *Uḻattiyar*.[34] Indra, the king of the heavens whom Tolkāppiyar calls *Vēndan* (king) was the God, who presided over the *Marudam*, and was the very personification of the monsoon rains.[35] The agriculturists worshipped Him as God, for they were entirely dependent on Him.[36] Rice together with water constituted the very basis of physical existence.[37] the cattle were their favourite beasts; *Vañji*, *Kāñchi*, and *Marudam* were the chief trees of the *Marudam* land.[38] Their occupation was agriculture and the lotus was their sacred flower.[39] The owners of land and the tillers of the soil were the *Vēḷāḷas*, the former known as the superior *Vēḷāḷas* and the latter the inferior *Vēḷāḷas*.

The two chief characteristics of an ideal state, which Vaḷḷuvar mentions are: (1) *vallaraṇ*:[40] suitability of the terrain for purposes of defence against foreign attacks and (2) *taḷḷā vilaiyuḷ*:[41] fertility of the land ensuing a perennial supply of food

33 They cultivated a kind of sugarcane called *kaḷaik-karumbu*. It seems it was a graft between sugarcane and ordinary bamboo; probably it was a luscious variety introduced by the ancestors of Adigaimān of Tagaḍūr.

34 *Tol. Poruḷ* : 20; Nach. com.

35 *Kali* : 98; 'Indra Viḻa' of *Silappadikāram*.

36 *Kuṟaḷ* : 542; "வானேக்கி வாழும் உலகெல்லாம்".

37 *Puṟam* : 18. In this poem Kuḍapulaviyanār says that a large irrigation system would relieve peasants from dependence on the monsoon.

38 In fact, the land *Marudam* derived its name from the tree *Marudam*.

39 *Tol Poruḷ* : 18; Nach. com. 40 *Kuṟaḷ* : 737.

41 *Kuṟaḷ* : 731.

to the population. He goes on to describe how this fertility can be best exploited for the benefit of all and naturally deals with *Uḻavu* 'agriculture' in a whole chapter.[42] He is very clear in his ideas about the fundamental and unalterable importance of agriculture, for 'food' is the first concern of man. He sternly repudiates the view that agriculture is not as dignified as other professions; on the other hand, the agriculturists are positively the support of the whole world.[43] They alone led a truly useful life, the rest being only parasites and sycophants.[44] Vaḷḷuvar endowed with a large practical outlook does not stop with mere praise of the agriculturists; he gives them a few ideas about agricultural operation. If an agriculturist would allow the ploughed land to dry up so that one *toḍi*[45] of dust on the land dries down to one *Kahśu*,[46] i.e. if it is reduced to 1/4 the original quantity, there will be no need to put into the land even one handful or *eru* i.e. manure.[47] An agriculturist, according to Vaḷḷuvar, must *(a)* plough the land, *(b)* manure it, *(c)* transplant the seedlings, *(d)* ensure an unfailing supply of channel-water and *(e)* protect the cultivated farm from the stray cattle.[48] He warns the farmer against lethargy; he bids him be active and never despond.[49] The most important advice the author of the *Kuṟaḷ* has to give to the agriculturist is to guard against absentee-landlordism.[50]

In spite of the fertility of the land, occasionally the monsoon must have turned treacherous and drought and famine could not have been infrequent. The repeated demands made by some poets of the *Śaṅgam* age for revenue relief can only mean unexpectedly poor harvests due to failure of rains. The *Iṟaiyanār Ahapporuḷ* mentions[51] a long period (twelve years) of famine in Pāṇḍyan kingdom when temporarily the Tamiḻ *Śaṅgam* had to be dissolved. On such occasions of extreme famine, the farmer lived on his capital, i.e. consumed the seed normally intended for sowing.[52]

42 *Kuṟaḷ* : Chap. : 104. 43 *Kuṟaḷ* : 1032.
44 *Kuṟaḷ* : 1033. 45 *Toḍi* : 1 palam. 46 *Kāhsu* : 1/4 *palam*.
47 *Kuṟaḷ* : 1037. 48 *Kuṟaḷ* : 1038. 49 *Kuṟaḷ* : 1040.
50 *Kuṟaḷ* : 1039. 51 Note on *Sūtram*, 1. 52 *Puṟam* : 230.

3. *Industry*

The fact that agriculture was the dominant and basic occupation of a majority of persons in the country does not mean that other activities were neglected or were negligible. The *Saṅgam* age witnessed an advanced stage of industries and crafts. Indigenous industries were fairly advanced and whenever the Tamils felt that foreign workmen were specialists in particular industries they were encouraged to come and settle down in Tamiḻaham to pursue their specialist occupation. It is on record that, side by side with the Tamil workers, artisans (*vinaiñar*)[53] from Magadha, the blacksmiths (*Kollar*) from Avanti, the smiths (*Kammar*) from the land of the Maharāṭṭas, and the carpenters (*tachchar*) from Yavana worked in their simple factories in the leading cities of Tamiḻaham;[54] certain articles for which certain foreign places became famous later on came to be manufactured in Tamiḻaham but still bore the name of the foreign place, like 'Kaliṅgam' and 'Kāḻagam' which were varieties of cotton fabric generally embroidered[55] and for which Kaliṅga and Malaya were famous, and 'Sinam' a kind of silk for which China was famous.

Next to agriculture, spinning and weaving were the most important and widely practised crafts. Patient women, then as now, spent their spare time in spinning cotton threads.[56] They spun on during night time also by the faint light of a wick lamp. Weaving was a specialized industry in certain very important centres like Uṟaiyūr, Madurai etc , which still continue to be leading centres of the handloom industry. The *Periplus* mentions the fineness of Tamil textile fabrics especially those of Uṟaiyūr; and we have abundant references in contemporary native literature about the beauty and fineness of the textile products.[57] The *Porunaṟāṟṟuppaḍai* mentions "beautiful cotton cloth so fine that the eye cannot follow the course of yarn

53 Dr. U V. Swaminatha Iyer calls them lapidaries; they were called *Vaḍama Vaṇṇakkar* or the 'northern lapidaries'.

54 *Maṇi* : XIX : 107 to 110; *Peruṅgadai* : I; 58:40 to 44.

55 *Silap* : XXII : 22; *Naṟṟiṇai* : 38; *Kuṟun* : 167.

56 *Puṟam* : 326. 57 *Tirumurugu* : 138; *Porunar* : 81-83.

and cloth bearing such designs as make it look like the slough of the snake". We are also told that they manufactured "silk cloth with its threads gathered in small knots at its ends."[58] It is curious that most of these details continue to be true even now, and one can see such products of such design and make manufactured in the famous textile centres of Tamiḻaham even to-day Embroidered clothing seem to have been a well-known article of manufacture, though the use of it must have been necessarily restricted to the aristocratic classes.[59] Dyeing was a widespread ancillary industry to weaving as it has always been; and the blue dye for the loin cloth was a favourite colour with the consumers.[60] It is interesting to note how in addition to silk and cotton fabrics, cloth made of wood fibre (called *Śirai Maravuri, Nārmaḍi*[61]) also was used by the priestly class. It is noted that in the Madurai market woollen goods (goods made of 'hair') were sold side by side with cotton and silk goods.[62]

The manufacturers wove long pieces of cloth at a time and bits of required lengh were scissored off later; and these bits were called *aṟuvai* or *tuṇi*, the textile dealers themselves being known as *aṟuvai vaṇigar* who lived in particular suburbs of the city known as *aṟuvai viḍi*.[63]

Generally, the Tamils wore cloth as it was woven and stitched it into garments: the reference to 'the two bits of cloth one wears'[64] supported by a later reference to 'the four cubits of cloth worn'[65] shows that normally the Tamils were content with a loin cloth and an upper cloth. But this does not mean that stitched garments were unknown. The foreigners, especially the Yavanas who came to

58 *Porunar* : 155.

59 *Tirumurugu* : 15; *Kali* : 56; *Śilap* : XVII : 1.

60 *Puṟam* ; 274 ; "நீலக்கச்சை". 61 *Tirumurugu* : 126.

62 *Śilap* : XIV : 205 to 207. Aḍiyārkkunallār, the commentator on the *Śitappadikāram*, however, says that the cloth made of hair, was made (not of fibre but) of the hair of rats; though it is difficult to see on what authority he says so it is interesting to find him anticipated in more than one reference in *Jīvakachintāmaṇi*; e. g., st. 2686. Probably Aḍiyārkkunallār was influenced by the *Chintāmaṇi* references.

63 *Śilap* : XIV : 207. 64 *Puṟam* ; 189. 65 *Nalvaḻi* : 28.

Tamiḻaham were found wearing *kañjugam* or *saṭṭai*; the spies and other servants of the king were dressed in special *kañjugam*.[66] These were all tailored garments. There were 'tailors' called *tunna-gārar*[67] in Madurai and other big towns, who stitched those garments.

Rope-making, manufacture of leather-sheaths (for war weapons), dealing in conches and ivory and especially manufacture of bangles are some industries mentioned often in contemporary literature.[68] Baskets made of wicker for containing articles of domestic use like grains and other dried articles of consumption were very usually manufactured.

The smithy was an important industrial 'factory' where weapons of war were forged and repaired;[69] it was, of course a small place and was called a *paṇikkaḷari*, literally, a workplace. These ancient factories required a blow-pipe or a pair of bellows (a *turutti*)—and iron-wheels and domestic utensils were manufactured at this factory fire used for smelting or welding. Such work-places were neither numerous nor wide-spread especially in the rural areas; a typical *paṇikkaḷari* was but a manufacturing smithy with a pair of bellows and it catered to the needs of many a village around and so was usually over-worked[70] and the blacksmith was the strong-handed smith.'[71] He made the iron lamps which were fed with oil and in which the wick glowed with a mild lustre. The art of the goldsmith seems to have caught the fancy of foreign markets and Tamil-made ornaments were shipped to foreign countries.

Carpentry was a very common industry and was practised as a hereditary profession, as indeed most other professions also were: ''The young carpenter boys emulating their elders learned their trade at an early age and made small toycarts for children.''[72]

66 *Silap*: XXVI: 138. 67 *Silap*: V: 32.

68 *Madurai*: 511 to 521. 69 *Puṟam*: 95.

70 *Kuṟun*: 172. ''ஏழுர்ப் பொது வினைக் கோசர் யாத்த, ... மிதிதோல்''.

71 *Puṟam*: 170. '*Karuṅgai*' means '*strong hand*' and not '*black hand*'.

72 *Perumbāṇ*: 248, 249.

The carpenter was engaged in assisting house building and in building boats, canoes and ships and chariots. Making jaggery cakes out of the sugarcane juice, in rural factories was a popular occupation. Cutting down the aromatic wood, sandal, and pearl-diving were known Tamil industries made famous in the literatures of North India and contemporary Europe and mentioned times without number in Tamil literature.[73] The very large class of 'fishermen' living in coastal areas made fishing[74] a regular industry. The anglers had a small leather pouch attached to one end of the rod into which the fish were thrown and secured. Salt manufacture[75] was the only other industry of the sea-coast which was largely practised. In view of the fairly extensive shipping of which there is mention, boat-building and other allied industries also must have flourised.

4. *Trade*

Tamil literature of the *Saṅgam* period is amply corroborated by foreign contemporary sources in the matter of the trading or commercial activities of the Tamils. Though internal trade of some sort or other must have been of older standing than foreign trade, we get glimpses of foreign trade even in the oldest *Saṅgam* texts A community, which, as we have seen before, was able to manufacture a large variety of consumer and luxury goods must have also led a brisk commercial life. Though generally industry and the consequent trade was carried on by groups of hereditary craftsmen pursuing their profession at the ancestral workplace, rarer instances of persons of any one caste being engaged in activity not prescribed for their caste are not wanting. Nakkīrar, the poet considered to be a brahmin[76] was engaged in the conch-cutting industry. Many instances of merchants and traders being poets are known. Kaṇṇan Puhundārāyattanār was a palm-leaf (*Ōlai*) seller; Śittalai Śāttanār was a seller of millet and grains; Bēri Śāttanār and Dāmōdaranār were lapidaries. It is clear that the

73 *Madurai* : 131–138.
74 *Paṭṭina*: 80-93; *Madurai* : 254-256. 75 *Madurai:* 117.
76 *Vide Nambi Tiruviḷaiyāḍal:* 16; *Aham:* 24.

leisured and moneyed merchant community was interested in literary activities.

(A) INLAND TRADE

Most of the trade was carried on by barter. We do not know if cattle which was considered wealth was an exchange commodity.[77] Paddy constituted the most commonly accepted medium of exchange, especially in the more rural parts of the land Well purified white salt was sold for paddy[78] which was sold by mentioning its price in terms of salt.[79] Honey and roots were exchanged for fish (liver) oil and arrack.[80] Sugarcane and rice flakes were exchanged for venison and toddy.[81] In the Pāṇḍya land the prosperous housewife whose house was well stocked with white paddy poured that grain into the basket of the shepherdess who had brought venison.[82] The housewife exchanged green grams for the thorny fish of the minstrel;[83] and poured the white paddy into the vessel in which the wandering bard had brought the fish.[84] It is noteworthy that the system of purchasing food stuffs, especially vegetables from street hawkers by paying for them in rice or in paddy still continues (to some extent) in urban areas and (to a large extent) in rural areas. A different type of barter which can be called 'deferred exchange' was known as *Kuṟi edirppai* which means taking a loan of a fixed quantity of a commodity to be repaid as the same quantity of the same commodity[85] at a later date. In view of the wide prevalence of the system of barter, it may be supposed that coins were used for purposes of exchange mostly in the case of foreign trade.

There were established markets or bazaars called *aṅgāḍi* in the bigger towns, while elsewhere hawkers brought most of the things to the doorstep of the householder. In some cases articles were sold at the centre of manufacture; e.g. salt was, in the case of

77 '*Māḍu*': Cattle: it also means 'wealth'; *Kuṟal*: 400.
78 *Paṭṭina*: 29-30; *Kuṟun*: 269. 79 *Aham*: 60.
80 *Porunar*: 214, 215. 81 *Porunar*: 216, 217.
82 *Puṟam*: 33. 83 *Aiṅguṟu*: 47.
84 *Aiṅguṟu*: 48. 85 *Puṟam*: 163; *Kuṟaḷ*: 221.

those who resided in the coastal tracts, sold near the salt pans [86] But salt is such a necessary article of consumption that the salt merchants called *umaṇar* carried large bags of the commodity from the salt pans to many places in the country in carts which had no covering overhead.[87] The numerous references to manufacture and sale of salt make it appear to be a very important object of trade.

Hence, there were two kinds of traders:[88] *(a)* those who manufactured and sold at the place of manufacture; and *(b)* those who went about selling the goods—the retailers who were mostly hawkers. Bags of pepper were taken about on mules and sold in many places.[89]

There were two kinds of markets i.e., bazaars in the leading cities like Puhār and Madurai.[90] (1) *Nāḷaṅgāḍi* the morning bazaar and (2) *allaṅgāḍi* or *aṅdikkaḍai*, the evening bazaar.[91] In the markets such large varieties and such large quantities of goods were sold and purchased, and such crowds thronged and such busy transactions took place that the poet Iḷaṅgo calls them 'The residence of Tirumagaḷ—the goddess of Wealth'.[92] There is a detailed description of the markets in the city of Puhār in *Śilāppadikāram*;[93] and of the bazaars of Madurai in *Maduraikkāñji* and in *Śilappadikāram*. These accounts are perhaps a slightly exaggerated picture drawn according to a conventional pattern but there is no reason at all to suppose that the basic facts mentioned there were not true.

Many people of many countries speaking many languages crowded in the bazaar streets of Madurai, naturally the foreigners who permanently resided there must have gone about shopping in the bazaar; or perhaps, the foreigners included those who had come from outside Tamiḻaham to make wholesale purchases of Tamilian

86 *Madurai:* 117. 87 *Kuṟun:* 388.

88 *Śilap:* V: 17; Aḍiyār. com. The third class of traders *viz.*, those who sold in established *aṅgāḍis* must also be included.

89 *Perumbāṇ:* 80-81. 90 *Madurai:* 365.

91 *Aṅgāḍi:* the bazaar. It seems also to have meant any particular shop: *Śilap:* XXIII: 150 (note). This word *aṅgāḍi* is in current use in Telugu and in Kannada: it is now not current at all in Tamil.

92 *Śilap:* VI: 12. 93 *Śilap:* Cantos: V and VI.

goods for sale elsewhere or those who had brought demanded goods from foreign places for delivery here.[94] In the evening bazaar in Madurai, the following persons were busy selling and buying; the grocers, the sellers of conch-bangles, goldsmiths, appraisers of gold and gold articles; dealers in foreign cloth like Kal ñgam, other textile dealers, sellers of copper wares, painters, dealers in perfumes, flowers and sandal paste.[95] In the bazaar of Puhār: dyes, scented powder, sandal paste, flowers and aromatic wood like ahil were sold in abundance. Flowers were greatly in demand especially during festivals and more particularly during the festival of Indra, so that the flower bazaar looked like a forest of flowers.[96] Normally textile dealers, sellers of perfumes, flowers, sandal paste, scented powder, sellers of salt, oil mongers, dealers in bronze and copper wares, carpenters, goldsmiths, artists like painters and sculptors, dealers in dolls, lapidaries, those that sold false hair or fashionable wigs, traders in sheep, fish and mutton and sellers of cakes and vegetable edibles thronged the bazaar. The sailors wandered about the bazaar which was situated in Maruvūrp-pākkam, the suburb of Puhār. There the traders lived in separate streets.[97] When merchants from various places crowded in the bazaar with their bags of goods they took care to indicate on the parcels the names of the owners and the contents of the packages.[98] The carts on which the packages were piled also had particulars about the owners and the goods written on them.[99] Near the bazaar, there were warehouses, in which goods could be stored in rooms which had no ventilators, or windows.[100] We do not know if there were underground cellars. A very simple type of advertisement which announced what goods were available and where, was adopted by these traders; each shopkeeper had his flag which waved over his shop and the inscription on the flag announced the commodities sold in the shop.[101]

94 *Madurai*: 503 to 522. 95 *Ibid.* 96 *Śilap*: V. 197.

97 *Śilap*: V: 13 to 39. 98 *Śilap*: V: 111, 112.

99 *Śilap*: XXVI: 136. 100 *Maṇi*: III. 95.

101 *Madurai*: 365-373.

The economic and wise habits of the cowherds and the shepherds are brought out in a passage in *Perumbanāṟṟuppaḍai* where it is said that "the young cowherdess sold buttermilk and clarified butter in the Kuṟiñji villages and took back (not gold, but) paddy" for domestic consumption and buffaloes for their professional use.[102]

The merchants functioned often in a body. Apart from the tendency to associate as 'guilds' and 'chambers of commerce' the wandering hawkers literally went about in large numbers together. In the *Saṅgam* age, as till a century ago, 'caravans' of traders used to go from place to place as a 'whole group' and never even in small units for they were in mortal fear of highway robbers. Such merchant bodies were called *Vāṇikachchāttu*;[103] and members of the warrior clan were recruited to escort their caravans.[104] In spite of these protective measures, they were not free from danger from robber gangs. If the robbers beat their taṇṇumai — a kind of shrill drum — it was almost cetain that some *Vāṇikachchāttu* was near at hand; the many references to *āṟalai kaḷvar*[105] show that these caravans of trade were not always left unmolested.

The merchants and the traders are prescribed an ideal code of conduct by the *Kuṟaḷ* which is: "Refuse to take more than your due and never stint giving to others their due".[106] It seems that this was not merely an empty advice or a desired ideal but was largely an ideal in practice. The merchants sold their goods by openly announcing the profit they were aiming at.[107] It was believed that honest trade led to increased trade which meant increased wealth; integrity in trade was generally appreciated.

(B) FOREIGN TRADE

Tamiḻaham carried on an extensive trade with foreign countries from very early times. The great secret of her foreign trade is her possession of certain commodities which have always been in great demand in foreign markets; pepper, ginger and rice among food

102 *Perumbāṇ*: 164, 165. 103 *Kuṟun*: 390. 104 *Aham*: 89.
105 *Porunar*: 21. 106 *Kuṟaḷ*: 120. 107 *Paṭṭina*: 209 to 211.

products; sandal wood, almug among trees; cardamum, cinnamon and turmeric among stimulating spices; ivory and pearls for luxurious ornaments; gems like beryl (an aquamarine gem) and corundum (a kind of sapphire), cotton fabrics for dress; monkeys, deer and peacocks among favourite domesticated animals and birds, cheetahs, and tigers and elephants among the wilder animals (which also provided luxuriously soft fur and ivory). These articles had always been associated with Tamiḻaham and in great demand in the crowded bazaars of foreign lands.

Possibly an instance of the most ancient trade contact which Tamiḻaham had was with the ancient land of the Hebrews. Bishop Caldwell observes,[108] "the oldest Dravidian word found in any written record in the world appears to be the word for peacock in the Hebrew text of the book of kings and chronicles, in the list of the articles of merchandise brought from Tarshish or Ophir in Solomon's ships". This suggests a date roughly about 1000 B.C. The Hebrew *Bible* mentions two important objects: (1) *kapim* (monkey) and (2) *tukim* (peacock). Clearly *kapim* is *kapi* which is easily in Tamil *kavi* (monkey) and *tukim* is the Tamil *tōkai*[109] (i.e. the peacock).

The Tamil foreign trade might have suffered temporary set back due to many reasons but on the whole the tendency to keep it up was persistent. Tamil trade with Greece is amply borne out by the existence in Greek vocabulary of Tamil names of many objects; the Greeks have *oruza* for 'rice' from the Tamil *ariśi*; the English 'ginger' is derived from the Latin *zingiber* which was derived from *ziggiberis* which ultimately is traced to Tamil *iñjivēr* as later on the Tamil *chiṟuttai* became 'cheetah' in English. 'Corundum' is clear transliteration of the Tamil *kurundam*. 'Sandal' wood was derived straight from 'śandana' or 'śandu'.

From the earliest times the pearl of the Pāṇḍyan kingdom has been a much desired article in the kingdoms of the Gangetic

108 Caldwell: *Comparative Grammar of Dravidian Languages*, p.88.

109 *Kapi* is a Sanskritised form of *Kavi*. S. Vaiyapuri's objection that 'tōkai' cannot stand for peacock is not upheld by Tamil Literature.

Valley. The *Artha Śāstra* of Kautilya mentions some commodities as coming from the land of the Pāṇḍyas: (1) *Pāṇḍyakavāṭaham*, the name of a kind of pearl; and (2) *Maduram*, a kind of cotton fabric from Madurai.[110]

An interesting question, in this context, is 'if the Śaṅgam Tamils exported so much to the Mediterranean countries, did they have a national surplus? or did they export for profit what was needed at home?' In any case it is obvious that the profits of the mercantile community did not pervade the society improving the overall standard of living but only added to the wealth of certain segments of society.

These references are valuable as indicating a considerable antiquity for Tamilian foreign trade. Even before the Christian era, therefore, the Tamils must have been a seafaring people, building their own naval craft and braving the breakers of the ocean but in the earlier days generally taking care to keep close to the coast line. The discovery of the monsoons by the Greek Hippalus of Alexandria by the beginning of the first century A.D.[111] familiarised the foreign merchants with the safest season for crossing the Arabian Sea; and therefore trade, which was not inconsiderable before, became widespread and large soon. That was a time when Alexandria had become the chief centre of east-west trade and a meeting place of the east-west cultures; it was the Augustan age, the beginning of Roman imperialism in earnest, when wars subsided giving place to increased commercial and cultural activities. We find large hoards of Roman gold coins of the Augustan age in many parts of South India which is evidence of the brisk trade between Tamiḻaham and Rome resulting in the inflow of considerable gold into Tamiḻaham. Such was the magnitude of the trade in the early centuries of the Christian era that Pliny bitterly remarked that "not a year passed without the Empire paying out 100 million sesterces (about £ 1,08,75,00 or nearly one and a half crores of rupees) to India, Chēra land and

110 Kautilya: *Artha Śāstra*, Chap. II.

111 In the later Ptolemaic or the early Roman times.

Arabia''.[112] The direct trade route between Tamiḻaham and Arabia, Egypt and Rome had been well established by the date of the *Periplus*.[113] "One of the most important articles which came from India was cotton[114] and perhaps silk. Both these products were worked up in the factories of Alexandria which sent in exchange glass, metalware and probably linen."[115] Even as the Red Sea ports were the point up to which the Tamil vessels could go, Alexandria was the point up to which the Roman vessels came and the Tamil ports were reached only by the Egyptian vessels in which the Romans might have arrived; the eastern trade beyond Tamiḻaham with Burma, Malaya, Java, Sumatra and China was mostly in the hands of the Tamils.

Trade with Rome in the first century A.D. was so lucrative to the Tamils that the Pāṇḍyan king sent two 'embassies' to Augustus (20 B.C.) to win his favour. That soon after the days of Augustus, this trade became very active and extensive was possibly due to the success of these embassies. Between the days of the *Periplus Maris Erythraei* and the days of Ptolemy, the geographer (the first half of the second century A.D), the trade had increased very much.

Though Megasthenes and Strabo had heard of the Pāṇḍyan kingdom they give no account of the ports or trade centres of ancient Tamiḻaham. Pliny, writing in the first century A.D. mentions Cottanara as a centre of pepper trade and Cottanara is easily identified with Kuṭṭanāḍu. He also mentions the town in the interior of the country called 'Modura'; and he speaks of another and a more convenient harbour of the nation as 'Nelcyndon' which is called 'Becare.'

The *Periplus* giving a list of the major ports of India of those

112 Warmington : *The Commerce between the Roman Empire and India* K. A. N. Sastri agrees with Hudson (*Europe and China*, pp. 100-102), who feels Pliny's 'Seres' were not the 'Cheras' as Warmington holds, but were the Chinese.

113 i.e., under Domitian (A.D. 81-96).

114 *The Periplus* : sec. 59.

115 Rostovizeff : *Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire*, p. 93.

days mentions Naura and Tyndis[116] as the first markets of Damirica, and then Musiris and Nelcynda as of 'leading importance.'

"Tyndis is of the kingdom of Cerobothra;[117] it is a village in plain sight by the sea. Muziris,[118] of the same kingdom abounds in ships sent there with cargoes from Arabia and by the Greeks. It is located on a river, distant from Tyndis by river and sea five hundred stadia[119] and up the river from the shore twenty stadia.[120] Nelcynda is distant from Muziris by river and sea about five hundred stadia and is of another kingdom—the Pāṇḍyan. This also is situated on a river about one hundred and twenty stadia[121] from the sea.

"Beyond this there is another place called Comeri[122] at which are the cape of Comeri and a harbour ... ... From Comorin toward the south this region extends to Colchis[123] where the pearl fisheries are; and it belongs to the Pāṇḍian kingdom. Beyond Colchi there follows another district called the coast country which lies on a bay and has a region inland called Argaru.[124] At this place and nowhere else are bought the pearls gathered on the coast thereabouts; and from there exported muslins, those called Argaritic".

The *Periplus*, which is most profuse in its mention of local place names in Tamiḻaham, proceeds to speak of the market towns and the harbours of 'Damirica'[125] and lists Camara,[126] Poduca[127] and Sopatma.[128]

116 Toṇḍi of the Malabar coast. 117 Cheraputra : the Chēra land.
118 *Muśiri*. 119 500 Stadia : 56.8 miles.
120 20 Stadia : 2.4 miles. 121 120 Stadia : 13.77 miles.
122 Kumari : Cape Comorin. 123 Koṟkai.
124 Uṟaiyūr. 125 Tamiḻaham.
126 The *Camara* of the *Periplus* is the same as the *Khabaris* of *Ptolemy*, both identical with *Kāvirippūmpaṭṭinam*.
127 'Puduvai' referring to 'Pondicherry', known as Puducchēri.
128 The ancient fortified city of 'Sopatnam' which many have equated with Marakkāṇam. Identification of Sopatma with Sadras (also on the coromandel coast) known in Tamil as Saturaṅgapaṭṭinam would be happier. 'Sō' means, a fort;

The direct and brisk trade between Rome and Tamiḻaham declined during the third century because of the growing anarchy in the Roman empire.[129] While coins of the previous century are found in such huge quantities in Tamiḻaham, coins relating to the third century are rarely to be found. But the trade did not die out; for when "Alaric, the Goth levied his war indemnity from Rome in A.D. 409 his terms included the delivery of 3000 pounds of pepper".[130]

The Yavanas, i.e. the Romans (including the Greeks and the Egyptians),[131] came and colonized certain parts of Tamiḻaham. We hear of the Yavana suburb in Puhār[132] and sympathetic and conventional references to the Yavana Chēris in a later epic.[133] They lived in considerable numbers on the west coast and they probably acted as agents for the foreign trade. It is possible that they like European traders of the 18th century A. D. got mixed up in the politics of Tamiḻaham but were once at least severely punished therefor by the Chēra king Imayavaramban Neḍuñ-jēraladan.[134] It seems that the foreign merchants maintained a force of the cohorts (840 to 1200 men) at Muziri to protect their trade.[135] The Peutingarian tables mention not only 'Tyṇḍis' and

'Saturaṅga', being the fourfold divisions of the army which guarded the fort, it is plausible to connect 'Sō' with 'Śaturaṅga' and equate 'Sopatina' with 'Sadras' which is a corruption of 'Śaturaṅgappattinam'. It is worth investigating whether 'Sopatina' is the same as Eyiṛpaṭṭinam for eyil also means fort.

129 K. A. N.: *Cōḷas*, p. 85.

130 Gibbon: *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ch. 31.

131 'Yavana' is derived in Sanskrit and in Tamil from the greek 'Iaones' by which the Greeks denoted their own nation. In Tamil it is indiscriminately used to indicate all people who came from the Mediterranean and Middle East areas. Tamil commentators refer to the Yavanas as '*Śōnakas*'.

132 *Śilap* : V: 9, 10; *Paṭṭina*: 214-217.

133 *Perungathai* : III: 4:8 and 9.

134 *Padiṛṛu* : II; *Ten-Padiham*.

135 *Malabar Manual* Vol. I, p. 199.

'Muziṛis' but also mention a temple of Augustus on the west coast. The Yavanas who permanently settled in the Tamiḻaham entered royal service and served as bodyguards, palace guards and guards in the military camps. They do not seem to have learned Tamil at all. They were brave and 'fierce-looking' and being ignorant of the local tongue and having no local sympathies, constituted ideal gate-keepers.[136]

Though ocean-going ships were known to the Tamils and the Romans, the western sea was so much infested with pirates that the Roman merchant convoys took military protection for their ships; cohorts of archers came on board their ships, escorting them. The Tamils must have realized the excellent military discipline of the Romans and benefited by their example. Impressed by the stern discipline of the Roman soldiers, the Tamil kings employed them as guards of the fortress gates.[137]

The Tamils took to the sea very naturally and had always a great reputation as seafarers. It was no mere accident that the Imperial Chōḻas of the later centuries (11th to 13th centuries A.D.) had a brilliant record of naval achievements; it was but a continuation of an ancient native tradition. The extensive and lucrative foreign trade which Tamiḻaham enjoyed during the *Saṅgam* period testifies to this tradition. The tradition goes back definitely to a more ancient period; there is the legend often repeated in the *Saṅgam* age and later literature of a "Chōḻa King who plied a navy across the seas and controlled the high winds".[138] This legendary Chōḻa is referred to in *Puṟanānūṟu* as an ancestor of Karikālan. Though it may seem strange that Tolkāppiyar should refer to a 'prohibition of ocean travel' in the case of the Tamils who could not have suffered from the same phobia which was natural to the Āryans, the commentary explains the position fairly clearly: "The prohibition of voyages related only to Vaidic Brahmins and not to the other communities or even to heterodox Brahmins persuing other secular occupations."[139]

136 *Mullaip* : 59 to 66. 137 *Śilap* : XIV: p. 67.
138 *Puṟam* : 66; *Kaliṅgattupparaṇi* : *Rājapāramparīyam*, 16.
139 *Tol. Poruḷ* : 11; Nach. com.

Ship-building was a native industry in Tamiḻaham. The ship was called *Marakkalam* as it was made of wood.[140] From the small 'Catamaran' (*Kaṭṭumaram*) which was but a 'raft or float of logs tied side by side', to big ocean going ships with mast and sail, all kinds of boats were in use in the Tamil ports. The *Periplus* says : "In the harbours of the Chōḻa land are ships of the country coasting along the shores as far as Damirica;[141] and other very large vessels made of single logs bound together, called *Sangara*; but those which make the voyage to Chryse and to the Ganges are called *Colandia* and are very large". Among the smaller craft *ambi*, *pahri*, *ōdam*, *paḍagu*, *timil* were common varieties. *Ambi* and *paḍagu* were ferry boats for crossing streams and rivers and *timil* was a fishing boat.[142] A description of the harbour of Puhār speaks of rows of large boats, *Pahri* which had returned laden with grain obtained in exchange for the white salt they had sold; and other boats were seen in the backwaters of Puhār tied to rows of pegs and looking so many destriers.[143] The coastal craft were plied by the *Parataver* community.[144] Muḍamōśi, a poet describing a war elephant in the battle-field compares it to a large ship in the midst of the sea of infantry.[145] It was not unusual for even the ocean going craft to be caught in a storm and be damaged. The Tamils were quite familiar with the harrowing experience of being caught in a storm in mid ocean.[146] But generally 'the sails of the ships helped the vessels to pierce the stormy waves of the ocean; on board the ships, drums were beaten; and tall flags were waving from the mast[147] (probably to indicate the country to which the ships belonged). While at harbour, the ships were anchored by a thick, long rope to the nether end of which

140 Parimēlāḻahar in his commentary on the *Kuṟaḷ* 600, says that 'wood was used in the building of temples, houses' chariots and ships'.

141 i.e., as far as Toṇḍi.

142 *Śilap* : *Kānal Vari*, 11.

143 *Paṭṭina* : 29 to 31.

144 *Paṭṭina* : 90.

145 *Puṟam* : 13.

146 *Maṇi* : IV : 29 to 34.

147 *Madurai* : 77 to 83; *Paṭṭina* : 173–175.

a big stone was attached.[148]

The harbour was called 'puhār' or 'kayavōy'. The *Paṭṭinappālai* gives a fairly detailed description of the harbour of Puhār and the activities there. That harbour situated not necessarily on the sea coast but quite possibly on the banks of the river in the estuary especially was a safe harbour even for the bigger vessels. They could enter the harbour without removing the cargo or slacking sail; and yet be quite stable, steady and safe.[149]

Warehouses for storing the merchandise were built on the beach near the fisherman's quarters; 'limitless quantities of goods' were collected in these warehouses and they lay there waiting to be shipped abroad. "The two kinds of goods (imports and exports) were found crowded in the quay".[150]

The chief ports had lighthouses called *kalam karai ilaṅgu chuḍar* — 'the bright light that beckons the ships'.[151]

Tamiḻaham imported from the Yavana land excellent wine: The expression *Yavanar nan kalam tanda taṇ kamaḻ tēṛal* occurring in a stanza in *Puṛanānūṛu* refers to this article of import; the expression has been interpreted in two ways taking 'kalam' to mean a 'ship' or a 'wine cup'.[152] The Yavanas exported to Tamiḻaham sugar candy also.[153] They also introduced many novel wares which soon became very fasionable here. A lamp shaped like a 'a black swan' (the *ōdimam*) was an article in

148 *Madurai*: 378. 149 *Puṛam*: 30; *Madurai*: 541.

150 *Paṭṭina*: 130, 131.

151 *Perumbāṇ*: 349 to 351. These Lighthouses were not specially built structures serving exclusively the purpose of beckoning ships, but were powerful lamps set up on top of the tallest building on the coast near the harbour.

152 *Puṛam*: 56; V. Kanakasabhai (*The Tamils*, 1800, p. 37) took 'Kalam' to mean 'Ship'; but the ancient commentator of *Puṛanānūṛu* means 'Wine-cups' by *Kalam*. It is very interesting to note that just as the English word 'vessel' can refer to a 'ship' or a 'cup', Tamil word *kalam* also can refer to a 'ship' or a 'cup' only it is generally qualified as *marakkalam* (ship) or *uṇkalam* (vessel).

153 *Śilap*: IV: 35, 36.

great demand; the peculiarity of this type of lamp was the flame in it did not flicker but was a steady flame; and it was a novelty to the Tamils.[154] Some of these lamps were like statues bearing in their folded palms the *tahaḻi* or the can containing the oil to light the lamp.[155]

Horses with a noble gait came to Puhār by the sea while bagfuls of black pepper were brought in carts from the west (the Chēra land). Gems and gold from the north (the Deccan and the Gangetic Valley), sandalwood and *ahil* from the western mountains; the pearl of the southern sea, the coral of the western sea, the yield of the Kāviri, food-stuffs from Ceylon, other consumer goods from Kāḻagam,[156] were other products which the great merchants of Puhār imported. Tamiḻaham was famous for her gold ornaments which she exported to the west.[157]

The imports into Muziris are given by the *Periplus* as "a great quantity of coin, topaz, thin clothing, linens, antimony, coral, crude glass, copper, tin, lead, moderate quantities of wine and wheat (only for the sailors), for this is not dealt in by the merchants there". The exports from there were "the pepper coming from 'Kottanora' (Kuṭṭa Nāḍu)" great quantities of "fine pearls, ivory, silk cloth".[158]

The exports from the Chōḻa land and were according to the *Periplus*: "The pearls gathered from part of what is brought at any time from there; and a kind of fine muslin called Argaritic" from (Uṟaiyūr). A variety of very thin, muslin cloth woven by the Tamil weavers was *tuhil*; contemporary Tamil poetry refers to it as resembling steam or vapour. Pliny says that the Roman ladies exposed their charms much too immodestly by clothing themselves in the "webs of woven wind", as he called the muslins imported from India. Though Tamiḻaham exported fine varieties of cloth, she seems to have imported certain varieties of cotton fabric from

154 *Perumbāṇ*: 316-318. 155 *Neḍunal*: 101-103.

156 Kāḻagam: Nachchinārkkiniyar treats this as a corruption of Kaḍāram-(Keddah-Malaya).

157 *Paṭṭina*: 187 to 191. 158 *Puṟam*: 343; *Aham*: 148.

other places herself. *Kaliṅgam* and *Kāḻagam* were varieties of cloth imported from the Kaliṅga land and Malaya.

Large ships laden with "tamarind which was mixed up with jaggery and salt and dried mutton chops, carried the large ornaments (manufactured in Madurai) and horses tamed with difficulty to the Yavana Land."[159]

Pearls, gold, diamond and ivory were the chief articles the Tamils exported to the north. The Tamil word *muttu* was sanskritized long ago into *mukta* and the commodity became so famous in the north as to deserve special mention in Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra*; and *mayura* was the Tamil *Mayil* (Peacock).[160]

The foreign trade of *Saṅgam* Tamiḻaham was brisk and had developed all the ancillary requirements of harbour, shipping lighthouses, etc. that trade was not a freak but a bright chapter in a continuing tradition of Tamiḻaham.

159 *Madurai* : 318 to 325; 539. 160 P. T. S.: *The Tamils*, p. 62.

PART III

ŚAṄGAM POLITY : SOCIAL

CHAPTER X

SOCIAL LIFE

1. *Society*

OF THE Social and Economic conditions of the age, the cultural ideas and ideals accepted and cherished by the people, of the institutions and activities which embodied and sustained them, the literature of the *Saṅgam* gives an unusually complete and true picture''.[1] Like the early Āryan society, the Śaṅgam Tamil society has 'left us few artifacts but a sizable literature'. With the help of the material in that literature we shall try to draw a picture of Tamil society of that age. While bearing in mind that the picture we draw from the *Saṅgam* literature about political conditions in Tamiḻaham can relate only to a very limited period of not more than five or six generations, it can also be presumed that broadly speaking the picture is true for the entire *Saṅgam* age.

Ancient Tamil society was essentially a tribal organization. It is remarkable that even when caste had become a distinctive feature of that society its tribal nature persisted. Certain tribes are known to have been in existence in the hilly and remoter parts of South India, like the Toḍas in Nilgiris and the Nāgas who find considerable mention in literature and legend. The Vēḍas of the Ceylon forests were hunters and were not different from the *Vēḍars* of Tamiḻaham. Equally ancient but less secluded from the general mass of society were other tribes. The nature, features and functions of these tribes largely differed due to the different geographical conditions in which they lived.

The division of the land into hilly, pastoral, agricultural, coastal and desert was not an artificial literary classification for such divisions of the land actually existed in Tamiḻaham; the people there were either hunters or cowherds (and shepherds) or farmers or

1 K. A. N.: *H. S. I.*, p. 124.

fishermen or robbers. Their looks, dress, food, occupation, habits etc., naturally varied. No doubt, they were all obliged to cross each other's path as much as they co-operated with each other; but they all lived in a fairly compact and limited area of South India and were quite often thrown together. And the one link among them was language which is always the root of any culture; the Tamil language with its variants (and the culture varying to the extent to which the language patterns varied) had been the medium through which the people could communicate their ideas; and ideas reflected and determined ways of life. There was no political unity as is clear from the fact that there existed three crowned monarchs and numerous lesser chieftains, and there was no unity among them either. Though political diversity, even disunity and frequent hostility existed, social groups were at liberty to move about and freely mingle. But the greatest barriers for such free mingling were (1) lack of easy communications and (2) habitual unwillingness to move out of one's usual environment unless there was the sharpest pressure to do so. These factors made social groups stabilise themselves in particular areas and pursue the professions suitable to those regions. So the more ancient divisions was geographical and horizontal and not hierarchical and vertical. The only and the very real vertical divisions related to the well-to-do and the poorer sections of society.

P. T. Srinivasa Iyenger draws a conclusion[2] from the five-fold division of land in the Tamiḻaham: *Kuṟiñji*, *Pālai*, *Mullai*, *Neidal* and *Marudam*; i.e. hilly, desert, pastoral, coastal, and agricultural areas. These regions are the lands of hunters, of roppers, of cowherds, of fishermen and of farmers respectively. He sees in a classification so graded an attempt to depict the historical growth of civilization in South India; i.e. the evolution of the savage mountaineer into the civilized man of the river valleys. There is a bit of confusion involved here; however attractive the theory on the face of it might appear, it does not seem to be historically true. The hunter, the cowherd, the fisherman, the robber and the peasant lived as they even now do, side by side;

2 P. T. S.: *The Tamils*, p. 14.

they did not appear in chronological succession; factually a hunter personally never became an agriculturist or a fisherman. He was born a hunter; he lived and died a hunter. This was true of the other classes too. These grades in society were always there and there was no supersession of one by another. Conquest of agricultural or pastoral tracts by the physically stronger hunters or robbers does not mean any social conversion or progress but only physical conquest. This so called 'evolution' is true in the larger field of world history in its anthropological setting. and protohistorical stage, but to import it into the limited space of Tamiḻaham and to suppose that all those changes occurred here also in the same historical order may not be quite correct. But broadly speaking we might confine ourselves to saying that the hunters were of an older 'social life' than the peasants. Again the order of *Kuṟiñji, Pālai, Neidal, Mullai, Marudam* has just been presumed by the professor. The order is not prescribed anywhere in the literature of the land. The *Tolkāppiyam* mentions the *Mullai, Kuṟiñji, Marudam, Neidal,* and omits *Pālai* for *Pālai* was treated as but a corruption of any of the other areas particularly *Mullai* and *Kuṟiñji*.[3] Even according to the *Tolkāppiyam* there was no sacredness about this order; it can be rearranged in any way.[4] In fact, the *Kalittogai* adopts the *Pālai, Kuṟiñji, Marudam, Mullai, Neidal* order; the *Aiṅguṟunūṟu* follows the *Marudam, Neidal, Kuṟiñji, Pālai, Mullai* order. So the particular order which the professor has preferred can lead to no conclusions. But it is quite clear that the inhabitants of these regions if classified will yield just a horizontal division of society and won't become a vertical order such as the caste system based upon birth would produce.

Actually there were innumerable social strata, groups and groups of men engaged in different occupations exhibiting distinct cultural traits and known by particular names. To try to connect the ancient Tami's with the *Rākshasās* or the *Vānaras* of the *Rāmāyaṇa* would be an absolute waste of effort and no amount of probing along that line of thinking is likely to yield any scientific conclusion.

3 *Silap.* : XI : 64 to 66. 4 *Tol. Poruḷ* 5, Nach. com.

To postulate a racial theory on the basis of the impossible myths of the ancient epics is a hopeless task.

In his *Tamil Studies*, M. Srinivasa Iyengar tries to classify the distribution of the principal Tamil *castes*.[5] He has made a certain assumption: that the Tamil population of today can be ethnically divided into three categories and that they are (1) Āryan, (2) Dravidian and (3) Nāga. He also assumes that the *Brahmins* are *Āryans*, the *Vēḷāḷas* are *Dravidians*, and that *Valayar*, *Paḷḷar*, *Shāṇār*, *Iḍayar*, *Maṟavar*, *Agambaḍiyar*, *Paṟaiyar*, *Kaikkōḷar*, *Kammāḷar*, *Vanniyar* (*Paḷḷi*), *Kaḷḷar*, *Ambalakārar* are mixed *Nāgas* and that the *Kuṟavas* are pure *Nāgas*. To say the least this is fanciful. In the first place, ethnically people cannot be divided into Āryans or Dravidians. The Āryan-Dravidian classification is linguistic and not ethnic, though people speaking particular languages tend to develop particular cultures; to say that those who speak Dravidian tongues like Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayālam or Tuḷu are Dravidians and those that speak any of the Indo-Aryan tongues, are Āryans 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 a caste-based society. Secondly the Brahmins as a caste was an Āryan gift to Tamiḻaham not the person but the concept. It was not indigenous; it came and was welcomed, accepted and adopted. Those that followed the Āryan Brahmanical way of life accepting the sacredness of the *Vēdas* and their ancillary *śāstras* and earning the competence to perform the sacrifices and assuming the status of teachers and priests are Brahmins; the invariable tendency in Indian caste system is for it to assume an hereditary aspect. But he that would declare that the Brahmin of South India is an unmixed Aryan and forms an ethnically distinct stock from the rest around him would be a bold man; the assertion cannot for one moment stand the test of ethnology. It is also clear that in the tribes M. Srinivasa Ayyangar includes among the Nāgas there are classes of persons designated not on the basis of caste but on the basis of profession.

V. A. Smith, summarising the position according to his lights, says :[6] "The population (during the days of Ptolemy) comprised

5 M. S.: *Tamil Studies*, p. 58 6 Smith: *E. H. I.*, p. 439.

various elements of which the *Villavar* — the bow-men or the *Bhils*, and the *Mīnavar* the fishermen or the *Mīnas* are supposed to have been the most ancient. The Tamils seem to be later immigrants."

Among the indigenous tribes, literature mentions a few : the *Vēḍar* and the *Eyinar* are mentioned as hunters and robbers; the *Parataver* or the *Mīnavar* find mention as the fishermen; the *Pāṇar* seem to be a people at the lower rungs of society and wandering minstrels. The *Tuḍiar* and the *Paṛaiyar* were but the same community engaged in beating drums and proclaiming the royal orders; the *Tuḍi* and the *Paṛai* were different forms of the drum. The *Kaḍambus* or the *Keḍambar* were another type of *Eyinar* and were robbers and pirates. *Maṛavar* was but a generic term for the members of a martial community of professional fighters. *Kaḷḷar* were the same as the *Eyinar*. These classes of persons, because of the regions they inhabited and the professions they pursued, were cut off from the great evolution towards civilization that was taking place elsewhere; and so they came to be looked upon as the lower stratum in society.

The number of tribes and castes in Tamiḻaham has greatly increased with the passage of time. Arguing back from today and postulating that all castes and tribes that Thurston has listed existed in ancient Tamiḻaham also can be wrong because castes in India tend to multiply; and today many castes have undergone subdivisions; there have been stray cases of merger also; and some that were quite well known in the past are not much heard of now. For our purpose we might suppose that the tribes or castes which find specific mention in literature did exist then but to posit anything about the rest would be arguing from silence.

The *Saṅgam* literature speaks of many tribes and refers to the traditional castes also and this means that the caste division and the tribal arrangement co existed. The fisherman community were known as the *Mīnavaṛ* or the *Valaiñar* or the *Valaipparadavar*. The bards or the *Pāṇar* were a special class of people whose business was to wander about singing popular songs or the praises of the

kings; entire families of these bards were always on the move never knowing how and where they were to secure their next meal. They carried many quaint musical instruments (generally *yāḻ* a kind of harp – a stringed instrument; or the *taḍāri* a kind of drum). They were extremely indigent but still they seem to have carried on merrily due to the liberal patronage of kings and chieftains. They professionalized the delicate art of flattery and were often to be found in the courts of kings and chieftains. Their women were called *Viṛaliyar*. They sounded the lyre in the mornings when the cock crows and the buds blossom. The professional dancers and acrobats were the *Kūttar* or the *Kaḻaikkūttar* who balanced on the bamboo, and entertained the admiring villagers; some of those who performed special Āryan dances were *Āryakūttar*. The *Vēḍars* were hunters; they were also murderous highway robbers and they used to lift cattle and rob pedestrian passengers and delight in their sufferings; the *Eyinar* belonged to this community. They had their own hamlets and their *manṛams*. They organized cruelty, loot and murder. They belonged to the *Maṛakkuḍi*, or the warrior class; as distinct from the *Aṛakkuḍi* or the more pacific and docile sections of society. The reference in *Puṛanānūṛu*[7] and *Śilappadikāram*[8] show clearly that the *Maṛakkuḍi* were a separate section of society and they had their own tradition and beliefs. One of their beliefs was that if the *Maṛakkuḍi* took to civilized and peaceful life, it would be destroyed, for such unorthodoxy would be tantamount to defiance of hoary custom. They worshipped the goddess of victory, *Koṛṛavai* and sacrificed to her.

The *Kuṛavar* were hill tribes and they were engaged in gathering the yield of the hills; the *Uḻavar* belonged to the plains and they were concerned with producing food from the farmland.

The caste system which is an intergral feature of Āryan Hindu society is heard of even in the earliest stratum of extant Tamil literature. But alongside a mention of caste we find the pre-Āryan tribes also flourishing. A peculiar feature of ancient tribal organi-

7 *Puṛam*: 19, 277 to 279: *Nālaḍi*: 112; 136; 195.
8 *Śilap*: XII; 14, 15.

zation is that the tribes are usually associated with certain totems. We come across many totemic symbols in ancient Tamiḻaham. These are either the royal emblems like the 'tiger', the 'carp' or the 'bow' or particular trees or flowers. Attachment to these symbols continued even after the caste system and its other affiliations had begun to attract the fancy of Tamil society. Even when Āryanization had overwhelmed that society, the democratic sense among the ancient Tamils resisted however feebly the non-egalitarian culture complex presented by the Āryans.

A distinguishing feature of the *Saṅgam* social polity is that it was not priest-dominated, though the 'priests' were slowly trying to assume powers of advice and supervision. The social life seems to have been on 'the heroic scale', rough and with a strong resemblance to Spartan or Anglo-Saxon polity.

The fact of the matter seems to be :

I. India to the south of the Deccan plateau has been the home of man from very early days. The autochthons of this land were thinly spread over the entire area; and being the most ancient among the people of the most ancient part of India, they must have had affiliations with the Negroids of Africa in the West and the Australoids in the East, especially the Polynesians. But the sparseness of the population and the total absence of worthwhile communications segregated the people living in various parts of the country one from another, like the hilly, the pastoral, the coastal, etc. Lack of contact among them isolated these pockets and we have a large number of tribes. Those in the delta area in the naturally fertile regions of the land developed a culture which was to be the basis of Tamil culture of the later days and they outstripped their brethren who were left in severe isolation on hill tops and in the recesses of forests.

II. Apart from this autochthonous element, the first ethnic superimpositions on this base, which can be deemed to be the earliest Tamil (Dravidian) element in Tamil Society, came from the Eastern Mediterranean regions with a culture strongly phoenician in texture. Ethnic, linguistic, archaeological and cultural probes will easily establish an Eastern Mediterranean origin for the first solid

core of the Tamils. They came perhaps in many waves and usually by the sea nestling close to the coast. They generally by-passed the hinter-land of North India and the Deccan and at important points touched the coast on their way like, e.g., Baluchistan where they left a pocket of Dravidian (Brahui) speaking group to provide a clue to this migration. Sea-faring and other strictly phoenician characteristics, along with many cultural traits which can be traced back to early Sumerian days, mark the Tamils. This Dravidian element had little difficulty in elbowing the indegenous people out of the plain and driving them into safe and obscure recesses.

III. 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. We can only hazard a guess when this might have happened. The 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 Āryans had fanned out over the entire trans-Vindhyan area, left the North for the South and peopled the extreme South; but it was perhaps more than a thousand years after the fall of Harappa and Mohenjo Daro, that these refugees reached the northern fringes of the Tamil country. Some of these were the Vēḷirs of whom we hear so much in Tamil literature; their men or followers were the *Vēḷāḷars*. 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 *Śaṅgam*. This position that the *Vēḷirs* and *Vēḷāḷars*, were non-Āryan North Indian immigrants into Tamiḻaham seems to gain support from the legend of Agastya and the Vēḷirs narrated by Nachchinārkkiniyar.[9]

IV. The Brahmin of Tamiḻaham is a veritable sociological problem. With the process of Āryanization spreading over India certain people in South India became Brahmins. The Brahminical system was introduced but not the Brahmin as such. When the caste system became petrified into a vertical system perpetuated by

9 *Tol. Eḻut. Śiṟappuppāyiram.* Nach. com.

birth, the castes i.e. the *Varṇa-Jāti* complex—Brahmins and others assumed an hereditary character.

2. *The Caste System*

The system of dividing society on the basis of caste or *Jāti* is peculiar to India. It is unique because it is the product of an association of so many circumstances which have not come together elsewhere at any time. Certain features of the caste system can be detected here and there in certain parts of the world; but the system in its complex entirety is not to be found anywhere else.

While this is the larger truth, it is necessary to remember a subtler but equally effective and valid truth that within India caste has not developed in the same manner and to the same extent everywhere. The Varṇa concept was peculiar to the post Rig Vēdic and pre-Buddhist Hindu Āryans of the Punjab and the Gangetic Valleys. The development of caste in the north, historically, was on different lines than what it was in Tamiḻaham. The exigencies of the Āryan 'occupation by conquest' of the Indus and Gangetic Valleys necessitated a pattern of life which would exclude the indigenes and glorify the conquerors or place the latter in positions of advantage in society. In fact, caste could not have been the consequence of theoretical speculation but an evolution on lines determined by historical circumstances. In Tamiḻaham different conditions existed. Though it is true that the earliest literary evidence we get from indigenous sources including the *Tolkāppiyam* unmistakably indicates Sanskritic or Āryan influence, it may not be correct to suppose that cultured and organized life commenced in Tamiḻaham only after or entirely due to Āryan infiltration there. If that were so Tamil culture would have been identical with Āryan culture and it is not so is clear even to a casual observer. Caste did not develop in Tamiḻaham for the same reason that it did in the thron. The older tribal polity evidencing a large number of horizontally cut up kinship groups, with their peculiar systems of endogamy and ritual taboos, existed intact in the south and the Varṇa system was a coat put on this ancient structure thereby creating a social cris-cross both horizontal and vertical; and very clearly the

system functioned in a most peculiar way. V. A. Smith observes:[10] "The Tamils had developed an advanced civilization of their own, *wholly independent of North India*. Immigrants from the North, who had settled at Madura and some other cities, sought to introduce Hindu notions of caste and ceremonial but met with much opposition, and the caste system, which for many centuries past has been observed with special strictness in the South was then inchoate and imperfect." Though the influence of V. Kanakasabhai is clear in the italicized part of the first sentence quoted above, it is not necessary for us, as some might be tempted to do, to swing to the other extreme and insist that all that is worthwhile in the *Saṅgam* Tamil culture was the product of Āryan contact.

Though in a general way the entire caste system revolves around the Brahmin axis, it is all the more so in Tamiḻaham. The most distinctive feature of the Tamil caste system was the Brahman, for the *Araśar* (the king), *Vaṇigar* (merchants) and the *Vēḷāḷar* (peasants) do not clearly correspond to the *Kshatriyas*, the *Vaiśyas* and the *Sūdras* of the Āryan caste system. As we know that the monarchical form of governmet prevailed in Tamiḻaham even before the process of Aryanization seriously commenced, the Tamil kings, especially the Chēra, Chōḻa and the Pāṇḍya could not correspond to the *Kshatriyas* of the North any more than the Roman Emperors or the Pharaohs of Egypt before them can be called *Kshatriyas*. Secondly, the right of intermarriage between the kings and the *Vēḷāḷas* and the fact thar the right of kingship vested also in the *Vēḷāḷas*, make the *Vēḷāḷas* socially and politically the equals of the kings; in any case the *Vēḷāḷas* of South India were not the *Sūdras* of North India, while the merchants as a community are to be found anywhere in the world and those communities do not correspond to the *Vaiśyas* of the typical Hindu caste system. Again while the Brahmins, the *Kshatriyas* and the *Vaiśyas* are all *Dvijas* ('the twice-born' to the Āryans) only the Brahmins in Tamiḻaham are reported to have worn the sacred thread. While there is clear mention of the sacred thread for the Brahmins that

10 *E. H. I.* 49. p. 439. Italics mine.

there is no mention any where in *Saṅgam* literature of sacred thread being worn by sects other than Brahmins points to the same conclusion that the Tamil caste system depended entirely on the Brahmins. The Brahmins of Tamiḻaham of the *Saṅgam* age were such (ideal priests, scholars and philosophers) that not only were they themselves greatly venerated by all alike but it was possible for the caste system also to build itself up in their name and none found any reason for rejecting any of the implications of that system. Another important factor which made the system not only possible but welcome in Tamiḻaham was that many of the Brahmins were not imported aliens but were natives of Tamiḻaham. It is well known that even in the *Saṅgam* age Vēḷāḷas were entitled Kiḻāns and brahmins were *Sarmans*. It is stated in the *Padiham* to the IX Ten of the *Padiṟṟuppattu* that Iḻam Chēral Irumpoṟai made his minister Maiyūr Kiḻan more learned in the Sastras than his purohit. It is also known that Uruttira Śarman who judged the best commentary on the *Iṟaiyanār Kaḷaviyal* was a son of Uppūri Kuḍi Kiḻān. These instances seem to confirm the view that some learned and pious Kiḻāns at least became brahmins.

They were the community of seers, ascetics, priests, philosophers and scholars, who were attracted by the fascinating metaphysics of the Āryan Brahmins and so converted themselves to Brahminism and became the sponsors and custodians of Āryan culture and Vēdic rituals. Of course a few North Indian Brahmins also arrived on the scene and were called Vaḍamar (northerners); and it has been in the hands of these Tamil Brahmins that unadulterated Vēdic culture and Sanskritic traditions have been preserved for posterity.

The introduction of the caste system did not bring about a revolution in the country. It spread only these principles: (1) the superiority of the Brahmins and (2) the organization of professions on a hereditary basis. Still a redeeming feature is that learning and character were considered to be decisive factors in determining the social status of a man; it was clearly a society in which accepted and responsible opinion held that the learned man or the man of character and integrity to whatever stratum of society

he belonged was superior to the unlettered or characterless ones to whatever stratum they might belong. In short, the rigours of a caste system based upon birth were mitigated similarly in its practical application by the leaders of society and the rest continued as of old in their tribal ways. The Āryanization, therefore of Tamil society, was a partial achievement which touched but the fringes of that society; but it became a more pronounced and important feature later on because those fringes were really the vocal parts of society arrogating to themselves the right to speak for others; probably that process of Āryanization so-called was not auybody's conscious effort and was not more of a success than the Europeanization of India recently has been. The advantages of that process were accepted by the society at large without allowing itself to be engulfed or fundamentally altered by that alien pattern [11] Untouchability (including unapproachability) was practised as evidenced by diffferent communities residing in ghettos, as it were, and by the reference in *Śilappadikāram* that a goldsmith kept the usual distance from a Vaiśya. The ideas of high and low caste also took deep root in society in course of time.[12]

Tolkāppiyar knows 'the four castes' : He speaks of *Andaṇar, Araśar, Vaiśiyar, Vēḷāḷar.*[13] He says that the *Andaṇar*[14] wear the *nūl* (i.e. the sacred thread), carry the *karaham* (the vessel containing holy water for ceremonial ablutions), the *mukkōl* (the trident-like staff which is the symbol of ascetic life), and the *maṇai*

11 ''Varṇa came to the Dravidian South comparatively late, for the earliest Tamil literature shows a society divided into tribal groups with little sense of the precedence of one over the other. Succeeding centuries saw the gradual hardening of class, until South Indian Brahmans became even stricter in their ritual observances and the untouchables even more debased than in the North''. — A. L. Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, p. 138.

12 *Śilap* : XVI : 107; *Puṟam* : 170 : 5.

13 *Tol. Poruḷ* : 625, 626, 632 and 635.

14 They are nowhere in *Śaṅgam* literature referred to as 'Brāhmaṇas'.

(the wooden plank to serve as a seat) — as their paraphernalia;[16] that the kings have the sword, the flag, the umbrella, the drum, the horse, the elephant, the chariot, the garland and the crown as the regalia;[18] that the *Vaiśyas* wear the garland on their shoulder and the flowers on their head;[17] the *Vēḷāḷas* have their weapons of war and the totemic garland.[18] Pērāśiriyar, the commentator expands Tolkāppiyar's idea and says that the Brahmins and the kings have the sacred thread and the plank-seat as common paraphernalia,[19] though the text does not warrant this statement. It is also notable that in one context *Tolkāppiyam* says that the weapons of war are not to be assumed by any but the two intermediate castes viz., the *Araśar* and the *Vaiśyar*[20] and that in another context he says that the weapons of war and the totemic garlands are relevant to the *Vēḷāḷas*.[21] The commentator is compelled to reconcile these two apparently contradictory statements by torturing the expression *vēndu viḍu toḻil* i.e. 'if the king permits'. Again it is said that even *Andaṇar* scan become kings;[22] the commentator takes care to add "if there are no 'araśu' available". The reference about *Andaṇar* seems definitely to mean ascetics and Brahmin householders never used the *mukkōl* or the *karaham*. The chapter on *Marabial* (conventions and usages) in the *Tolkāppiyam* has 15 sūtras relating to castes, their functions and their paraphernalia.[23] It is strange that this ancient text should mention only four castes while other texts in the *Saṅgam* literature have many other definitions of caste and mention many sub-castes; it is strange also that *Tolkāppiyam* does not mention any other tribes whatsoever, though some of them like the *Āyar*, the cowherds and shepherds (who looked after flocks of sheep and cattle and sold milk and butter) were indeed doing a useful job. It is not as if he is unaware of this. He does mention the *Āyar* of the pastoral lands

15 *Tol. Poruḷ :* 625; Pērāśiriyar says the *maṇai* must be tortoise-shaped.

16 *Ibid.* 626. 17 *Ibid.* 634.

18 *Ibid.* 636. 19 *Ibid.* 627; Pērā. com. 20 *Idid.* 631.

21 *Ibid.* 636. 22 *Ibid.* 637. 23 *Idid.* 625 to 639

and the *Vēṭṭuvar* of the forest and hilly tracts;[24] but does not include them among the castes. On one occasion he mentions the 'superior ones' among 'the four categories'[25] but the commentator Nachchinārkkiniyar does not treat his 'four' as the traditional *Andaṇar, Araśar, Vaiśyar* and *Vēḷāḷar* but as *Andaṇar, Araśar*, superior *Vēḷāḷar* and the inferior *Vēḷāḷar* leaving the *Vaiśyas* out of account. It is also true that *Tolkāppiyam* does mention *uyarndōr* — the superior ones: and the *pinnōr* — the backward ones — the commentator identifying them with the *Vēḷāḷas*.

This shows that Tolkāppiyar was only trying to mention in the *Marabial* such castes as had acquired distinct characteristics and was probably influenced by the other and the North Indian varṇa system: *Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaiśyas* and *Sūdras*. But one should suppose that it would be uncharitable to accuse Tolkāppiyar of trying to foist any alien social order on the Tamils.[26] He was only mentioning certain existing facts about contemporary society.

That the two systems are not identical is obvious, because the fourth caste *Vēḷāḷar* is subdivided into 'superior' and 'inferior' and the 'superior' enjoyed *jus Connubium* with the *Araśar* and many of them were actually chieftains ruling over large territories in parts of Tamiḻaham.

The four-fold division was known to them; there is a passage in *Puṟanānūṟu* which while mentioning the four-fold caste division seems also to divide that system as a hierarchy of social status based upon birth: "Of the four divisions based upon differences, if one of the lower classes is learned those of the upper classes shall also be subject to him."[27] This means only that the royal author (Āryappaḍai kaḍanda Neḍuñjeḻian) of this poem is of the view

24 *Ibid.* 21. 25 *Ibid.* 29.

26 K. N. Sivaraja Pillai in his *Chronology of the Ancient Tamils* started accusing Tolkāppiyar of a conscious attempt to foist an alien caste system on native Tamil society. The language employed by him in that context shows that he had extra-academic (and therefore irrelevant) motives in making that charge.

27 *Puṟam* : 183

that learning and not caste based on birth decides superiority. The commentator Iḷampūraṇar quoting this poem in his commentary on *Tolkāppiyam* carefully qualifies[28] the unqualified statement of the royal poet by saying that 'learning' here does not include the learning of the 'Vēdas'. The same cemmentator says in another context[29] that "nature means 'caste-nature', i.e., the differences which mark *Pārppār, Araśar, Iḍayar, Kuṟavar* off one from another." He implies that the castes can be recognized by their peculiar gait, speech and other mannerisms.

The poet Māṅguḍikiḷār has a curious statement in the Puṟam:[30] "There are no castes (tribes) except these four: *Tuḍiyar, Pāṇar, Paṟaiyar, Kaḍambar*." Of these the *Tuḍiar* and the *Paṟaiyar* were drummers, the *Pāṇar* were bards and the *Kaḍambar* were pirates. The poet does not use the word *jāti* in this context, he speaks of *Kuḍi. Kuḍi* means 'tribe'. The poet was not unaware of the other castes or the usual four varṇas. He did not even mean to say that there were but four indigenous castes of Tamiḻaham. The poem is set in the martial context (the *Tuṟai 'Mūdin Mullai'* in the *Tiṇai 'Vāhai'*). So the martial God is the hero-stone; martial food is horsegram, millets, etc., and the martial flowers are 'Mullai', etc., and the martial communities are *Tuḍiar, Pāṇar, Paṟaiyar* and *Kaḍambar*. This poem has often been taken out of its context and Māṅguḍi Kiḷār is wrongly quoted as disapproving of the usual four-fold caste division.

V. Kanakasabhai has a classification of caste:[31] He speaks of *Uḻavar, Āyar* artisans like goldsmiths, etc., *Paḍai-Ātchis* (armed men), *Valaiyar* (fishermen), *Pulaiyar* (official slaughterers or hangmen). There is no warrant for such a division of society.

The concept of upper (superior classes and lower (inferior) classes was quite well established in the days of the *Śilappadikāram* where it is said that the goldsmith being a *Kammāḷa* walked at a distance from the higher class people walking along the street among whom Kōvalan the Vaiśya was one.[32] The poet Uṟaiyūr

28 *Tol. Puṟattiṇai* : 16. 29 *Tol. Meippāṭ:* 12. 30 *Puṟam* : 335.
31 V. K.: *Tamils*, 1800; p. 114. 32 *Śilap.*: XVI : 107.

Maruttuvan Dāmōdaranār calls a 'Pulaiyan' a low born one.[33]

The caste system, whatever be the number of major or minor castes, was accepted or at least tolerated. Certain slighting references to caste are not wanting but by and large the system had come to stay. An idea inextricably associated with caste, is expressed by Muṉṟuṟai Araiyar: "the hereditary arts (exclusively cultivated by members of particular castes) are understood without learning".[34] This served as the basis and justification of caste.

3. *The Brahmins and the Ascetics*

Presumably the Brahmins have been an integral part of Tamil society ever since cultural contacts between the Āryans and the Tamils commenced. They are mentioned in practically every text in *Saṅgam* literature. The *Tolkāppiyam*, the *Ten Idylls*, the Eight Anthologies, the Eighteen 'Minor' Works and the epics—all mention Brahmins. Brahmins had composed minor and major poems; they had played the role of patrons also. They had been ambassadors, priests, ascetics, householders, merchants, judicial advisers. They had been in and of the Tamil society and had contributed to the enrichment of Tamil culture.

The 'Brahmins', ('The Brāhmaṇas') mean "those that enquire into the Brahman or the Absolute One"; i.e., philosophers. In Tamil the nearest equivalent to the word is either *Andaṇar* or *Pārppār*[35] or *Maṟaiyavar*.[36] *Andaṇar* has been defined by Vaḷḷuvar as "Aṟavōr because they assume justice and kindness towards all creatures".[37] This word is quite applicable to all those who possess this merciful trait. 'God' is often referred to as *Andaṇar*.[38] The ascetics are also referred to as *Andaṇar*. The word has a special reference to Brahmins who were in those ancient days looked upon as the chief upholders and practitioners of these virtues. Parimēlaḻagar says that this definition by Vaḷḷuvar cannot apply to those who do not have any claims to those virtues.[39] The word *Andaṇar*

33 *Puṟam* : 170. 34 *Paḻamoḻi* : 21.

35 *Puṟam* : 34. 36 *Śilap* : XXIII: 63. 37 *Kuṟaḷ* : 30.

38 Kali : 38:1: "இமையவில் வாங்கிய சார்ஞ்சடை அந்தணன்". *Aham*: Prayer song. 39 *Kuṟaḷ* : 30; Pari. com.

has been interpreted in another way also. Nachchinārkkiniyar in more than one place says that *Aṇṇaṇar* are "those who always pursue the 'anta' or the 'end' or the 'vēdānta'."[40] Both these meanings seem to have applied to the Brahmins of Tamiḻaham of the *Saṅgam* age and in one instance at least the qualities mentioned by both the definitions have been applied to the Brahmins in the same context. In the chapter on *Andaṇar oḻukkam* of *Tiru Mandiram* Brahmins are said to be "those who are endowed with the lovable quality of kindness and those that contemplate the rare 'ends' of the Vedas, i.e., the Vedānta". That this word is generally used to indicate the Brahmins is clear from the innumerable references to *Āṟaṟi Andaṇar*[41] those who know the six *aṅgas* of the Vedas, *Nānmaṟai Andaṇar*[42] the *Andaṇar* of the four Vedas. The legal and judicial advisers of the king especially in the urban courts of justice, were called *Aṟakkaḷattu Andaṇar*. This expression has been interpreted to mean as if the entire body of judicial advisers were brahmins; it has already been noted how this could not have been the case in view of the fact that *Kāvidi* holders were also included in the judicial advisory body. In that context especially, the expression *Andaṇar* has been used strictly in the sense in which Vaḷḷuvar used it.[43]

Aṟavōr are distinct from *Andaṇar;* e.g. the *Śilappadikāram* says, "Pārppār, Aṟavōr, Paśu".[44] These *Aṟavōr* are perhaps ascetics who were not necessarily Brahmins. Still it appears that most of them at least were *Andaṇar* or that the word *Andaṇar* was used commonly to indicate *Pārppār* as well as the *Aṟivar* and the ascetics. The *Aṟivar* or the *Aṟavōr* were in all probability the people described by the *Kuṟaḷ* as 'Nittār'[45] or 'those who have renounced'. The *Tolkāppiyam* calls them "Maṟuvil mūvahaikkālamum neṟiyin Āṟṟiya Aṟivar".[46] They were supposed to know the past, the

40 *Madurai*: 474; Nach, com. 41 *Kali*: Prayer song.

42 *Śilap*: XIII: 141. 43 *Kuṟaḷ*: 30. 44 *Śilap*: XXI: 53.

45 The *Kuṟaḷ* 'Chapter on *Nittar Perumai*' (Chapter III).

46 *Tol Poruḷ*: 75.

present and the future. They always spoke the truth; and people implicitly believed them for they had such faith in their veracity. They lived, by choice, a life of destitution and ate the food and a small quantity of cow's *ney* (clarified butter) they got from any *one* house. They also begged for some hot water which they stored up in a primitive kind of flask or bowl. It seems that these persons begged for alms only in the Brahmin's quarters. There is an idealized situation mentioned in the *Tolkāppiyam*: the relatives of the heroine, who eloped with her lover and is known to have passed through a desert, pursued the couple. On the way they enquire of passers-by if they had seen the young couple of the description they mentioned. But they wish to learn it only from the *Aṟivar* who are also described as *Aṇdaṇar*; for the people were quite sure that these *Aṇdaṇar* or *Aṟivar* would never utter a falsehood, even for fun and could always let them know the truth, for they were so knowing. They are described as holding a *kuḍiñai* or a primitive flask hung from a chain hanger (*uṟi*) and an umbrella to protect them from the hot sun and the three-pronged staff (*Mukköl*) reclining on their shoulders.[47] The umbrella and the foot-wear (are not mentioned in the *Tolkāppiyam*, but) are mentioned (in the *Kalittogai*) probably because these *Aṟivar* in the mentioned context were passing through a desert and so these articles of protection were deemed appropriate. Nachchinārkkiniyar commenting on a poem in the *Kalittogai* explains[48] that the purpose of the three pronged staff was to indicate that the holder thereof holds the view that *Ari* (Vishṇu the Preserver), *Ayan* (Brahman the Creator) and *Aran* (Śiva the Destroyer) are not different but the same. The staff was cut of the *puraśu* (*palāśu*) tree, the bark was clean removed and the staff made fit for use. The folds of their cloth were known as *maḍi*[49] and they were expected, to wash their cloth in saffron or redstone.

Pārppār which is another name for Brahmins is not a translation or a corruption of the *Brāhmaṇa; Pārppār* means a 'seer'. In fact, he who fixes his vision on the Vēdānta was a *Pārppān*. *Pārppanar* is a verbal variant of *Pārppār* grammatically permitted. *Maṟaiyavar*

47 *Kali* : 9. 48 *Kali* : 9 (2). Nach. com.
49 *Puṟam* : 43 colophon; *Puṟam* : 6:20.

means those who study and teach the *Maṟais* or the Vedas. Though *Maṟai* and Vedas refer to the same sacred texts, *Maṟai* literally means that which is hidden from the non-Brahmins or the non-initiated, while Veda means 'sacred knowledge' and is derived from *Vid*; the term *Vediyar* and *Maṟaiyavar* referred to the same persons, viz., the Brahmins.

The *Tolkāppiyam* deals with the *Andaṇar* first while dealing with the castes : *Andaṇar, Araśar, Vaiśyar* and *Vēḷāḷar*. It seems from this order that Tolkāppiyar depicts a society in which the *Andaṇar* were granted a certain social eminence while even the kings came after them, to be followed by the *Vaiśyar* and the *Vēḷāḷar*. This order rather closely follows the Sanskritic varṇa division of *Brāhmaṇa, Kshatriya, Vaiśya* and the *Sūdra*, though we have noticed above that there is no strict correspondence between the *Vēḷāḷar* and the *Sūdras*. The *Kuṟaḷ* mentions the *Andaṇar* in general terms and uses the word *Pārppār* also.

The *Andaṇar* were held in high esteem. Doing injury to the *Pārppār* was considered a heinous crime. They were treated as equal to the very cows in respect of their innocence, timidity and usefulness. If war broke out the *Pārppār* were warned off the scene of battle as unfit for those grim affairs. Kaṇṇagi when she commanded the God of Fire to consume the city of Madurai enjoined upon him to exempt the *Pārppār*, the ascetics, the cows etc., from his ravages. There the *Pārppār* (whether it be for exigencies of metre or otherwise) are given the first place.

The basic and inalienable functions of the *Pārppār* and of the *Aṟivar* were different according to the *Tolkāppiyam*. The *Tolkāppiyam* says that the duties (or privileges of) the *Pārppār* were six-fold : (1) learning, (2) teaching, (3) performing (vēdic) sacrifices, (4) helping others to perform (vēdic) sacrifices, (5) giving presents and (6) receiving presents. Their learning was specifically defined; it related to the study of the Vedas and their *aṅgas* (ancillaries) like (1) *Niruktha* (Vēdic Grammar), (2) *Vyākaraṇa* (Grammar relating to secular texts also), (3) *Kalpa* (like the *Grahya Sūtras* of Āpastamba and other *rishis*), (4) The science of mathematics

(like those of Nārāyaṇīya and Vārāha), (5) philosophy or the study of language (like the Brāhmaṇas) and (6) music relating to poetry (*Chandas*). These were exclusively Brahmanical,[50] while the *Dharma Śāstras*, the *Artha Śāstras*, the *Itihāsās* and the *Purāṇas*, the *Nyāya Śāstras*, refutations of anti-Vēdic texts etc. were deemed of a lower order. Nachchinārkkiniyar who gives the above classified list also mentions that *Nyāya* or *Tarka Śāstra* (Logic) and *Gaṇita* (Mathematics) were common to the *Vēḷāḷas* also. Of the six functions stated above 'teaching' and 'officiating at the sacrifices' belonged exclusively to the Brahmin.

Tolkāppiyar speaks of the *Aṟivar* also. They are the wise men who know the past, the present and the future, i e. are omniscient. Agastya the famous sage is included among these ascetics by Nachchinārkkiniyar. These ascetics were of two kinds : (1) those who did penance and (2) those who did yoga. The ascetics undertook an arduous programme of selfdenial and on occasions even torture : starving (i. e. destroying the craving for food and water); enduring extreme heat and extreme cold; defining the nature of their place of stay or residence and similarly defining the seats (*maṇai*); speaking only at intervals (i. e. abstaining from speech while taking food) or assuming total silence (i. e. ever since assumption of asceticism) were some self-restraints. They had their external disciplines like bathing frequently in cold water, reclining on bareground, sporting the deerskin, wearing long matted hair, tending the sacred fire, shunning towns and villages, eating only what was available in the forests like fruits, leaves of trees and roots and entertaining the Gods and guests in the ascetic way.[51] Abolition of desires[52] and controlling the five senses were prescribed for them.[53] *Tuṟavu* or renunciation was their way of life. It is quite possible that the Jaina and Buddhist philosophers added to the popularity of asceticism.

The *Kuṟaḷ* which exhibits many Jaina and Buddhist ideas has an *Iyal* or chapter on renunciation[54] while *Nāladiyār*, a declaredly

50 *Tol. Poruḷ* : 30. 51 *P. V. M.* 168. 52 *Kuṟaḷ* : 370.
53 *Kuṟaḷ* : 126. 54 *Kuṟaḷ* : Chap. 35.

Jain work goes all out in favour of asceticism. But a study of Tamilian social life as depicted in the anthologies gives a clear picture of a confident, optimistic, wordly-minded people full of zest for the pleasures of the present and not much bothered about the problems of the hereafter. But there is no contradiction. The anthologies depict the life of such men as lived in the cities and the villages and were engaged in the arts of love and war, government, trade and agriculture, gifts and praises. But the *Aṟa Nūl* (the didactic literature) is concerned with a portrayal of life as it ought to be in its various aspects and in that context has to mention *Tuṟavu* also. It is not as if renunciation is not even mentioned in the anthologies; the poet Pakkuḷukkai Nankaṇiyār was well versed in astrology and was a recluse; so he wore only a sack for his loincloth (*pakku*: sack, *uḍukkai:* dress). He mourned that it was an unhappy world that the Creator made, for in it while in one house there was a happy marriage party in another there was weeping and wailing for a departed one; he said "Let the wiser ones realise the truth"[55] The *Padiṟṟuppattu* mentions how the Purohit of Palyānai Śelkeḻu Kuṭṭuvan renounced the world and went away to the forests and the king later followed him.[56] So renunciation was not merely theory; it was in vogue. But it can be said that the number of ascetics compared with the total population was quite small, but sufficient to infuse into the minds of the numerous lay people a certain sense of spiritual discipline. More than the kings and the armies and other secular arrangements for law and order, these pacific sages must have contributed to the sense of contentment and culture among the people leading to the perpetuation of an orderly and well-behaved society. The *Kuṟaḷ* says that the *nittār* (ascetics) set an example to the world.[57]

It was perhaps quite unnecessary that these ascetics should be Brahmins, though the term *Andaṇar* is used indiscriminately to refer to them also. In the centuries round about the commencement of the Christian era, there must have been Jaina and Buddhist

55 *Puṟam:* 194. 56 *Padiṟṟu:* III Ten; *Padiham,*
57 *Kuṟaḷ:* 28.

ascetics also in the Tamil country, and they were not Brahmanical; even non-Jain, non-Buddhist and non-Brahmanical ascetics could have been there and they probably formed the nucleus of the Siddhās peculiar to Tamiḻaham (noted for their system of medicine, yoga and worship). Asceticism must have been a more ancient and indigenous institution in Tamiḻaham than Brahmanism. The early *Śaṅgam* age was a period of transition during which the Vedic Brahmin was slowly ousting the older order of ascetics. Later literature naturally treated all ascetics as *Pārppār* or *Andaṇar*. The yellow-robed (*Kāshāyam*-wearing) ascetics are referred to in the *Mullaippāṭṭu*; and Nachchinārkkiniyar says that the *Andaṇar* are the crowds of monks who wear *Kāshāyam*.[58]

The *Andaṇar* were recruited for service in the royal court as purohits (*Āśāns*) and probably as astrologers (*Kaṇi*). Some of them served as judicial advisers, and were employed as ambassadors; as they were noted for their soft and diplomatic ways, the king preferred to employ the Brahmins as ambassadors[59] though nothing prevented his employing others also.[60] The employment of Brahmins by Tamil royalty was not analogous to the role of the sacrificing Brahmins in the vedic polity. The idea that "*regnum* could not exist without *sacerdotium*" was historically never known to the Tamil polity.

The *Andaṇar* lived in particular parts of the town or village; for the system of separate communities living in separate quarters of a town or a village was fully, in vogue even then. These separate quarters were called *chēris* meaning only 'suburbs' and had not acquired the unpleasant connotation which it now has, meaning some kind of slum area of the poor. The *andaṇar* quarters were called *Pārppana Chēri*. Nachchinārkkiniyar says, however that *chēri* is the residential area where the low-caste ones live.

We come across very typically Brahmnical gotra names; e.g., Kauṇiyan (Kaundinyan), Gautamanār, Kauśikanār, Bāradāyanār

58 *Mullaip* : 37, 38. Nach. com.

59 *Aham*: 54; *Puṟam:* 305. *Tol. Ahat*. 28: Iḷam. com.

60 *Puṟam*. 95.

(Bhāradvājanār). These are as much personal names as they are gotra names. They performed the Vēḷvis (Vedic Sacrifices). Āvūr Mūlaṅkiḻār praises 'Pārppan Kavuṇian Viṇṇandāyan of Pūñjāṟṟūr' of the Choḻa land in the following terms:[61] "Oh; scion of the celebrated race of wise men who laid low the strentgh of those who opposed Siva's ancient lore, who saw through the sophistry of the false doctrines and preferring the truth and shunning error completed the twenty one forms of Vedic sacrifice. Worn by you on the occasion of the sacrifice, the skin of the grass-eating stag of the forest shines over the sacred thread on your shoulder. Your wives, — suited to your station, gentle and of rare virtue wearing the web-like garment prescribed in the *Aṟam*, sparing of speech, with small foreheads, large hips, abundant tresses —are carrying out the duties prescribed for them, twice seven paśus (cows) in the proper places supply clarified butter more freely than water, you make countless offerings and spread your fame to make the whole world jealous; at the culmination of the rare sacrifice your exalted station gains a new splendour. May we ever witness it so.'

We know from the *Paḍiṟṟuppattu* that the Brahmin poet Pālai Gautamanār was assisted by Palyānai Śelkeḻu Kuṭṭuvan to perform ten great sacrifices with the help of the wisest among the Brahmins.[62] The Vedic sacrifices, were performed by the Brahmins and encouraged by the kings; the most notable among such kings being Palyāgaśālai Mudukuḍumi Peru Vaḻudi who is said to have built as many sacrificial halls as he had fought battles.[63] The kings performed the sacrifices which they were entitled to perform. A Chōḻa king was called Rāja Sūyam Vēṭṭa Perunaṟkiḷḷi for he performed the great imperial sacrifice called *Rājāsūyam*. We do not know if any Tamil king performed the 'equestrian' sacrifice called *Aśvameda*.[64] Māḍalan, the Brahmin from Puhār advised

61 *Puṟam*: 166.

62 *Paḍiṟṟu*: III ten. *Paḍiham*. 63 *Puṟam*: 15.

64 Mr. D. C. Sircar says: "No one except a fanatic can be expected to perform an Aśvamedha sacrifice and expose his wives to such indecent and obnoxious practices as are necessary in the performance of this sacrifice". *Journal of the Dept. of Letters*, Calcutta University, XXVI, p. 111.

the great Chēra king Śeṅguṭṭuvan, that it was time he performed 'the greatest and the best of sacrifices fit for the kings'.[65] Karuṅkuḻal Ādan says that the Chōḻa king Karikālan performed Vedic sacrifices in all their elaborate details.[66] The Chēra king Peruñjēraḻ Irumpoṛai performed the Putrakāmeshti sacrifice.[67]

The Brahmins were the twice born; they were held to take the second birth after their initiation into the knowledge of Brahmam on the occasion of the *Upanayana* or the wearing of the sacred thread; this sacred thread consisted of three threads. *Grihastas* wore three threads each with three thinner threads;[68] they were associated with the Vedas or the 'unwritten learning'.[69] The ideal ones among them spent forty eight years as bachelors and then married and settled down as householders; "they preserved the three kinds of fires 'which was all their wealth'. They recited their Vedic mantras at the appointed hour, at dawn, at noon and at sunset; while worshipping they wore cloth just washed and wet and drying on their body". The *Śilappadikāram* beautifully summarises the Brahmanical traits and activities and discipline: They "loved the *one* great objective, *Vidu;* they were of *two* births; they preserved the *three* fold sacrificial fire; they were well-versed in the *four* vedas; they performed the *five* great sacrifices; they pursued the *six* fold duties prescribed for them".[70]

The recitation of the Vedic mantras by the *Andaṇar* in the early morning was such in the bigger cities like Madurai that the people (other than the *Andaṇar)* of the city were awakened not by the crowing of the cock but by the loud chanting of the Brahmanical mantras. The lotus flower was associated with them and when the kings desired to make a present to them they gave the gold lotus flowers. The lotus is Lord Brahma's favourite flower as he was himself born of the *Nābi Kamala (*the lotus of the navel*)* and the Goddess Sarasvati *(*the Goddess of Learning — Brahma's divine consort) is associated with the white lotus; hence the connection

65 *Śilap* : XXVIII: 177 to 179. 66 *Puṛam*: 224.
67 *Padiṛṛu* : 74. 68 *Tirumurugu* : 179 etc.
69 Kuṛun : 156. 70 *Śilap* : XXIII : 67 to 70.

between Brahmin and the lotus is evident. But in the *Saṅgam* Tamiḻaham the *pāṇar* or the bards were also the recipients of gold lotuses.[71] The Brahmins who were the custodians of Āryan culture and promoters of abstract thought, though numerically smaller played a vital role in the development of Tamilian culture.

They were famous for their clean surroundings and hygienic environment and studiedly pacific domestic setting. Their *chēri* (street) could be easily recognized. It was the faultlessly clean street.[72] Small *pandals* or canopies of dried palm leaves were put up in front of the Brahmins' houses and the *pandals* were supported by four bamboo poles; to these poles calves were tied up. The flooring in the house was scrubbed with cowdung paste. There were the idols of their favourite gods in their houses. Dogs and poultry (especially hens) were not allowed to enter their houses.[73] On the other hand in their houses parrots were brought up with kindly care and they were taught to recite the Vedic hymns.[74] The housewife in the *Andaṇar* family was a dutiful and industrious lady whose chastity was proverbial like that of *Arundadi*.[75] Nachchinārkkiniyar describes with considerable relish the tasty, vegetarian food that the *Andaṇar* lady prepared and which the Perumpāṇar on their way to Toṇḍaimān Iḷandiraiyan tasted; the daily food of the *Andaṇar* was of this order: rice of the Rājānnam variety was the favourite dish; for, that particular variety of rice was most suitable for sacrificial Āhudi or offering; the unripe fruit of the pomegranate (especially of the *kommaṭṭi* type) was mixed with pepper powder and *Karuvēmbu* leaves, and fried in the pure butter churned in the butter milk obtained from the reddish cow; the cut pieces of the unripe fruit of the tall mango tree served as pickles. The steaming smoke emerging from the oven warmed the forehead of the lady of the house.[76] Beggars or ascetics

71 *Puṟam* : 319 etc. 72 Kuṟun : 277.

73 *Ibid* : *Perumbāṇ* : 299; *Innā* : 3.

74 *Perumbāṇ* : 300. 75 *Perumbāṇ* : 303.

76 *Perumbāṇ* : 297 to 310. R. Raghava Iyengar suggests that the word Rājānnam is scribe's corruption of 'Sārasānnam' which means 'Garudan śampa' or the kind of rice which is

received only the rice food and the white *ney*.[77]

Kūḍalūrkiḻār describes the seene of a Brahmin lady serving food to her lord: "the shining face of the lady brightened when her husband relished the food she had herself prepared; the food was rice mixed with the sweet thick curds; (and she had used her own fingers to do the mixture and had cleaned her fingers not by washing it with water but by rubbing it away in her apron) and the sweet and sour Kuḻambu which she had herself mixed with rice". Nachchinārkkiniyar says that this was a 'Brahmin household'[78] and he says so from the nature of the food served and the manner of service. The Brahmins were no idle class; "they deemed it wrong to eat the bread which they had not earned."[79]

So it becomes clear that the Tamil Brahmins of the *Śaṅgam* age were a respectable and learned community, living apart in their *Chēri*, maintaining a most desirable environment, performing their caste duties scrupulously (performing the Vedic sacrifices and muttering the Vedic chants, worshipping their gods in their own houses) serving the king occasionally as judicial advisers and always as purohits and astrologers, performing ambassadorial duties to the kings, giving and receiving patronage, preferring the pacific and ascetic life to the noisy and vulgar life of the market place and scrupulously vegetarian in food habits.

It is strange that a couple of references in the whole of the *Śaṅgam* literature has led many usually reasonable scholars to conclude that the Tamil Brahmin of the *Śaṅgam* age was a meat-eater and a wine drinker. The sources which are supposed to support them are poems 113 and 119 of *Puṟanānūṟu*. Kapilar the famous *Śaṅgam* poet who styles himself a Brahmin[80] and who is called a Brahmin[81] speaks about the efficacy of meat and drink. It must be noted that in those two contexts Kapilar mentions only the most popular dishes of the Parambu land of Pāri and has never said that

partly white and partly reddish in colour : *Perumbāṇāṟṟupaḍai Ārāichchi*, p. 61.

77 *Kuṟun* : 277. 78 *Tol. Poruḷ* : 24; Nach. com.

79 *Innā* : 2. 80 *Puṟam* : 200, 201. 81 *Puṟam* : 126.

he ate meat or relished drink. Even if the references are made to yield that meaning, Kapilar must be taken to assume the role of a *Pāṇar* as a literary device, even as Auvai quite often assumes the role of a *Viṛali* and mentions the delicacy of meat and the taste of drink. Dr. U. V. Swaminatha Iyer, in his introduction to *Puṛanānūṛū* gives the correct lead in this matter and warns against hastily concluding, on account of such utterances that Auvai was in fact a *Viṛali*. It was but a literary convention. In the face of the very clear references in the *Perumpāṇāṛṛuppaḍai* and *Kuṛuntogai* about the nature of Brahmin food in the *Saṅgam* age, to say that Kapilar "approved of meat and drink" as S. Vaiyapuri does is to argue from wrong premises. K. A. N. Sastri, agrees with S. Vaiyapuri and says, "Apparently Brahmins ate meat and drank toddy without incurring reproach".[82] Kapilar, who is known to have written the *Innā Nāṛpadu* one of the eighteen minor works of the *Saṅgam* literature clearly says "He that drinks toddy says no sensible thing"[83] and "fattening by eating meat is undesirable".[84] Munṛuṛai Araiyar says that "Even the Brahman would eat the Uḍumbu"[85] which means, he does not normally do so.

The Brahmin's habits were simple and consistent with his general way of life It is not mentioned anywhere if he wore the caste mark on his forehead. The Śaivite *Vibhūti* (the dried cow dung powder) and the corresponding Vaishṇavite caste marks do not find mention. The *Tilaham* is mentioned only in connection with the dress and ornaments of women.[86] The Brahmins wore the tuft on their head; it was curiously knotted and allowed to dangle on one side; it was compared to the knot of hair on the mane of a horse.[87]

82 K. A. N.: *H. S. I.*, p. 126. 83 *Innā*: 34.

84 *Innā*: 23. S. Vaiyapuri escapes this contradiction by denying Kapilar the authorship of 'Innā Nārpadu': thus one false step leads to another.

85 *Paḷamoḷi*: 35

86 *Tirumurugu*: 24; it was but part of their toilet.

87 *Aiṅguṛu*: 202.

Then, as always, there were Brahmins who did not take to the traditional occupation of the priestly class. Some were inclined towards heteredoxy and interested themselves in clearly secular and commercial professions. Nakkīrar the great *Śaṅgam* poet is known to have been a dealer in bangles made of conches; conch-cutting was his employment. He, and some others like him, never performed Vedic sacrifices and so were *Vēḷāp Pārppār* (the non-sacrificing Brahmins).[88] In the *Kalittogai* the incident of the leprous and lecherous old Brahmin who ran after a young lady and was appropriately punished therefor, though set in a humorous setting probably indicates that there were some undesirable renegades also in the community.[89] The *Śilappadikāram* gives an instance of a community of Brahmins resident in a village near Madurai. Iḷaṅgo calls it "the village of the Brahmins who wear the sacred thread but have left off chanting the Vedas and have become musicians."[90] As these Brahmins were 'fallen', Kavundi, Kovalan and Kaṇṇagi avoided them and stayed in a suburb outside the village. This shows clearly that Brahmin as Brahmin was not respected but only "as a true follower of the great Brahminical principles". The respect shown to the really sincere Brahmin was equalled only by the contempt with which the erring Brahmins were treated. This can be held to be generally true of all the communities but particularly true of the Brahmins who were probably expected to be exemplary in their behaviour. This again shows that adherence to traditional and prescribed ways of life was considered to be the first social virtue; this view actually gave

88 *Aham*: 24 *Nambi Tiruviḷaiyāḍal*: 22.

89 *Kali*: 65. The *Tolkāppiyam* says that Brahmins were not excluded from royal duties. This does not mean that at any time in *Śaṅgam* history the country or any part of it was governed by Brahmins. It is quite probable too that no Brahmin ever ruled in his own right. Pērāśiriyar commenting on *Tol. Poruḷ.* 637: I rightly points out that the Brahmin ministers and purohitas possibly looked after royal duties when there was a short interregnum; and this is what Tolkāppiyar meant when he prescribed regal functions for Brahmins too.

90 *Śilap*: XIII: 38, 39.

extraordinary stability to society which no governmental organization of those days could have given.

The Brahmin community had taken root into the social structure of Tamiḻaham; they were really attached to the land for they were all natives of the land and were proud of their country and their mother-tongue. Sanskrit was to them the language of their religion and nothing more. We do not find the Tamil *Saṅgam* literature referring to Sanskrit as the *Deva Bhāsha* (the language of the Gods ; it was just the language of the North (*Vaḍamoḻi*).[91] The Brahmins were greatly attached to their mother tongue. In fact any contemptuous reference to Tamil was resented by the poets of the *Saṅgam* and other learned men of the land.[92]

The highest intellects in the land insisted that 'virtues by birth' are not reliable, while 'merits' have to be judged afresh each time in the case of each person, implying that virtue and merit might be found among the 'lower' castes and evil and vice might be found among the 'superior' castes. The *Kuṛaḷ* says, "A Brahmin might relearn his Vedas if he has forgotten them, but if he loses character and conduct, his high birth will be lost and cannot be regained." The same idea is repeated in a later work: "To the Brahmins character is more important than even learning." It can be supposed that the Brahmin, slowly came to occupy a high place of respect and dignity in Tamil society largely because of their character, and way of life and not because of their birth; the Tamils reminded themselves very often that "while character is above learning, learning is above caste". It should be enquired why they should have done so; the obvious answer is: Even then, caste by birth had begun to assert itself and the idea that the individual's lack of merit can be made up by the high caste to which he belongs or *vice versa*, was perhaps becoming more and more pronounced. The *Kuṛaḷ* is very emphatic on that point: "It is better not to eat the flesh, than perform a thousand Vedic sacrifices" Obviously the reference to killing and eating here is to the Vēdic

91 *Kali* : 25.1.

92 *Vide* : Pēra. Com. on *Tol. Poruḷ* : Sūtram 490.

paśu sacrificed". Some texts especially *Nālaḍiyār* being of Jaina origin and understandably anti Brahmin, have delighted in drawing pointed attention to the artificial nature of caste distinctions. The prince-poet Āryappaḍai kaḍanda Neḍuñjeḻian extolling the virtues of culture and learning says "of all the four castes if one of the lower caste is learned, he of the upper caste who is not learned will be subject to him". But in course of time, even as caste came to be based upon birth, the Brahmin came to be regarded as indisputably superior.

The Brahmin enjoyed considerable respect at court. The kings, most of them at least, treated them with great courtesy. Kārikiḻār addressing Palyāgaśālai Mudukuḍumi Peru Vaḻudi says: "May your head bow down before the blessing hands of the ascetics well versed in the four *Maṛais*."[93] Kapilar speaking with authority says that Śelvakkaḍuṅgo Vāḻi Ādan does not bend before any but the *Pārppār*. This was quite a general practice. Dr. S. K. Iyengar, generalizing this, says: "The Brahmins had a general permit to speak their mind in any *darbar*; and these Brahmins often gave out their opinion most fearlessly". This generalization, like most generalizations is slightly misleading. All learned and wise men were given this privilege and it was not an exclusively Brahmanical privilege. Māḍalan, the Brahmin from Puhār, was given the privilege of advising Śeṅguṭṭuvan, not because he was a *Maṛaiyōn* but because he was a learned and wise man. Other learned and wise men like Kōvūrkkiḻār (a *Vēḷāḷa* poet) were in fact more famous for their outspoken advice to kings in stronger terms than even the Brahmins.[94] That Brahmins were given this privilege uniformly is not true either; for when Kapilar went on a peace mission to the enemies of Pāri, his efforts failed. When Kapilar requested Malaiyamān to marry Pari's daughters, the request was turned down. If Māḍalan had given his advice to Śeṅguṭṭuvan before his Āryan adventure and not after it, it is quite likely that the great Chēra would have rejected that advice. But it is very strange that Dr. S. K. Iyengar should say that Māḍalan weaned Śeṅguṭṭuvan away

93 *Puṛam* : 6.

94 *Puṛam* : 44 to 47.

from his North Indian expedition.[95] In fact, Māṅguḍi Marudanār, according to Dr. S. K. Iyengar,[96] weaned the great Pāṇḍyan Neḍuñjeḻian from embarking on his Talaiyālaṅgānattu battle. This is an error. It was only after the king's famous victory in that battle that the poet thought of praising the king, no doubt, for his victories in the battle-field but really to draw his attention to ultimate realities.

The Brahmins at least most of them as we saw above were natives of Tamiḻaham who at an early period in the history of their land adopted Brahmanism. They were concentrated for obvious reasons in particular places and were called after the villages where they were numerically considerable. A particular sect came to be called *Brahatcharaṇas*; this is literally translated as *Peruṅkālar* meaning 'those of the great family' (*kāl*: branch). In fact, among the native *Smārta* Brahmins of Tamiḻaham a good number were *Brahatcharaṇas* concentrated in places like the Maḻanāḍu (not to be confused with Malai Nāḍu), or Māṅguḍi in Trichinopoly District, Paḻamānāri in Tanjore District, Tiruvaṇṇāmalai in North Arcot District, etc. The Brahmins of Chōḻa Nāḍu were Chōḻia Brahmins who wore their tuft on the forepart of their head like the Nambūdris of Malabar. A compact mass of Brahmins, a single unit consisting of 8000 families spread all over came to be called *Eṇṇāyiram*, later Sanskritized as *Ashṭasahasras*. Probably they lived in the famous villages Eṇṇāyiram in South Arcot District and so came to be called after that village or gave their name to the village which they might have founded making it from the very beginning a centre of Vēdic learning. Of course, there is a vast body of *Smārta* Brahmaṇas called *Vaḍamar*, probably because they were immigrants into South India from the north. It is noteworthy that while the various sections among the *Brahatcharaṇas* are associated with particular localities in the Tamil country, there is no such division among the *Vaḍamas* who must, therefore be treated as a compact mass of northern immigrants into the Tamilian brahmin fold. Endogamic inhibitions have prevented intermarriage between *Brahatcharaṇam* groups and

95 S. K.: *Beginnings*, p. 140. 96 *Ibid.*

the *Vaḍamar* groups, and among the *Vaḍamars* subdivisions are not known to exist. All this would point to two conclusions : 1. The *Vaḍamar* are a body of northern immigrants into the Tamil country; 2. they have not been absorbed into the body of local brahmin groups like the *Brahatcharaṇams*, *Ashṭasahasrams* etc. Each group naturally looks upon the other as of inferior caste status. The origins of Brahminical southward treks belong to the early stages of Āryanization of the Tamil country.

4. *Communities other than Brahmins*

The kings of Tamiḻaham, i.e. the dynasties to which the crowned monarchs belonged were the natives of Tamiḻaham in every sense. They are heard of from the very beginning of South Indian history. There is no local or foreign reference of any kind at any time which does not mention these three kingdoms and their rulers. Tentatively it may be granted that these Tamil kingdoms were founded by Dravidian immigrants; clearly they were not Āryan immigrants. (1) Either they were immigrants from a place to the south of the people who so gloriously developed the Indus valley culture and their southward immigration was prompted by the destruction of the ancient Indus cities, which is more probable, or (2) they were North Indian Dravidians who were pushed south by the earliest Āryan impact, or (3) they belonged to the Dravidian element which arrived from the Eastern Mediterranean region by sea. Their arrival in South India centuries before the Āryans entered India is progressively being proved by the mass of material regarding linguistic and ethnic affinities between the Dravidians and the ancient people of the middle east. The earliest Āryan contact with the South which must have taken a considerable time after the earliest Aryan settlement in the Punjab, could have happened only after the southern kingdoms had been established firmly. So the Chēra, Chōḻa, and Pāṇḍya royal dynasties were perhaps some of the oldest dynasties known to India. If the Saiśunāga dynasty was historically the oldest dynasty known to the North, the Chēra, Chōḻa and Pāṇḍya dynasties could be equally old if not older. While tradition gives immeasurable antiquity to these dynasties no

other known fact in history clashes with tradition. So to give the Tamil kings a *Kshatriya* status would be an anachronism. V. Kanakasabhai, is right when he says[97] that while the Tamil Brahmin wore the sacred thread, the *Araśar* and the *Vaiśyar* did not wear it, though the *Kshatriyas* and the *Vaiśyas* of the North wore the thread; they were entitled to marriage with the superior *Vēḷāḷas* known as the *Vēḷirs* who were either large land owners or petty chieftains. The existence of *jus connubii* between Chēra, Chōḻa, Pāṇḍya kings and the superior *Vēḷirs* suggests the absence of any class barrier. This *Jus* was no aberration but a permitted and recognized practice.

The king's duties were well recognised. 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.

The merchant community was mostly in evidence in the towns Tolkāppiyar calls them the *Vaiśigas* and treats them as a commercial community.[98] Fundamentally they were simple traders dealing in the eight varieties of *grams, dhal* and millets. The *Kuṟaḷ* prescribes a high standard of honesty for them; just as the kings are to uphold justice and the Brahmins are to closely adhere to the way of life prescribed for them, the *Vaiśyas* are to buy and sell without profiteering.[99] The idea was not to abolish profits but to reduce them to just and reasonable limits.

It seems from a note in the *Nachchinārkkiniyam* that 'trade' is common to *Vaiśyas* and to *Vēḷāḷas*. It appears that (1) learning, (2) performing sacrifices, (3) making gifts, (4) agriculture, (5) protection of cows and (6) trade were the prescribed duties of a *Vaiśya*, while, (1) learning, other than the Vedas, (2) making gifts, (3) agriculture, (4) protection of cows, (5) trade and (6) worship are the prescribed functions of a *Vēḷāḷa*. But another list says that worship must be substituted by performing sacrifices for, in as much as they enjoyed *jus connubium* with royal families, they could also per-

97 V. K.: *The Tamils*, 1800, p. 113.
98 *Tol. Poruḷ*: 632. 99 *Kuṟaḷ*: 120; *Paṭṭina*: 210.

orm such sacrifies as the kings performed. But it seems that considerable confusion existed between the *Vaiśyas* and the *Vēḷāḷas* and they were known mostly by the profession they for the time being pursued The merchants and the traders largely belonged to the cities; Puhār was a most famous place for the great *Vaiśya* families to which Kaṇṇagi and Kōvalan belonged. The name *Cheṭṭi* denoting a commercial community of South India seems to have been known in the *Śaṅgam* age also. We come across a merchant called *Araṭṭan Cheṭṭi*[100] in the *Śilappadikāram*; the *Maṇimēkalai* speaks of 'Chandradattan' a merchant as a *cheṭṭi*[101] and mentions nine other *cheṭṭis* in another context.[102] These *cheṭṭis* were merchants. They were the richest community in the land; among them were the richest persons in the capital city with the possible exception of the kings. The suburb of the city in which they lived was 'like the very house of the Goddess of Wealth'.

The foreign trade which is known to have been very extensive in the *Śaṅgam* age was managed by the Vaiśyas. While the fisherman owned the small fishing boats, the big merchants owned the bigger ocean-going vessels. They lived in luxurious houses and led a high life

The *Vēḷāḷas*, especially the agriculturists, were a very important limb of society.[103] Nachchinārkkiniyar recognizes[104] two types of *Vēḷāḷas*; the superior and the inferior. The superior *Vēḷāḷas* owned land and directed agricultural operations, while the latter were actually cultivators working on the farm land, as labourers personally engaged in tilling, sowing and reaping. The former had the right of marriage with the royal families, and some of them, also known as *Vēḷirs*, were chieftains of some importance. The celebrated Pāri, Añji, Kāri, Ōri, Pēhan etc. belonged to this group of *Vēḷirs*. In the caste hierarchy the labouring *Vēḷāḷas* were the lowest and their women were called *kaḍaiśiyar* meaning 'women of the last class'.[105] In fact all the communities were entitled to own land while only the

100 *Śilap*: XXIII: 129.
101 *Maṇi*: XVI: 107.
102 *Maṇi*: XXV: 165.
103 *Kuṟaḷ*: 1033.
104 *Tol. Poruḷ*: 632; Nach. Com.
105 *Puṟam*: 61.

last class of labourers was considered fit to be employed as farm labourers.[106]

The superior *Vēḷāḷas* held high positions and were regional chiefs, *Maṇḍalattalaivar* and army commanders, *Daṇḍattalaivar*; they belonged to places like 'Piḍavūr',[107] 'Aḻundūr',[108] 'Nāṅgūr',[109] 'Ālañchēri,'[110] 'Peruñjikkal', 'Vallam', 'Kiḻār' etc., and were called *Vēḷs*[111] and *Araśus* in the Chōḻa land. In the Pāṇḍya land they were entitled *Kāvidis* and enjoyed *jus connubium* with the royal family. Nachchinārkkiniyar who makes this last statement leaves it doubtful if the practice of conferring the *Kāvidi* title on superior *Vēḷāḷas* was restricted to the Pāṇḍya land. While he is silent on that point, no other evidence is available to point to that conclusion that it was a purely Pāṇḍyan practice. The expression *Kuṟumuḍik Kuḍippiṟantār* used in Nachchinārkkiniyar's commentary on the *Tolkāppiyam* suggests that these superior *Vēḷirs*, some of whom by virtue of their matrimonial ties with the royal families became chieftains and princes, wore a shorter and smaller kind of crown. *Kiḻār* was usually a title sufflxed to the *Vēḷāḷas*, like 'Kārikiḻār, 'Kōvūrkiḻār etc.[112]

Among the innumerable other communities, the warrior community which provided soldiers to the royal army and which was generally considered to be of very old standing *(Mūdil)* was economically unimportant but often of great use to the king.

The *Paradavar* or the *Mīnavar* were the fishermen; they were also called the *Valaiyar*. They owned the small fishing boats called

106 *Kuṟaḷ* : Chap : 104; prefatory note by Pari.

107 *Puṟam* : 395.

108 Chōḻan Uruva Pahrēr Iḷañjēṭ Śenni married in the *Aḻundūr* family.

109 Chōḻan Karikālan married in the *Nāṅgūrvēḷ* family.

110 Maindan of Ālañchēri was a great philanthrapist. *(Tamiḻ Nāvalar Charitai)*.

111 *Vēḷaḷa* is derived from *Vēḷ:* to please: he who pleases society by serving it is a 'vēḷāḷa'; hence the words 'Vēḻvi: 'Vēṭkai' also. But V. Kanakasabhai derives it from 'Veḷḷam' (floods) which is not tenable *(The Tamils* 1800: p. 43).

112 *Kiḻār* means 'He who belongs to' or 'He who has the right to'.

timil and they plied a brisk trade in fish. They resided on the seashore and when the sea was stormy they met in the *manṟam* and engaged in pleasant games. Their net *(valai)* was supplemented by another large container for holding the catch. Parata Kumarar mentioned in *Śilappadikāram* were only fishermen youth.[113]

The *Umaṇar* were the manufacturers and sellers of salt. The government (that is the king) seems to have had no hand in salt manufacture; it was done by that community of salt traders as a matter of traditional right. Cart loads of white salt used to leave the sea-shore for the interior for sale. The builders of boats and the larger ships were a community of specialists who were to be found in the bigger ports like Puhār.

The blacksmith was the very soul of village industry; his wheel and his smelting fire kept up the mechanical crafts of the land. He was the *kollan*; he worked hard and his arm was strong and so he was called the *karuṅgaikkollan* (meaning 'the strong armed smith'). The iron wheel was made by him; he made and repaired the various metallic weapons needed for the army.

The goldsmith, called *Poṟkollan*, was the dealer in gold and manufacturer of jewels and ornaments. In Madurai, the royal goldsmith had many assistants under him; he was in the habit of swindling his customers; it was a royal goldsmith who treacherously brought about the murder of Kōvalan, the merchant from Puhār. To pacify 'the goddess of Chastity' (Kaṇṇagi) who had pronounced a curse on Madurai, Veṟṟi Vēṟ Cheḻian of Koṟkai sacrificed a thousand goldsmiths. But their integrity apart, they were very clever artisans, and their gold ornaments were greatly in demand in foreign countries. They were treated as low-born persons and they maintained a physical distance between themselves and the 'higher-born ones' while walking along the streets.

The cobbler who was also treated as a 'low born' not only made and mended shoes but he manufactured the *pari* the large leather can used for drawing water for irrigation. The shield and the sheath generally made of leather were also manufactured by the

113 *Śilap. Indraviḻā:* 158.

cobbler. There is specific reference to persons of 'low birth'; one such was the Tuḍiyan[114] also called a Pulaiyan. Perhaps the Paraiyar, the Kaḍambar and the Pāṇar belonged to the same category. It seems that at least in the days of the anonymous commentator on the *Puṟanānūṟu*, Pulaiyar was a generic name for persons deemed to be of low birth. The weavers of the coir mattress of the wooden bedsteads and the hunters at least have been designated 'persons of low-birth'.[115]

The carpenter (*Tachchan)* was a busy craftsman whose activity ranged from building the wooden structures in palaces down to making a three-wheeled toy vehicle for children. The carpenters from Greece and Rome (Yavana *Tachchar)* lived and worked alongside of local artisans. These carpenters helped the ship-builders and made Vehicles and bedsteads, planks and doors, chariots and boats.

The weavers were next in importance to the agriculturists and they were famous in foreign countries for the very fine textile goods they produced. Cotton weaving and silk weaving were both common and Madurai, Uṟaiyūr, and other places now noted for the textile industry were even in the *Saṅgam* age quite famous as weaving centres The workmen engaged in dyeing and tailoring did service ancillary to spinning and weaving. The tailors were called *Tunnakārar*.

Manufacturers of luxury goods like cosmetics, spices and perfumes were legion; umbrellas and whisks were sold in large numbers in the bigger towns.

The shepherds and cowherds (*Āyar*) were a very important and large community; in fact they represented the pastoral regions in the land and cattle was their wealth. They tended the cattle and sheep in the grasslands with the wonted staff in their hands.[116] They supplied milk and milk products like butter, melted butter, butter-milk and curd to house-holders. There were rich and influential *Āyar* who supplied milk and curd to the palace establishment. Kōvalan and Kaṇṇagi arriving at Madurai from Puhār stayed in the house of a cowherdess called 'Mādari'. The cow-

114 *Puṟam* : 170. 115 *Puṟam :* 82 and 170. 116 *Aham* : 274.

herdess naturally enough worshipped Tirumāl who as Lord Krishna 'spent His youth in the company of the *Āyar*'. They danced the *Kuravai* and sang His praise and worshipped Him.

The Vēḍars were the hunters and they accompanied the king on hunting expeditions; they were hill-folk and they brought to the plains the products of the hills and jack fruit.

Such, in the main, was the Tamil *Śaṅgam* social structure. A large substratum of indigenous, hill, forest and coastal tribes distinguished by their own religious practices, social behaviour, dietetic and sartorial habits stood at the lower rung of the ladder. The villages had another stratum. They were the poorer workmen, casual labourers, the agriculturists. The towns and cities had yet another stratum. The ascetics, the Brahmins, the kings, the chieftains, the local bards, the merchants, traders, manufacturers, the rich land owners — these constituted the more sophisticated, the more cultured and the more advanced sections of society. So, in the *Śaṅgam* age the primitive culture, the later Tamilian indigenous culture and the exotic Āryan culture: all co-existed. At the outermost surface like a crust, a colony of foreign settlers especially the Yavanas and some Chinese and some artisans and skilled craftsmen from places like Magadha, Māḷava etc., existed; soldiers recruited from foreign areas like the Vaḍugar and the Kōśar were also stationed in Tamil capitals. But the Tamils looked upon foreigners with a certain amount of distaste, occasionally of contempt, which is evident from the way they always refer to foreigners as *Mākkaḷ* (i.e., inferior men or mens without the sense of discrimination).

5. *Slavery*

We have no positive evidence to prove that slavery as an institution comparable to the ancient Greek or Roman forms of slavery existed in the Tamiḻaham of the *Śaṅgam* age. We have no reference to entitle us to conclude that human beings were sold and purchased in any market. But this does not mean that there were no low servants or labourers whose condition of life was no better than that of those slaves. Megasthanes says that

slavery as an institution was not known to India.] Being a Greek if he had looked for the Greek type of slavery in India he could certainly not have found it. V. Kanakasabhai says "slavery was ever unknown amongst the Tamils and this is strong evidence of their superior civilization in this early period".[117] V. A. Smith merely echoes V. Kanakasabhai when he says, "slavery is said to have been unknown among the Tamils".[118] These statements are exaggerated; for the condition of the lowest class of agricultural labourers was not superior to that of the serfs in the Anglo-Saxon manors. The *Śilappadikāram* refers to *Urimai śuṟṟam* which is interpreted as *āḍimaittiraḷ* or the 'group of slaves' by the commentators.] Slaves were called *aḍiyuṟai* and their status *aḍimai*.[119] *Aḍiyuṟai* was a total dependent. In the *Kalittōgai*, there is mention of a peculiar practice by which slaves were branded on the chest, just as war horses were branded, in a later age, for purposes of recognition;[120] this simply indicated ownership. It is also common knowledge that the *Tiruttoṇḍar Purāṇam* mentions that in the suit brought against Sundaramūrthy Nāyanār by the old Brahmin, it was mentioned that Sundaramurthy was by an ancient agreement his 'slave'. This must be taken as conclusive evidence of the knowledge of slavery and legal instruments establishing that status of slavery at the time of the *Periya Purāṇam*. The institution of slavery and of enslavement for failure to pay one's debt must therefore be persumed to have been fairly ancient. The mention of slaves being employed to work the pearl fisheries on the coromandel coast almost proves the existence of this practice even in ancient days.] But the absence of local literary evidence can only mean that slavery though of a moderate nature did not offend the sentiments of even the enlightened sections of the community.

6 *Status of Women*

The place of women in Tamil *Śaṅgam* society could not have been the same as it is to-day; though paradoxically enough, it

117 V. K. *The Tamil* 1800; p. 114.
118 Smith : *E.H I.*, p. 441.
119 *Puṟam* : 67; *Peruṅgadai* : I : 47 and 48.
120 *Kali* : 84 : 26, 27.

could not have been very much different either from what it is now. The fact is that while legally the written constitution of today grants to woman a certain condition of equality with man and says that she cannot be excluded on the ground of sex alone from the rights and duties of public life, there is no knowing if that grant has materially and factually altered the condition of women in society; and in ancient Tamiḻaham there was no statement of legal and social equality between the sexes; on the other hand it was clearly understood that the duties of a woman in society are different from those of a man, that the basic qualities of a woman are different from those of a man; and by implication, therefore, woman is not to aspire to the same place in society, as man. In spite of such direct as well as implied statements it is quite possible that in actual life women were in those days in no worse position than they are now or can ever be.

The *Tolkāppiyam* says that while it is desirable that in an ideal marriage, man and woman shall be equal to each other in beauty and attainments, wealth, manners, etc., if a difference between the two is unavoidable, then it is better that the man should be superior to the woman.[121] It is added that a personality born of his moral stature, ability, fame, generosity, enquiry (a sense of healthy curiosity), deportment, capacity for friendship and consideration together with a sense of determination and constancy are ideal masculine traits;[122] and that fear born of love, shyness, and implicit acceptance and retention of elderly advice without question are ideal feminine traits.[123] Thus while forward behaviour is peculiar to man, shyness and a retiring disposition are specially feminine; and so even in the case of love of the *Aintiṇai* type, i. e. natural love, man can announce his love in words but woman can do so only by look or suggetion.[124]

The *Iṟaiyanār Ahapporuḷ* commentary says that natural feminine qualities are shyness (*nāṇam*) and holding steadfast to what is taught one (*maḍam*) and shrinking from the unfamiliar (*achcham*)

121 *Tol. Poruḷ*: 93 122 *Tol. Poruḷ*: 98. 123 *Tol. Poruḷ*: 99.
124 *Tol. Poruḷ*: 108; *Kali*: *Kuṟiñji*: 1.

and a sense of disgust at unaccustomed persons or things (*payirppu*).

The very enumeration of these qualities makes it clear that women were expected to occupy a more passive role in society. The women of the warrior community mentioned in *Puṟanānūṟu* as *Mūdinmahaḷir* did not perhaps belong to this normal category of women. But even so we do not hear of women participating in warefare in the *Saṅgam* age.

For women normally the most important virtue was that of chastity. Girls who have come of age were confined to the house and watched by female elders in the house.[125] It was *kaṟpu* (meaning 'learning'), i. e. the most important lesson that woman has to learn in her life. The lesson was that she had no God except her husband. This *kaṟpu* began to be effective the moment a woman set her heart on a man. That moment she begins to treat him as her lord, wears the *mullai* flower representative of *Kaṟpu* by convention, and refuses to worship another God. In course of time she marries him and settles down in family life; and begets children and is a partner in life to her husband; but she is not to judge him, but be of assistance to him in weal and woe. Even the wayward behaviour of man is to be tolerated by the woman, as Kaṇṇagi tolerated Kōvalan's extra-marital relationship with Mādavi. The *Ahapporuḷ* grammarians classify this behaviour as *iruttal* or forbearance. Vaḷḷuvar speaks at length about the chastity of women being the basis of domestic happiness; and he says it is only her mental firmness or determination that can save her from temptation. He adds that a home with a housewife of character, is perfect while a home with a characterless housewife will be ruined. He deprecates men setting their heart on other people's wives and would prevent man from desiring professional hetaerae. Kōvalan's dealings with Mādhavi were perhaps tolerated by a lenient society. And Vaḷḷuvar issues a stern warning to those who wish to be guided by women. It is difficult to see what he really means in his chapter on "being guided by women". He says definitely that it is shameful for a man to be guided by a woman while it is his duty to guide her.

125 *Kuṟun*: 159; *Aham*: 7.

No sane advice, it seems, can be tendered by women. Perhaps this was an ancient prejudice against women which denied commonsense and wisdom to them. The *Śilappadikāram* says: "the wisdom of woman is only huge folly".[126] It was perhaps this view that made Vaḷḷuvar put a ban on female advice to man. The latter day dictum 'Do not listen to what women say'[127] was also a reflection of this idea. The suggestion that in these contexts 'women' means the 'hetaerae' is an afterthought and an attempt to gild the pill.

This idea that woman was to play a subordinate role to man, was unfit to tender advice, was herself to be perfectly chaste, refraining from critically judging man's character, and that the husband was her very God, made woman need man's support and protection always. But we do not know if woman was treated as 'slave' or 'mere chattel'. No doubt we come across the expression *urimai* in connection with man's rights over woman. But this, in view of the then prevailing condition in society could not have meant 'slavery' involving the right to purchase and sell the women, but merely 'considerable rights over her'. It is possible that woman was considered the property of man, but to be enjoyed subject to what dignity and status, the contemporary society permitted.

Kaṟpu was spoken of as a divine quality. "Chastity was more important than 'shyness' and 'shyness' was more important than "life itself." She was to worship her husband at daybreak and avoid worshipping other gods. A woman who could claim to be chaste in thought, word and deed could make the very 'elements' obey her. The *Śilappadikāram* enumerates the stories of many chaste women of Puhār, "who because of their chastity worked many miracles". There were the two kinds of *Kaṟpu*, (1) the *aṟakaṟpu*: the peaceful maintenance of chastity; e g., Kōpperundēvi, wife of Āryappaḍai Kaḍanda Neḍuñjeḻian, who died the moment her husband died; and (2) the *maṟakkuṟpu*: the ferocious manifestation of chastity; e.g., Kaṇṇagi who died only after wreaking terrible vengeance on those who brought about the murder of her husband.

126 *Śilap*: XXI: 24. 127 *Āttiśudi*: "தையல் சொற் கேளேல்".

This was an ideal. The *Maṇimēkalai* says that even the *Kaṟpu* of women depended on the righteous rule of the king. It might mean that woman's chastity was open to violation by lawless elements if the king was not strong enough; and it might also mean that women themselves might go astray but for royal punishment. For we hear of the instance of Āputtiran's mother being unchaste, and her going away to Kumari for fear of royal punishment.

But the normal housewife was a chaste, retiring, dutiful woman who was a by word for chastity and modesty and who was an ideal hostess to beggars and other guests. It was her habit not to talk to strangers except through some medium; even an inanimate object like a pillar or a rafter was enough to serve as a medium.[128] We are told how there was a practice of the king rewarding 'the chaste woman' by conferring certain prerogatives or titles on her. The women who earned a special reputation for unusual devotion to their husbands were rewarded with the right to use a 'flag'. Nannan's (the hero of *Malaipaḍukaḍām)* wife was one who used such a flag. It would be cynical to suggest that chastity had to be encouraged by state awards.

Women, or at least some of them, were highly accomplished, and it appears that they were not forbidden from getting accomplished in any way. We hear of a large number of poetesses in *Saṅgam* literature and some of them like Auvaiyār and Nachchellaiyār are quite famous. Peruṅkōppeṇḍu, wife of Bhūtappāṇḍyan, is an instance of an accomplished queen whose poem on 'sati' is included in the *Puṟanānūṟu.*

It was a maxim of ancient wisdom that women had no country, no deity, in short no personality of her own apart from that first of her father and then of her husband almost like the Roman slave who acquired the country of his master.

Women, however, do not seem to have owned property, whether they were queens or farm labourers called *kaḍaiśiyar*. Women were not recruited as soldiers, ministers, ambassadors or other advisers

128 *Puṟam* : 85, 86.

of the king; Auvai's embassy to Kāñchi was not official but personal. But women bodyguards (beautiful, talented, courageous and alert) are much spoken of. These women belonged to the courtesan class and constituted the king's *urimai śuṛṛam*.

Some women other than wives were set apart as companions and by right shared the attention of men; they were called *urimai magaḷir*. The king had many favourites in his harem but it seems there were not many queens but only one. Except in the very early history of the Pāṇḍyas when we hear of mythical queens like the daughter of Herakles called 'Paṅḍaiya' or 'Taḍātakai Pirāṭṭiyar' we do not know if women of their own right ruled the land.

So, to summarise: the status of women in *Śaṅgam* society as in most other societies was not equal to that of man either in theory or in practice. The *Śaṅgam* society consisted of many kinds of women: the married woman who settled down as a dutiful housewife looking after her husband and her children and managing the household was a normal type of woman who led a full moral and purposive life of love, devotion and service all around her. It was she that either committed *sati* or did penance as a widow. There were other strata of women in society among whom the female ascetics of the Jaina, Buddhist Saṅghas like Kaundi Aḍigaḷ and Māṇimēkalai can be mentioned. Another and a merry crowd was the group of courtesans who seem to have been numerous in the *Śaṅgam* age.[129]

7. *Marriage*

The institution of marriage which is the foundation of family life underwent an evolution in Tamiḻaham in the pre-*Śaṅgam* period; and the story of that evolution was known to the *Śaṅgam* Tamils one of whom has recorded it in his great work the *Tolkāppiyam*.

The earliest form of 'marriage' among the Tamils seems to have been simple and natural. The coming together of man and woman constituted marriage. Naturally in a very large majority of cases love must have been the basis of marriage for it was not arranged. The theory of matrimony for the conscious perpetuation of the

129 *Vide my paper on The Status of Women in Ancient Tamiḻaham* (*J.I.H.* XXXVIII, pt. III, Dec. 1960).

family, dynasty, species etc., was but dimly known. The kind of marriage which involved no rituals was known to the Tamils as *kaḷavu*; because it was performed by consent of the man (called *talaivan)* and the woman (called *taḷaivi*) only and was usually consummated without the knowledge of the parents or other near relations of either party; and this fact involved the element of *kaḷavu* or theft. The idea was that the girl was stealthily appropriated by the man.

This marriage by 'naturally coming together' was not unknown to the Sanskritists. They call it *gāndharva* form of marriage; a classic example being that of Dushyanta and Śakuntala. It was one of the eight systems of marriage known to them: (1) *Brahma*, (2) *Prājāpatya*, (3) *Ārsha*, (4) *Daiva*, (5) *Gāndharva*, (6) *Āsura*, (7) *Rākshasa*, and (8) *Paiśāśa*. The first was the gift of a twelve year old girl to a 48 year old *Brahmachāri* (bachelor). The second was the giving of a girl to a person of a different *Gōtra* if he asked for her. The third was giving a girl by the process of *datta* i.e., standing the girl between a gold cow and a golden bull and giving her away along with the golden cattle. The fourth was giving the girl to the Purohit who performed the Vēdic sacrifice. The fifth was the natural coming together of man and woman without the parents or others arranging the marriage and it was free of rituals and usually clandestine. The sixth was taking the girl to wife after performing a prescribed and difficult task as Rāma and Arjuna bent the bow and married Sita and Draupati respectively. The seventh was forcibly carrying away a girl without her consent and without the consent of her people. The eighth was marrying (seduction of) a woman older than oneself, or who is asleep or is in a drunken state. Of these the *gāndharva* marriage was so called because the *Gandharvas* (a species of celestials) were supposed to be followers of that system of marriage.

To the Tamils *maṇṟal* or *maṇam* meant marriage: The *Saṅgam* Tamils dimly remembered an age when the only form of *maṇṟal* they knew was the *gandharva* system which they called the *Yāḻōr* system; for the *Gandharvas* were *Yāḻōr* (those that played on the *Yāḻ* or the ancient *Viṇa*). It was called the natural union or

iyaṟkai punārchchi. As early as the days of the *Tolkāppiyam*, which is the earliest among our extant Tamil works, the eight fold classification of marriage was deemed to be made by the *Maṟaiyōr* or the Brahmins.[130] The *Iṟayanār Ahapporuḷ* echoes Tolkāppiyar but puts it in different words saying that the "eightfold system of marriage was peculiar to the rare Vēdas of the Andaṇar", and that "what is called '*kaḷavu*' in Tamil was known in Sanskrit as the *Gāndharva* way."[131]

This *kaḷavu* meant the meeting, naturally of man and woman and it was almost always consummated later by getting the *fait accompli* approved by the elders. This system did not work always without a hitch, for if the elders happened to be tough and refused to recognize the union, there was surely troyble. But generally, it ended in settled family life. The *Tolkāppiyam* says that this system came to be abused in course of time as any system of free love can so easily by abused. "When falsehood and error made their appearance, the wise men of the community" whom Tolkāppiyar calls the *aiyar*, "invented the rituals".[132] The *aiyar* were perhaps the Brahmins; though the word is generic and refers also to God even as *Andaṇar* also refers to God. Tolkāppiyar suggests that originally when the rituals were invented, the same set of rituals governed the four communities; but later the first three (Brahmins, Kings and *Vaiśyas)* got another set of rituals and the last (*Vēḷāḷas)* were provided with a different set of rituals. So it is possible that Tolkāppiyar lived in an age or within memory of an age when the *Kaḷavu* system of marriage had yielded place to the ritualistic marriages.

The memory of such a simple but romantic system of marriage based upon pure and reciprocal love had fired the imaigination of the Tamil grammarians and poets; and they invented a beautiful web of drama, romance, and poetry in which they arranged this love theme. It was based on the simple idea of man and woman coming together in *kaḷavu* and of consummated marriage being

130 *Tol. Poruḷ :* 92. 131 *Iṟai*: *Ahap* ; 1.
132 *Tol. Poruḷ :* 145.

confined in *kaṟpu* (or married life). The rest was supplied by the imagination and a whole form of literature called *Ahapporuḷ* has come to be a good part of Tamil letters and is in a sense very peculiar to Tamil. But all that is not history; for *kaḷavu* was surely not the form of marriage known to historical Tamiḻaham as far as we can see from the available sources, though an age of ritualless marriage can be imagined.

In this idealized picture there are three categories of love mentioned. 1. Pure natural love *(Aintiṇai)* — which deserves to mature into a life-long union. This is itself divided into five *tiṇais* or 'situations': (*a*) *Kuṟiñji* (meaning the hilly tracts; and the situation *puṇardal* or *gāndharva* marriage); (*b*) *Mullai* (meaning the pastoral land; and the situation *Iruttal* of the wife passively enduring the absence of her husband); (*c*) *Marudam* (meaning the plains; and the situation *Uḍal* of the wife being cross with her husband as he freely delighted in the company of the courtesans; (*d*) *Neidal* (meaning the coastal tracts; and the situation *Iraṅgal* of the wife being sorry for herself when the husband was away); (*e*) *Pālai* (meaning the desert; and the situation *Piridal* of the husband's separation from the wife). 2. Unilateral love or *Kaikkiḷai*. 3. Abnormal or improper love or *Peruntiṇai*. The first is synonymous with the *gāndharva* system of marriage; the second with *Brahma*, *Prājāpatya* and *Ārsha*; the third with *Rākshasa*, *Āsura* and *Paiśāśa*.

It is very difficult to believe that there could have been a time in the history of Tamiḻaham when there was no institution of marriage at all; but then it need not have been elaborately ritualistic. At the earlier periods of Tamil history marriage must have been much simpler.

The idealized system of marriage described in detail in the *Tolkāppiyam (Ahattiṇai, Kaḷavu* and *Kaṟpu Iyals)* contemplates the consummation of marriage according to the *gāndharva* system at the *kaḷavu* stage; but expects that the situation might become known to the parents and other elders through attendants, ladies in waiting, go-betweens and others. The issue will then beforced and a ritua-

ristib marriage take place after which normal family life commences. This picture includes both systems of marriage. A redeeming and graceful feature of this picture is that it is supposed that once a couple have entered *kaḷavu* they naturally and automatically pass on to *kaṟpu* and there is no question whatever of a *kaḷavu* marriage not being finalized at the *kaṟpu* level. So far as *kaṟpu* (the mental attitude of chastity) for the women is concerned, it commences even at the *kaḷavu* stage. The ideal is that from the moment when the woman's mind has accepted a man though physical consummation might not have followed, she treats the man as her lord. She would thereafter wear the *mullai* flower indicative of *kaṟpu* and would refuse to worship even the crescent moon, for a 'married lady' recognizes none but her husband as her God.

The *Tolkāppiyam* says (i.e. the commentator Pērāśiriyar says so) that there were three stages in the evolution of the institution of marriage in Tamiḻaham: the first was one of *kaḷavu* described in an idealistic way by the poets of *Aham* literature subject to conventional rules laid down by grammarians who were themselves guided not by any facts of history but by what they considered was good drama and romance and would constitute a basis for good poetry; the second was a stage at which a uniform pattern of rituals governed the institution of marriage in society with respect to all the four communities; the third was the final stage at which a peculiar pattern of rituals governed marriage in respect of the first three communities (the Brahmins, the Kings and the *Vaiśyas*) and another set in respect of the last community (the *Vēḷāḷar*).

Contemporary literature seems to bear out this evolution. Though *Tolkāppiyam* says that the age of free love was brought to an end when the *Aiyar* invented the rituals, that statement is very cryptic and does not tell us anything about these rituals. Two poems in *Aḵanānūṟu* give the picture of a wedding which is different from the wedding described in canto I of *Śilappadikāram*. The first picture by Nallāvūrkkiḻar describes the marriage as follows: "there was a huge heap of rice cooked with pulses (even after many guests had been fed). On the floor of a Pandal erected on long rows of

wooden columns was spread fresh sand. The lamps were lighted. The bride and the bridegroom were adorned with floral garlands. In the beautiful morning of the day of the bright crescent moon, when the stars shed no evil influence, some women carrying pots on the head, others bearing new, broad bowls, handed them from one to another, while fair elderly chattering dames stood by. A mother of sons, with her belly marked with wrinkles, wearing beautiful ornaments, poured water on the bride, so that her black hair shone bright with cool petals of flowers and grains of rice (which had been mixed with water) and at the same time blessed her saying 'do not swerve from the path of chastity, be serviceable in various ways to your husband who loves you and live with him as his wife'. On the night after the marriage ceremony was over, the neighbouring ladies assembled, dressed the bride in new clothes and sent her to the arms of her lover, to which she went with trepidation."[133]

Nachchinārkkiniyar says that this is *kaṟpu* which is consequent on and is a consummation of *kaḷavu*.

The other poem is by Viṟṟūṟṟu Mūdeyinanār and is to this effect: "White rice well cooked with plenty of clarified butter was served to the elders with unstinting generosity. The omens shown by the birds were propitious. The broad sky shone bright. The moon was in faultless conjunction with the Rōhiṇi (Hyades, part of Taurus) asterism. The marriage house was decked. They worshipped their gods. The big drums resounded with wedding tunes. Excited women were looking with their flower-like eyes constantly at the bride who had been bathed (and decorated). The image (to be worshipped) made of big flower petals, clear like a gem that has been well washed was placed on the soft *vāgai* flower with the double leaf whose rear-side is bright, and the sprugal grass which grows in low land when the roaring clouds pour the first rain and which is eaten by the calves. It was decked with cool sweet flower beds and white thread, covered with holy cloth, so as to look grand. The bride was seated under a *pandal*, on the floor of which

133 *Aham* : 86.

sand was strewn looking as if the raindrops had fallen. She was perspiring with her load of ornaments. They fanned her to dry the wet. Then her relatives gave her away.''[134]

As is rightly pointed out by P.T. Srinivasa Iyengar, ''there is absolutely nothing Āryan, no lighting of fire, no circumambulation of fire and no priest to receive Dakshina'', in the kind of marriage finding mention in these poems. If the *aiyar* (the wise men) invented only these rites, then there is no particular point in saying that ''The *Tolkāppiyam* states *definitely* that marriage as sacrament attended with ritual was established in the Tamil country by the Āryas.''[135] From the account of marriage functions mentioned above, it becomes clear that the elaborately ritualistic marriage which the *Śilappadikāram* mentions is different from these simple ceremonies. This is true but does not lend support to the view that this *Śilappadikāram* account belongs to a later date and refers to a later stage in the evolution of matrimonial rituals. This argument is further used to assign a later date to the *Śilappadikāram*. But it must be remembered in this context that the *Tolkāppiyam* itself speaks of two kinds of rituals laid down by the wise men—one for the higher classes (to which Kōvalan the Vaiśya belonged) and another for the other classes (to which the heroes of the *Ahanānūṟu* stanzas may be supposed to belong). Thus it is quite possible that these two were contemporaneous.

A system of marriage actually in practice in the *Śaṅgam* age was a kind of ritualistic marriage not much different from what it is now. *Śilappadikāram* in its opening setting gives a graphic picture of the marriage of Kōvalan with Kaṇṇagi; the bride was on the eve of completing 12 years; and the bridegroom 16 years. The marriage was arranged by the parents. Just before the marriage some beautifully attired women were seated on an elephant and asked to go round announcing to the city the marriage. Then the drum was sounded; the conch was blown; the sacred *Tāli* (which the

134 *Aham :* 136.

135 P.T.S.: *The Tamils*, p. 80 Ai (ஐ): chief (தலைவன்) Aiyan (ஐயன்) — 'அன்' பகுதிப்பொருள் விகுதி : leader.

bride was to wear around her neck throughout her wedded life) was taken round for all to bless it; the grand old Brahmins conducted the marrige of Kōvalan with Kaṇṇagi (as chaste as Arundhati). Kōvalan, in the manner prescribed by the *Maṛai* (Vēdas) circumambulated the sacred fire in a clock-wise direction and wedded Kaṇṇagi. The women-folk, just as they do even today took round the *pāligai* (the grains or the seeds which were made to grow into sprouts in diminutive pots and which anticipated the future prosperity of the married couple). And even that day, the marriage was consummated. This is the description of an absolutely modern Tamilian ritualistic marriage.

As stated above it is open to us to conclude that the ritualistic marriage mentioned in the *Śilappadikāram* coexisted with the simpler type of marriage mentioned in *Ahanānūṛu* and that as Kōvalan belonged to one of the 'higher' communities he performed the rituals which were naturally different from those of the fourth community which perhaps find mention in *Ahanānūṛu*; and that this explains the *Tolkāppiyam* statement that there was a time when all the communities observed the same rituals but now there are different rituals for the 'higher' communities and the 'lower' ones.

Now, the word *aiyar* has been interpreted as the *rishis* by Pērāśiriyar. As is clear, *aiyan* was the name of a Tamil God *Śāttan*; the feminine form of the word being *Aiai* (the name was borne by the daughter of Mādari, cowherdess of Madurai). The title 'wise men' or *aiyar* came to be applied to the Brahmins exclusively later on. The temptation to derive this word from *Ārya* is no doubt very great for some people. But it has to be remembered that Pērāśiriyar does not take *aiyar* to mean 'Brahmins' or that the word was a corruption of *Ārya*, but only says that *aiyar* meant *rishis* and it must be borne in mind that in the *Śaṅgam* age the practice of suffixing *aiyar* to Brahminical names was not known. So we are forced to conclude that we have, even among ritualistic marriages, two types: (1) the one mentioned in *Ahanānūṛu*, more simple and free of fire and priest which was possibly an organized form of Tamil marriage most probably pre-Āryan. (2) The one

mentioned in *Śilappadikāram* which is full of Āryan rituals. The two strains simultaneously existed; and most probably so, because institutional changes are, if at all, a very slow process in Hindu society, and especially so in ancient times.

Marudan Iḷanāganār, in the *Marudakkali* mentions the purohit coming round the sacred fire on the day of the marriage. It was also generally believed that the performance of a ritualistic marriage must take place on an auspicious day. *Ahanānūṟu* speaks of the *Sukla Paksha* (the waxing Moon) with the *Rōhiṇi* asterism as an auspicious day for the marriage. It was usual for the people of the hilly regions (*kuṟiñji*) to celebrate their marriages on the day on which the *Vēṅgai* buds blossom into flowers, for it was believed that such blossoming always took place on an auspicious day. *Pērāśiriyar* in his commentary indicates that the consummation takes place on the night of the fourth day, after marriage. Probably he was influenced by contemporary practice. It is clear from the *Śilappadikāram* account and from the mention in *Ahanānūṟu* (86) that the consummation took place on the night of the marriage.

The system of wearing *Tāli* or the sacred thread worn by the bride is a peculiarly non-*Āryan* (Tamil) or practice and indigenous to Tamiḻaham, which was incorporated by the Brahmins into their ritualistic pattern. Now, the Tāli can have two-fold significance. It was a practice among the *Śaṅgam* Tamils to make their children wear an ornament on which the five weapons of Tirumāl (the conch, the sword, the disc, the bow, and the mace) were punched and the ornament was called *Aimpaḍai Tāli* (the *Tāli* of five weapons). The Śaivites later evolved a similar ornament depicting the weapons of Śiva. It was believed that this would protect the child from harm. The marital *Tāli* was perhaps such another protection. A more practical significance is that she (the wearer of the *Tāli*) can be identified at once as a married lady.

If marriage of a girl at the age of twelve is early marriage, then early marriage was practised in those days. Iḷaṅgo mentions Kaṇṇagi's age as twelve at the time of her marriage. It is diffi-

cult to say to what extent this is connected with a strange statement from Megasthenes that "girls of the Pāṇḍya kingdom bore children at the age of six" and in another context that "women when seven years of age are of marriageable age".[136]

After ritualistic marriage became fully established the practice of arranged marriages automatically followed. Elderly persons including respectable brahmins (probably those who were to officiate as priests or purohits) constituted the party that arranged the marriage. In the earlier days, the bridegrooms' party approached the bride's party for the girl's hand and so the question of Dakshiṇa for the *Varan* (the dowry) did not arise; on the other hand, the practice of the bride-groom paying a price for the bride was prevalent and it was called *Mulai Vilai* and was often fixed by the elders who constituted the '*maṟam*'. The practice of paying a fee for the bride is mentioned in such ancient texts like *Ahanānūṟu*, *Puṟanānūṟu* and *Kalittogai*. Even now, the latter practice of the bride being paid a price is quite common among some communities in South India. So it may be generally supposed that the *Kannikādhāna* type of marriage was the last stage in the evolution of the institution of 'marriage' in Tamiḻaham and that the *Pāṇigrahaṇa* type was anterior to it. Though the motive of perpetuating the family was not dominant, a second bride was taken by a married man if his first wife proved barren, as seen in references in *Aiṅguṟunūṟu* and *Tolkāppiyam, kaṟpiyal*. We shall see below (in sub-chapter on 'Pastimes, games and entertainments') that the system of an appointed bride being presented to the successful bull baiter was also in vogue.

8. *Sati*

The loving wife was a lucky one if she predeceased her husband; but if she had the misfortune to survive him, her position became deplorable. She could either perish with him on the funeral pyre or survive him to lead the humiliating life of a despised widow. The name by which the former practice is well

136 McCrindle; *Ancient India: Megasthenes and Arrian*: pp. 14, 202.

known in India is *sati* which is a Sanskrit term literally meaning 'a virtuous wife' but historically has acquired the meaning of 'self-immolation of widows'. This term is not used in *Saṅgam* literature, though the practice was there; *tippāidāl* (falling into flames) is the expression used in Tamil. This means that *tippāidal* was the most usual form of self-immolation.

The practice of a wife killing herself immediately after her husband's death is mentioned in the *Tolkāppiyam*. There it is treated as a military situation in which the wife of the warrior killed in battle proceeds to the field and hugging his head gives up her life.[137] The practice of the wife entering the funeral flames and perishing in it is also mentioned in the *Tōlkāppiyam* where it is called the action of the 'good great woman'.[138] We hear of a few instances of a devoted wife perishing in the funeral flames. Peruṅkōppeṇḍu, the young wife of Oḷḷaiyūr tanda Bhūdappāṇḍyan, on the eve of her committing *sati* said, "Oh! You wise ones, who try to dissuade me from entering the fire! I am not the 'miserable' kind of woman who (survives her husband and) eats the cold rice mixed not with *ghi* but with gingili oil and the cooked *Vēḷai* leaves alone for dinner and who lies down on the bare (mat-less) floor to sleep. May this kind of funeral pyre never be your lot! But I have lost my husband and to me this fire is not different from the cold water of the lake."[139] That the noble queen died in that fire is mentioned by Madurai Pērāḷavāyar.[140] In the *Maṇimēkalai*, we hear that Ādirai, the wife of Sāduvan, the merchant who was supposed to have perished in the seas, tried to commit *sati* but found that even the furious flames would not consume her; but she soon learned that her husband was not dead; so she desisted from future attempts at self-immolation.[141]

137 This is called 'கொண்டோன் தலையொடு முடிந்த நிலை'; it is only in this situation that Kamban in his *Rāmāyaṇa* modifies Vālmīki and says that Mandōdari died in the field of battle after Rāvaṇa had been killed.

138 *Tol. Poruḷ* : 79.

139 *Puṟam* : 246.

140 *Puṟam* : 247.

141 *Maṇi* XVI : 23 to 44.

From these references we infer that the wife who perished along with her husband was described as a *Nallōḷ*, that she preferred to perish rather than live the life of a sorrowing widow, that her sorrow was such that the flames were not different to her from the cold water in the lake, that usually relatives and others dissuaded the *sati* from the fatal act, but the more determined ones scorned those who tried to dissuade them and achieved their purpose of *sati*. It must be said that there is no instance mentioned of an unwilling widow being compelled to perform *sati* in *Saṅgam* Tamiḻaham.

It is usually believed and said that this practice does not find mention in the *Kuṟaḷ*; but that proves nothing, for it is not the declared objective of the *Kuṟaḷ* to mention all contemporary social institutions. There is a chapter in the *Kuṟaḷ* which exclusively deals with the 'virtues of the partner in life' (namely the 'good qualities of an ideal wife'). There the *Kuṟaḷ* (56) says that "she is an ideal wife who protects herself, looks after her husband and preserves her good name in this world". The author of the *Kuṟaḷ* famous for his epigrammatic way of putting his ideas, rarely repeats himself. But in the immediately succeeding *Kuṟaḷ* (57) he speaks of 'the wife protecting herself'. There would be no need for the poet to have introduced that 'apparent' repetition unless there was a specific purpose in doing so. There he says 'Of what avail is the protection of a prison if a woman cannot protect herself?' Here it seems that Vaḷḷuvar wished to suggest that a widow who lacks the protection of a husband must depend on self-protection alone. The following *Kuṟaḷ* (58) says that: "If a woman can get the opportunity of serving (following) her lord then she will be blessed by the gods in Heaven". This almost seems to suggest that the devoted wife who performs *sati* will be welcomed in heaven, which is precisly the idea mentioned in *Śilappadikāram* in the context of the poet's description of the passing of Kaṇṇagi. Further it is notable that 'the humiliating life of a widow' finds neither prescription, nor sympathy nor even mention in the *Kuṟaḷ* and the great moralist nowhere denounces the practice of *sati*.

The number of women who performed the heroic act of *sati* must have been small; for we hear more of the harrowing life of a sorrowing widow than of *sati*. The latter day practice of raising a cenotaph for the *sati* called *satikal* (or *maha sati kal* corrupted into *māstikkal*) is not mentioned in *Śaṅgam* literature; though it is possible that the practice was known to them for we hear of *naḍukal* for heroic soldiers dying for their lord and the king and the idea of setting up a stone for heroic wives dying for their lord, the husband, is but an extension of that idea. It is worth noting that the stone planted by Śeṅguṭṭuvan in honour of Kaṇṇagi *(a mahā sati)* is described as a *naḍukal* by Iḷango.[142]

What prompted these ladies to commit this extreme act of self-immolation is a matter of speculation. Some of them at least must have been prompted by the most genuine and irrepressible sorrow to commit *sati*; the tradition that such an act constitutes great heroism for women finally landing them in heaven must have been an additional driving force, just as the desire for *tuṟakkam* induced the soldiers to embrace death in the battle-field; the fact that the alternative was the life of a widow which must have been, from all accounts we receive, extremely hard could have added to this motive force. Sensitive women wished perhaps to avoid that degraded life. After all, for those women life had lost all meaning with the death of the husband.

9. *Widowhood*

It was not every woman whose husband predeceased her that committed *sati*. From *Maṇimēkalai* we understand that usually one of the three things happened to a surviving wife.[143] In the first place she might immediately and automatically, by the very intensity of sorrow, die. This is said to have happened to Kōpperundēvi wife of Āriyappaḍaikaḍanda Neḍuñjeḻian who inadvertantly ordered the execution of Kōvalan and on realising his great error died on the throne. This noble woman died even before she could understand the situation; figuratively this is used by the poet to illustrate the fact that the husband and the wife though having dis-

142 *Śilap : Naḍukaṟkādai.* 143 *Maṇi* : III : 42-47.

tinct physical existence have but one life in common to them.[144] This was the best form of *sati*. The next was to start a special ceremonial fire and die in it. This is what Peruṅkōppeṇḍu did.[145] The third is for the surviving wife to lead the austere life of a widow. While *sati* was not prescribed but tolerated and even praised, the particular way of life for a woman who chose to live after her husband was quite rigid. Any deviation therefore met with stern disapproval.

The life of a widow was to be that of an ascetic. It was a life of *nōnbu* (penance). It was a degraded life; for to a woman life was 'worthwhile and full only while the husband was alive'; so it was called *kaimmai*, the condition of being reduced or bereaved; and a woman so bereaved was a *Kaimpeṇ*.

She was prescribed a kind of diet which was austere in the extreme; 'the boiled vēḷai leaves and cold rice' are spoken of by Peruṅkōppeṇḍu; the lily flowers fried or boiled were a kind of food prescribed for them;[146] the white lily is mentioned by Tāyan Kaṇṇanār; the last mentioned poet has a detailed description of what happens to a surviving wife; "Her head is shaven clean; the short bangles are removed from her hands; the *alli* (lily) with rice is her food; this is her condition after her son's father had departed."[147] It is perhaps this reference which makes Dr. S. K. Aiyangar say that *sati* was not permitted to women who had children to bring up or had natural guardians to fall back upon.[148] The practice of clean shaving of the head was an indigenous[149] practice of the Tamils and is not found prescribed in the Sanskritic scriptures. Manu in fact says that a woman should consider that the spirit of her dead husband will be displeased by any

144 Kachchiappa Śivāchāriar in his *Kanda Purāṇam* introduces this idea and suggests that 'Paḍmakōmaḷai' wife of 'Sūra Padman' died in that manner.

145 *Puṟam* : 246; this is the method which became so much associated with Rajput heroism and in course of time came to be abused leading to the abolition of *Sati* by Bentinck.

146 *Puṟam* : 247.

147 *Puṟam* : 250; 261.

148 S. K. : *Beginnings*, p. 145.

149 *Puṟam* : 280.

action which she would not do if he were alive. Though self-control, chastity and constancy are necessary, self torture and self defacement were not Manu's prescription. But this Tamil practice mentioned in *Puṟanānūṟu* has come down to the present day, and curiously enough is most strictly observed among the Brahmin community and is deemed to have almost religious sanction behind it. The removal of ornaments which includes the removal of *tāli*, the bangles and 'the beautiful, long and shining hair' from the head were probably devices to render her unattractive and save her from falling a victim to temptation. The pure white cloth which she wore thereafter just represented purity. The widow had to serve symbolic, sacrificial food for the departed soul of her husband and she was to clean, scrub and wash the floor of the house for that purpose with the wet cow-dung paste. 'The weeping widow washed the ground with her tears."[150] "The widow who had just lost her husband sorrowed very much; and she beat her breasts so often and so violently that she soon lost consciousness."[151] Bathing often and in cold water which was a general prescription for all ascetics was also prescribed for the widow. Naturally the rigours of a widowed life drove a few loving and sensitive women to prefer death to a life of such abject humiliation.

K. A. Nilakanta Sastri says "women gave up eating betel leaves and bathing in cold water when their husbands fell in battle", and quotes poem 62 of the *Puṟanānūṟu* in his support.[152] The poem does not yield this idea. The reference in the *Puṟamh*[153] relates to the widows of the warriors dying in the battlefield and therefore escaping the degraded life of a widow which means 'eating green leaves and bathing in cold water'. Here *pāśaḍai* does not mean betel leaves but only *Vēḷai* and other varieties of green leaves and cabbages.

150 *Manu*: V: 156-158.
151 *Puṟam*: 25.
152 K. A. N.: *Cōḷas*, p. 75.
153 *Puṟam*: 92.

10. The Courtesans

The courtesans (or the hetaerae) are mentioned in many places in the *Saṅgam* literature and especially in the *Aham* literature. They were called *paṛattaiyar* or *kaṇigaiyar*. There was neither prohibition of, nor licensing of prostitutes. The courtesans were a separate class of persons whose profession was prostitution. They were of two kinds. The professional prostitutes who earned a living by the profession and did not get attached to any particular customer. They were called the *Chēri parattaiyar* or *kāmakkaṇigaiyar*. There were others who though belonging to that community set their heart upon a particular person and lived in love with him but were not married at any time. They were called the *kādaṛ parattaiyar* or *kāmakiḻattiyar* and they were just unmarried spouses. Kōvalan lived with Mādhavi on those terms only. No indignity or reproach seems to have attached to a man who had dealings with such persons. It was considered fully within the rights of man to behave so. But from the way in which the *Aham* literature deals with *Marudam* or the 'Love situation of the wife being cross with her husband on account of his attachment to other women', it seems that the harmony of domestic life was quite often disturbed by the incursions of the hetaerae into the affections of the husband. These professional disturburs of domestic peace welcomed by one half and dreaded by the other half of society were an integral part of it.

These courtesans were to be found in large numbers inthe royal establishment; they were the King's body-guards and servants. The maids-in-waiting of the queen were perhaps also such persons. They accompanied the king even to the battle field. They were beautiful; they buckled a short sword on their waistbands; they looked to the comfort of the king.

These persons lived in separate suburbs in cities called *parattaiyar chēri*. The *Śilappadikāram* says that in Madurai there were two large streets exclusively peopled by them; an *Ēnādi* chief had set up a colony of courtesans called *Ēnādi chēri*. They were greatly accomplished in fine arts especially the arts of dancing, music and drama.

The tradition of music and dance being cultivated by them has come down to modern days so much so that in the minds of the people of the middle ages, all those who interested themselves in the fine arts, especially music, dance and drama were suspects. In the *Maṇimēkalai* we come across a list of attainments usually expected of the hetaerae: 1. the two kinds of dance : (*a*) *vēttial* (dance performed in the presence of the king) and (*b*) *poduviyal* (dance performed in the presence of the common crowd). A knowledge of the art of dance was not perfect unless it was accompanied also by a knowledge of music and *laya* (rendered orally and on instruments like the *yāḻ* and the flute). The music covered *sāhitya* which symbolised a drama; 2. playing at games involving throwing and catching of balls; 3. the art of cooking and dietetics; 4. thorough understanding of the details of their profession like the art of courtship etc.; 5. eloquence, the art of speaking persuasively; 6. the art of going about unnoticed; 7. the ability to read the thoughts of others; 8. calligraphy; 9. making flower garlands; 10. the arts of sartorial make-up and costume; 11. stringing together pearls and other ornamental beads; 12. astrology, etc. It is stated[154] that the hetaerae mastered sixtyfour arts but the chief of them all was the art of playing the *yāḻ*. The Chola kings patronized them and instituted a prize paid every year to the best dancer; Mādhavi won this prize, and that started the affair between Kōvalan and Mādhavi.

Though these attainments mentioned in this rather "bizarre list"[155] were prescribed, it need not be imagined that every courtesan was an adept in those arts. The extraordinary leader in that community like Mādhavi perhaps came near the ideal. The common ones among them as usual perhaps ran a miserable, wretched and dishonest profession. They stood at the door steps of their houses or in the bazaar street and beckoned to their customers or invited them by clapping their hands.[156] The pro-

154 *Perungadai* : I; 35: 84-86; *Silap* ; XIV : 166 and 167.
155 Basham : *Wonder that was India.*
156 *Madurai* : 419, 420.

fessional prostitutes advertised themselves and let the public know their price by sending a garland through their servants to the bazaar and asking them to announce that the man who would pay the highest price for that garland could possess her for the day. This was called a *pariśam*. Kōvalan is reported to have obtained Mādhavi by paying the necessary *pariśam* for the garland brought by Mādhavi's maid servant 'Kūni'.

The favourite courtesans of the kings were recipients of special honours which included the right of travel in a palanquin, the right to use the whisk, the right to use a golden casket of betel leaves etc. It was considered necessary that this class of persons should not be discouraged from their ancestral profession. In fact courtesans who neglected their professional practices were judicially punished.

11. *Food and Drink*

The *Sangam* Tamils were fully accustomed to a sumptuous fare, whether vegetarian or non-vegetarian and believed in eating well. It is quite clear that at least one section of the Hindu society, namely the Brahmins, confined themselves scrupulously to vegetarian food taking rice, melted butter, milk, curd, vegetables like unripe mangoes and pomegranates and cabbages; and usually the Brahmin women folk were expert cooks taking pride in their mastery of the culinary art. The millet or rice cooked in boiling milk was a delicacy and even now it is popular and is known as *pongal*. The people sat down on the floor while the womenfolk served the already mixed-up food. Food was served on plantain leaves, a still current practice. The only kind of food which was prescribed for widows, to whatever community they might belong, was cold rice and cabbage leaves. The ascetics were to be content with cold rice and hot water. But for the householder, milk products formed a large part of the daily dietary, and the cowherds plied a brisk trade. There is a reference to the absence of fat or taste in skimmed milk [157]. Nachchinārkkiniyan, the commentator says that there was a special method by which, employ-

157 *Kali* : 110 ; 17 and 18.

ing a medicine, all the butter (i. e. fat) was taken out of the milk and that kind of milk was sold; and adds that such milk has absolutely no food value. Frying of dried preserves in boiling butter was a well-known culinary process[158] which is even now popular; and the preserves are known as *ūrukāi* and *vaṟṟal*. Rice was the staple food and on occasion a special variety of rice called *rājānnam*[159] was served. Another kind of rice used was *Samba* which is so called perhaps because it was got from Champa.

Mutton was freely eaten by all the other sections of society. The *Pāṇar* and the *Viṟaliyar* who sang and danced and begged of the kings for gifts joined them in a noisy dinner which was usually predominantly non-vegetarian. Kumattūrkkaṇṇaṉār, assuming the role of a *Pāṇar* praised Imayavaramban Neḍuñjēralādan and called upon all concerned to drink toddy and cook the rice food, chop the mutton for food, and get ready other varieties of roasted edibles. Eating o mutton was always accompanied by drinking of toddy. The king ate and drank in the company of his guests and relatives and presided over a boisterous table. In the market place separate places were alotted for the sale of toddy and their location was announced by waving flags.[160] 'The pleasures of drink were unrivalled.' The drunkard's walk to the toddy shop was a 'pilgrimage to the drink-house'.[161] The customers drank the heady toddy in bowls called *maṇḍai*[162] and the drunkards liked to take sour ancillary chops to match the hot drink.[163] Toddy and other inebriating drinks were manufactured in private houses also (naturally in the houses of those who consumed them).[164] Excellent wine imported from the land of the Yavanas was a special and favourite drink of the kings who drank the thin clear liquid while they gave the thick and delicious stirred drink to the guests.[165] To enjoy this spirituous drink better, they used to have bits of ginger

158 *Puṟam* : 386.

159 *Perumbāṇ*: "பறவைப் பெயர்ப்படு வத்தம்" i. e. the paddy that bears the name of a bird; here the hawk called 'Garuḍa': The Brahmany Kite.

160 *Piḍiṟṟu* : 60; 10, 11. 161 *Kuṟun* : 293. 162 *Puṟam* : 329.

163 *Puṟam* : 177. 164 *Puṟam* : 329. 165 *Puṟam* 298.

with them; to ensure an unfailing and ready supply of these ginger bits, they were strung along with flowers in the garlands which they wore and a sip at the toddy bowl and a bite at the ginger bit alternated to the great pleasure of the eating party. They picked their teeth leisurely after a mutton meal.[166]

The turtle, the fish, venison, and the flesh of the hare, were some extra delicacies. Intoxicants were freely used and there were some gardens which specialised in growing the intoxicant poppy which yielded opium; there is a reference to opium being taken especially by the nomadic classes.[167]

The *Maṇimēkalai* says that the *Nāgas*, a nude community in an island, which was visited by Śāduvan, a merchant from Puhār, were cannibals.[168]

The Buddhists and the Jainas of that age strongly denounced non-vegetarian food. Vaḷḷuvar's denunciation of drink and meat-eating are quite well-known; and the Nāladiyār speaks out against killing and meat-eating.

The use of betel leaves was known and was quite in vogue. The rolls of betel leaves were known as *tiraiyal* (literally meaning a 'roll')[169] suggesting that before those leaves were used they were rolled into fanciful shape. There were special servants appointed to wait on kings when the latter chewed betel leaves. Diminutive boxes containing these leaves then, as now, were being carried about and the privileged ones had gold betel-leaf boxes. They felt that the use of betel leaves added freshness and beauty to the chewer; they used slaked lime obtained from conch shells; and they knew and liked the use of a special kind of arecanut which was in a kind of *kali* (or paste derived from the bark of *karuṅgāli* or rose-

166 *Puaṟam*: 384 167 *Śiṟupāṇ*: 28

168 *Maṇi*: XVI: 58, 59; Prof. A. L. Basham remarks: "One passage even suggests cannibal feasts after battle" and quotes Pattupāṭṭu (*Wonder that was India*, 1963 Indian ed. p. 62). But the *Maduraikkāñji* text (ll. 34-38) on which he depends for this view does not yield this meaning. It is only the Tuṇaṅgai dance performed by the goblins that is mentioned here. 169 *Śilap*; XX: 14.

wood).[170] There was a special class of persons called *pāśavar* whose business was to roll the betel leaves and get them ready for sale.[171] The practice of the wife giving her husband betel leaves and arecanut after he had taken his food is also mentioned.[172] This word 'betel' is a Western corruption of the Tamil word *'Veṟṟilai'* (meaning 'mere leaves') so called because those leaves were chewed raw. *'Aḍagu'* was also a name for these leaves and the nuts munched with the *Aḍagu* were *Aḍagukkāi* shortened into *Aḍaikkāi* and later corrupted into areca. The name 'malabathram' which the *Periplus* gives to these leaves is obviously a compound of Tamil and Sanskrit words meaning the 'leaves obtained in the malaināḍu' or the Chēra land in particular.

12. Dress, Cosmetics and Ornaments

Even as there were many strata in *Saṅgam* society, there were many forms and qualities of dress worn by the various classes of people. The kind of dress varied from wearing a bunch of green leaves around one's waist to wearing the finest quality of *argaritic* (or the Uṟaiyūr muslin) mentioned in the *Periplus*. The former was worn by hill tribes and "criminal" tribes or the martial communities and occasionally the cowherds also; while the latter was used by the inhabitants of *Marudam* or agricultural delta areas. Almost all the references to the foliage dress indicate it was intended for and worn

170 A variety of Arecanut is even now called *Kaḷippākku*.

171 *Silap*: V: 26.

172 *Silap*: XVI: 54, 55. Some scholars like K. A. N. express the view that the chewing of betel leaves was not a Saṅgam practice but a later introduction into Tamil Society. The practice of chewing betels with arecanuts is as ancient as *Silap.* (XVI: 54, 55) and *Maṇi* (XXVIII: 243). The reference in a Buddha Jātaka story (The *Jātaka*: Vol. I, pp. 132, 152) to the use of 'Veṟṟilai' (tāmbūlam) by Bauddha Bhikshus is wellknown. In ancient days, it would appear that instead of slaked lime, clarified camphor was used by betel users and it was quite an aristocratic practice. *Vidē Tol. Iḍai*: 36. Iḷam. com.

''அடகு புலால்பாகு பளிதமு முண்ணுன்
கடல்போலுங் கல்வி யவன்''.

The references give a clear view that the use of betel leaves was quite ancient.

by women; and it seems men invariably wore cotton cloth which no doubt varied in beauty, texture and length with various persons. The foliage that was used as dress comprised green leaves and flowers strung together and worn round the waist. Undraped womanhood bedecked in flowers finds frequent mention in early Tamil literature. There is no mention of a routine upper garment for any of them; in Malabar till recently and even now in interior villages in Tamilnad untouched by modern practices, we come across women wearing only their loin cloth and eschewing the upper cloth even if they could afford it. V. Kanakasabhai observes[173] that in Tamil women "the shoulder, arms and body down to the waist were entirely bare". But it was not a universal practice to do away with the upper cloth. The more aristocratic and sophisticated and the richer communities did wear a kind of upper cloth known as *oliyal*[174] which was common to men and women. The loin cloth went by the name *puḍaivai* and refers to the loin cloth worn by men as well as women in that age but is now restricted to mean only the loin cloth worn by women.[175]

V. Kanakasabhai is of the view that the *Viṛaliyar*, women folk among the *Pāṇar*, were 'perfectly nude'. But the reference he has quoted to support this theme does not really help his view.[176] What is attempted in the poem, is a description of the beautiful person of the *Viṛali* from 'head to foot'; hence no reference to the dress is made here. This cannot mean that they were nude. The *Pāṇar* and the *Viṛaliyar* being practically beggars depict their poverty in an exaggerated manner but it can be safely assumed that except in the case of some extremely backward communities (of which however no mention is made in the *Saṅgam* literature) total avoidance of clothing was not known. The contemptuous reference made to the distant and nude Nāgas in the *Maṇimēkalai*[177] shows clearly that nudity was considered uncivilized by the Tamils. Kanakasabhai's observation "in fact, nudity does not appear to

173 V. K. *The Tamils*, 1800, p. 117.
174 *Madurai* : 435.
175 *Mullaip* : 59. Nach. com.
176 *Porunar* : 39.
177 *Maṇi* : XVI, 56, 68.

have been a disgrace in ancient India" is not borne out by facts in so far as they can be related to any account in the *Śaṅgam* literature.[178]

But it must be remembered that the labouring classes were on the verge of nudity i. e. did not mind near-nudity. They went about their work with but a 'kōvaṇam' which just stood between them and full nakedness. Shepherds and cowherds, particularly, wore only loin cloth and dispensed with the upper cloth. This condition is even now prevalent in most parts of Tamiḻaham; the hunters, the wood-cutters and the fishermen really prefer to be as near to nakedness as possible. This condition is perhaps what made Strabo say that the eight servants who presented the Pāṇḍyan gifts to Augustus were naked.

The loin cloth worn by the women descended from the waist to the ankle; on occasions its nether border touched the ground. In the case of well-to do persons it was embroidered and of blue colour.[179] In fact blue colour for the loin cloth was a favourite colour with the Tamils.[180] The finest type of cotton fabrics were used by the Tamil aristocrats and those pieces of cloth resembled 'smoke'; or the skim of boiled milk,[181] or the slough of a snake,[182] or the web of a spider.[183] The silk cloth was heavy and cotton fabrics were lighter naturally and during night time, women-folk doffed the silk and donned the cotton cloth.[184]

The cloth that was woven as a long piece was cut into bits of suitable length; the bits were the usual pieces of cloth actually worn. They were called *tuṇi, tuṇḍu, aṟuvai* — all of which mean cut-pieces (suitable for wear). *Tugil* was either white or red in colour, was aristocratic and was prescribed for religious occasions. *Kaliṅgam* and *āḍai* were common terms while *maḍi* referred to the folds of the robe especially the cleaned and folded cloth.[185]

Stitched garments were also in vogue but not largely. The coat which the body-guards and other officials wore was called *meippai*

178 *Tirumurugu* : 214. 179 *Kaḷi* : 111, 115.
180 e.g. *Śiṟupāṇ* 96 181 *Tirumurugu* : 138. 182 *Porunar* : 84.
183 *Padiṟṟu* : 39 184 *Paṭṭina* : 107. 185 *Kuṟaḷ* : 1023.

and interpreted as *śaṭṭai* (shirt). The foreigners especially the Yavanas used this coat. As stitching was known, there were tailors (*Tunnakārar*) who repaired torn cloth and stitched new ones.[186] The sash which the men wore around their waist to hold their loin cloth in position was called *kachchu* or *rambu*. Foot-wear called *aḍipudaiyaraṇam* meaning 'protection for the foot' was only the ordinary type of shoes worn by hunters, soldiers and cowherds.[187] These sandals were made of leather.[188]

Special headwear is mentioned only for the king and his judicial advisers. While the king wore the crown, the judicial advisers wore a kind of headgear, not a wig made of false hair but a turban of white or red cloth as indicated by its name *Tugil* That is what the commentators mean by *mayirkkaṭṭu*. The men like the women allowed the hair to grow freely to its natural length and collected and knotted it at the back of the head or they had only a tuft of hair at the top of the head and called it *kuḍumi*. The males invariably did their hair only as a *kuḍumi*. The women however, grew their hair on the head to its natural, shining, black full length; and it was *kūndal*. The fashionable girls did it in five parts : called, *kuḻal*, *aḷagam*, *koṇḍai*, *panichchai* and *tuṇjai* and each was of a different kind; collectively their hair-do is called *aimpāl*. But elderly women just combed their hair clean and wore it as a tuft at the back of the head. Widows and ascetics were the only persons who completely shaved the hair off the head. Wearing the naturally overgrown matted locks of hair on the head is also spoken of in the case of ascetics.

Many valuable ornaments or precious metals or jewels were worn by the richer people while even the people unable to afford any, wore simpler ornaments like glass beads strung together. Children usually were made to wear an ornament called *aimpaḍai tāli;* this ornament was a chain worn round the neck of a child with five pendants representing the five weapons of Tirumāl.[189] It was made of gold.[190] The children wore

186 *Puṟam* : 136. 187 *Perumbāṇ* : 169. 188 *Paṭṭina* : 265.
189 *Maṇi* : VII : 56; *Puṟam* : 77. *Vide Supra* : sub chap. 'Marriage'. 190 *Aham* : 54

round their ankles diminutive anklets called *kiṇkiṇi*, which jingled as they walked along. Apart from these, ornaments representing the paraphernalia associated with Śiva like the sword, the trident, the bull were also worn. Children also sported a golden chain to which the teeth of a tiger were attached as a pendant; it was called the *pulippal tāli*; the teeth of the tiger, if worn around the neck of children, it was presumed, would save them from the evil eye.[191]

Women developed a most elaborate system of ornaments. *Śilambu* was the anklet; usually particular gems were put into these anklets which like the *kiṇkiṇi* of the children jingled. Kaṇṇagi wore a *śilambu* with the ruby inlaid and the Pāṇḍyan queen Kōpperundēvi wore a śilambu with pearls inlaid.[192] Around the waist more than one kind of belt-like ornament was worn; they served both the purpose of ornamentation and of a belt. *Muttarai* was a belt of pearls; *mēkalai* consisted of thirtytwo rows of pearls and was an elaborate and extremely ornate and aristocratic ornament. A coral belt was also used.[193] Over these belts another and a thinner muslin was worn. On the head they wore a kind of flower-like ornament called *śentiru* or *deiva utti* and called *śidēvi* by Nachchinārkkiniyar.[194] *Vayantakam* was a kind of pendant which dangled on the centre of the forehead and was generally worn by dancers.[195] *Kūḻai* for the ear, the chain of *kāśūs* for the neck, rings or *mōdiram* for the toes as well as fingers on the palm, an ornament for the shoulder called *toḍi*,[196] an ornament for the forearm called *kaḍakam* are all often mentioned as ornaments of the *Śaṅgam* age. *Tōḍu* the ear-ring derived its name from very early association with the practice of wearing rolled bits of coloured and dried coconut leaves called *ōlai* or *tōḍu*. This *tōḍu* seems to have been an attached ornament pending from the lobes of the ears. The commonest among the ornaments was the *vaḷai*, worn round the wrist, as it was a circular shaped ornament which along with

191 *Puṟam* 374 : 9. 192 *Śilap*: XX: 67 to 69.
193 *Kali*: 85. 194 *Tirumurugu*: 23. 195 *Kali*: 79.
196 *Vide* 'Toḍittōṭchembian'; *Puṟam*: 150; 21.

the marital *tāli* was invariably removed from a widow. Just like the *tāli*, the *tōḍu* was also an invariable ornament of married women; only widows doffed them. These ornaments were a symbol of the auspicious nature of their married status.

The Tamils loved perfumery to excess. Iḷango describes that on the fatal day when Kōvalan and Mādhavi repaired to the sea-shore, Mādhavi had elaborately dressed, ornamented and perfumed herself. A delicate kind of perfume was applied to her tresses and the perfume was a mixture of ten astringents, five scents and thirtytwo varieties of odoriferous plants; the odour of Ahil smoke was allowed to spread on the hair and an ointment made of musk was finally applied to it; her feet were beautified by the painting of a reddish paste on them.[197] This picture of Tamil women applying sweet smelling ointments to their bodies is very general and it is interesting to note Strabo's remark in connection with a description of the Indian embassies to Augustus: "Eight naked servants presented the gifts that were brought. They had girdles enriching their waists and *were fragrant with ointments*."[198]

Flowers were, as they are, easily the greatest favourite of Tamil women. The Tamilian thought is at every turn influenced by flowers. They have associated special flowers and garlands with their crowned kings; *ār* with the Chōḷas, *vēmbu* with the Pāṇḍyas, *panai* with the Chēras. Their division of land and the *tiṇais* (behaviour) associated with these land divisions were named after flowers: *Kuṟiñji*, *Mullai*, *Marudam* and *Neidal* being flowers; these happen also to be the names assigned to *Rāgas* in Tamil music. In *Kuṟiñjippāṭṭu*, Kapilar mentions one hundred and one varieties of flowers.[199] while Śāttanār mentions twenty varieties in *Maṇimēkalai*.[200] In the bazaars of Puhār and Madurai, flowers were being sold loosely and as garlands in such large quantities

197 *Śilap*: VI: 76 to 82.

198 J. W. McCrindle: *Ancient India as described in Classical literature*, p. 77, para 73.

199 *Kuṟiñjip*: 61 to 97. 200 *Maṇi*: IV: 160 to 166.

that the flower bazaar actually put on the appearance of a forest of flowers; loose flowers, garlands and bouquets were the three forms in which flowers were sold. These flowers were worn on the head and called *kaṇṇi* and on the shoulder and called *tār*.

The use of cosmetics naturally involved the use of a mirror and the Tamils used mirrors or some polished surface which served the purpose of a looking-glass.[201]

13 Pastimes, Games and Entertainments

The *Saṅgam* Tamil, who had a profound desire and capacity for living a full life, had enough entertainment and pastime for his spare and leisure hours. In the urban areas, of course people had more of formal social activity to indulge in and so had less time for pastimes, but the villager spent a good part of his time in a variety of ways some of which were cultured and desirable and the rest low and vulgar.

There was the stage which catered to men endowed with the very highest taste; music, dance and drama could be heard and seen to one's delight and instruction; and in coastal cities like Puhār resorting to the beach on a festival day or merely for wiling away one's time was as popular then as now. In the pastoral areas especially, known as 'Mullai', the practice of *ēṟu viḍutal* or *ēṟu taḻuvudal* or bull-fighting was prevalent. This practice consisted in organizing a competition in which the participants were to exhibit their physical prowess by capturing the bull kept specially wild for the purpose.[202] The bull was released and the whole place resounded with the violent beat of drums which was intended partly to announce the commencement of the tournament and also partly to madden the bull. This was a feat of strength. The successful candidate was generally given a considerable prize. It was not unusual to announce that such a successful candidate was to be given a fair and accomplished maiden for wife. This was bait enough for those young and valiant men to risk their lives against a ferocious bull; many were gored to death but the one who captured the bull would not have risked his life in vain. This practice widely spread over

201 *Śilap :* XXVIII : 30. 202 *P.V.M.*: 347.

all areas of Tamiḻaham of the *Saṇgam* age, is now known only in the pastoral areas of Madurai, Tirunelvēli and Rāmanāthapuram districts; i.e., the territory of the ancient Paṇḍyan kingdom and is known as *maindu viraṭṭu*. The poets raised this practice to the lofty level of literary convention in *Aham* literature; and thanks to that convention we have seventeen beautiful *Kali* stanzas in *Mullaikkali* by a Chōḻa Prince Nalluruttiranār.

In the villages cock-fighting[203] and goat-fighting[204] were popular. Each suburb of a town or each village, it seems organized its own cock-fight and goat-fight. We do not know if betting was practised on those occasions but we know that the on-lookers derived inexpressible delight and entertainment from these murderous pastimes. There were specialists who knew the qualities of the winning cock. There were other kinds of birds also, a fight among which was frequently organized e. g. the *Śival*.[205] A fight among bull-elephants was but occasionally organized. Mock fights among equestrians, and charioteers were infrequent but important sources of enterainment.[206]

Pure gambling, namely the game of dice was also not unknown. In fact it was practised widely. The place where the game was played was a theatre, an *arangu*, or a *kaḻagam*; the die was called *vaṭṭu* or *kavaṛu*; "those that lost the game and were once ruined never learned by experience but wished to gamble more and more and repeatedly".[207] That is why Vaḷḷuvar strongly prohibited this vicious game in his chapter on *Śūdu*. Kings and their friends. also played this game and indulged in trickery therein. Once when the Chōḻa prince Māvaḷattān and the Brahmin poet Tāmappalkaṇṇan were at dice play, the Brahmin played foul; the prince struck the Brahmin with a die and the latter accused the former of behaviour not befitting a Chōḻa prince. The prince was greatly ashamed; but the poet knowing that really he was to blame admitted his guilt and praised the king.

203 *Kuṛun* : 305. 204 *Perumbāṇ* : 209; 210.
205 *P.V.M.*: 352; *Paṭṭina* : 77, the quail.
206 *P.V.M.*: 355; 356. 207 *Kali* : 136.

We do not hear of centrally organized tournaments involving races like running, discus throwing or relays as we hear of in the Greek accounts of the Olympic games.

Wrestling was a form of fighting which often ended fatally for one of the parties. The fishermen, when they had leisure, assembled in the maṇṛam for a deadly wrestling match.[208] This was not, it seems, restricted to humbler-folk in the interior villages or on the seashore. There were professional wrestlers called Mallar, who challenged all those who wished to fight them. It was in one of such wrestling matches against a great wrestler called 'Mukkāvanaṭṭu Āvūr Mallan' that the Chōḻa Pōravaikkōpperunaṛkiḷḷi won a great victory.[209] That was the last match in which the professional wrestler participated, for the Chōḻa not only defeated him but also killed him.

Women engaged in less noisy and risky but more amusing games like setting up a trained parrot against a trained nightingale in recitation competition. They were taught certain expressions to reproduce; which if they did in the competition, the owner of the successful bird won a prize. It is notable that in these pastimes there was an element of skill as well as gambling.

Women true to their sex, indulged in pacific pastimes; *Ammānai* or *Kaḻangu* or playing with coloured balls of size not more than that of badminton balls was developed to such an extent that the girls could engage at the same time in singing and in throwing up the balls. Throwing other kinds of balls or *kandugam* or *pandu* was not unknown; and the practice of singing while swinging on a swing (*ūśal*) was also popular among the women.[210] Engaging in the game of *ōrai* was a very usual pastime with the girls; it seems it was a game played by groups of women the chief part of which seems to be to tease small creatures like crabs, etc., on seashore.[211]

Children played innocent games; very young children played *kilukili* with small rattles made of dried palm leaves.[212] Young

208 *Paṭṭina* : 59-77. 209 *Puṛam* : 80.
210 *Śilap* : *Kanduka Vari*, *Ammānai Vari*, *Ūśal Vari*.
211 *Puṛam* : 243; *Kuṛun*: 316. 212 *Śiṛupāṇ* : 61.

boys and girls stood on top of some mounds and watched the caravans of salt vans going, and spent their time in counting their number.[213] On the seashore the children of the Paradavar watched and counted the number of boats coming and going.[214] Small wooden dolls resembling toy elephants and chariots were dragged about by young ones.

14. Funerary rites

When a person died, the normal reactions of weeping and wailing were accompanied by the beat of the drum and the blowing of the conch.

There were more than one method of disposing of the dead known to the Tamils. They knew and practised (*a*) cremation, (*b*) urn burial, (*c*) exposing for vultures and jackals to eat and (*d*) simple burial. The cremation ground or the burning ghat was *śuḍukāḍu*, while the rest were *iḍukāḍu*. Of these cremation seems to have been the most usual practice, for references to *śuḍukāḍu* (or *śuḍalai*) are more numerous and common than the *iḍukāḍu*. *Nāladiyār* refers to the unproductive palm tree in the *iḍukāḍu* and to the simpler forms of burial.[215] The other practice of leaving the dead body in open space for vultures to eat was not unknown. It is *Nāladiyār* again that makes a reference to it.[216] The poet Kuṭṭuvan Kīran attests to the fact that when Āy Aṇḍiran died with his wives, his body was cremated.

Urn burial was done by putting the dead body in a large pot and burying the pot deep in the ground upside down. The 'Urn' was called *mudumakkaḷ tāḻi* meaning 'the urn of the departed ones';[217] and the *Puṟanānūṟu* speaks of the reddish eared cock and the vulture waiting on the urn in expectation of the dead body.[218] Both practices are mentioned in another context.[219] The system of urn burial, however, was not very widely practised, it seems; and that is the reason why we do not really come across many of these urns. The practice of *sati* however was done only by setting

213 *Puṟam* : 116. 214 *Aham* : 190.
215 *Nāladi* : 26. 216 *Nāladi* : 48: 26; *Maṇi*: VI: 66, 67.
217 *Paḍiṟṟu* : 44: 22. 218 *Puṟam* : 256. 219 *Puṟam*: 239.

fire to the widow, whatever be the manner in which her husband's body was disposed of.

The relatives of the dead carried the body to the separately located burial or cremation ground; and before and after disposing of the body, they rested under some shady tree which was called a *maṉṟam* as those people assembled there for a common purpose.[220] The *Paḍiṟṟuppattu* mentions the *vanni* tree as a particular instance of a tree under the shade of which such people rested.

It was customary for certain post-mortem rites to be performed; the *Śilappadikāram* speaks of these as *Kaḍan* (duty)[221] the commentator explains this as 'balikaḍan' i. e. the duty of giving 'the ball of rice' to the departed; this ball of cooked rice was placed on the grass (presumably the *kuśa* grass).[222]

The cremation was done by placing the dead body on a pyre of piled up logs of wood and setting fire to the pyre.[223] The *Maṇimēkalai* mentions the construction of brick tombs of various shapes built by the relatives of the dead whether they were sages or kings or women who had become *sati*. This is to be distinguished from the *naḍukal* raised for the warriors who had fallen in battle; for the *naḍukal* was more of a cenotaph, while the structures mentioned in *Maṇimēkalai* were in fact tombs. These tombs were of varying shapes for different castes and persons of different ranks. Some of them resembled towers built of baked bricks.[224]

15. Some Social and Domestic Customs and Habits

The ideal of the house holder was to sustain society by feeding the ascetics and the bachelors. The sacrifice *par excellence*, of a householder *(Illaṟattān)* was to entertain guests with unstinted hospitality and this is a virtue much insisted upon by Vaḷḷuvar.[225] Public charity especially feeding on festival occasion was also organized and good and tasty food was distributed to all those who came.[226]

220 *Paḍiṟṟu* : 44. 221 *Śilap* : IX : 32. 222 *Puṟam* : 360.
223 *Puṟam* : 246. 224 *Maṇi* : VI : 48 to 59.
225 *Kuṟaḷ* : chap : 10. 226 *Kuṟiñjip* : 203.

Every person was to look upon the parents, the elder brother, the teacher and the king as 'the Five Great ones' to be primarily respected and of these the parents were the two great ones deserving of all respect from a person. It was considered the duty of a father "to make the son take the first seat in the assembly of the wise ones" (i.e., to make him learned and of wise counsel) and reciprocally it was the duty of the son to so conduct himself as to earn great tribute from the world for his father. Piśir Āndaiyār says that one of the reasons why hair on his head had not turned grey in spite of advancing age was that the youngsters in his house never crossed him.[227] For a wife, however, the husband was more worthy of worship than anybody else.

Guests were not only to be received with a smiling face and fed well but departing guests were to be given a send-off by walking along with them 'seven steps'. [228] It was quite usual for the host to get up from his seat when a visitor or guest arrived and welcome him warmly.[229] The practice of setting apart some food for the crow before one began eating was in vogue.[230] The origin of this practice cannot be traced. How this practice is related to the other one of feeding the crow with the ceremonial 'vāyasa piṇḍa' on the occasion of *Śrāddha* is not clear either.

The shepherdess lighted the fire at home with a stick (flint) which was violently rubbed against a wooden frame *(ñelikōl)*;[231] this was perhaps the only way known to them of making fire. The difficulty experienced by them in lighting a fire must have induced them to preserve a nucleus of the fire always from which the fire could ever be taken. The log of wood which was maintained as a fire preserver or a sort of fire bank was called a *kaḍaikkoḷḷi*. The practice of scrubbing the floor with cowdung paste was quite common even in those early days. In course of time it acquired religious significance.[232]

The hour of the day was determined by them in a variety of ways; finding out the position of the sun, observing the dripping

227 *Puṟam* : 171. 228 *Porunar* : 166. 229 *Nālaḍi* : 143.
230 *Porunar* : 183, 184. *Kuṟun* : 210.
231 *Perumbāṇ* : 178, 179. 232 *Puṟam* : 249.

away of water from the water basin set up for the purpose and observing the blossoming of flowers were some ways. The dawn was no doubt announced by the unfailing cock.

16. *Special Beliefs and Superstitions*

The Tamils held many beliefs and like most ancients were to a great measure superstitious. This perhaps indicates that an advanced material civilization is not inconsistent with many deep-lying superstitions and other unsubstantiated beliefs.

They believed in the significance of dreams which they thought would always come true. They thought that the exact time when a dream would be realised depended on the *jāmam* (the quarter of the night) in which it occurred. A dream of the first quarter of the night was expected to be realized in a year; that of a second quarter in eight months; that of a third quarter in three months and that of a fourth quarter in ten days.[233] Kaṇṇagi's dream, it is said, occurred in the last quarter of the night and so it was experienced very early; the dream of Kōpperundēvi related in the *Vaḷakkuraikātai* must have also been of that order, for it was realized even earlier. In these cases, the dreams more or less foretold in clear terms the nature of the event. In certain other cases a general evil foreboding was made by dreams and 'the science of dreams' made out in their dreamlore a list of such evil dreams.

If the following were seen to happen: (1) the falling of burning logs in all directions; (2) The bare and dry leafless tree catching fire; (3) more than one sun appearing on the firmament; and (4) the hooting of birds of bad omen; or, if the following were seen in dreams: (1) the fall of a tooth to the ground; (2) oneself taking oil-bath; (3) falling down of the weapon-stand in the armoury along with the weapons; (4) seeing oneself naked; and (5) riding a pig; then ominous consequences were expected to follow.[234]

233 *Śilap*: XV: 95 to 106; Aḍiyār. com.
234 *Puṟam*: 41.

They had profound faith in certain other omens also. 'Virichchi' was a chance expression uttered by somebody serving also as a warning or a blessing to one who is on the look-out for an omen. The lizard creeping along the steep wall was watched for the direction from which it hooted.[235] It was also *aśariri*. Before a chieftain embarked on military activities, the augurs consulted the omens. The flight of particular birds especially the black bird called *kāri* was a sure omen.[236] An auspicious day was necessary for a journey.[237] It was considered lucky if the left eye-lash of a girl or the right one of a man quivered violently.[238] If the right eye lash of the girl quivered it was very unlucky for her. If the milk would not be curdled or if anything unusual occurred in the dairy it was a bad omen for the cow-herd.[239] If the planet *Veḷḷi* (Venus) appeared in the south it was a bad omen for all.[240] The cawing of a crow was taken to portend the arrival of guests.[241] Vaḷḷuvar adverts to the belief that if a person sneezed it meant that somebody was thinking of him.[242]

The ghosts and spirits were believed in and feared. It was believed that the nature of the next birth of a man was decided

235 *Aham* : 9, 151; *Naṟṟiṇai* : 333; *Kali* : 11, 21.

236 *P. V. M.* : 3. *Vide* also Marco Polo. "They also know the import of meeting with any particular bird or beast; for such omens are regarded there more than by any people in the World". (K. A. N. : *Foreign Notices*, p. 170)

237 *Kali* : 5.

238 *Kali* : 101; *Śilap* : V : 239; *Aintiṇai Eḻupatu* : 41; *Tiṇai-mālai* : 80.

239 *Śilap* : XVII : 11, 12.

240 *Puṟam* : 338: 1, 117 : 1 and 2.

241 *Kuṟun* : 210; *Aiṅguṟu* : 391.

242 *Kuṟaḷ* : 1317, 1318; *Vide* Marco Polo : "If a man is going along the road and hears some one sneeze, if he deems it (say) a good omen for himself he goes on, but if otherwise he stops a bit or peradventure turns back altogether from his journey." (Quoted in K. A. N. : *Foreign Notices*. p. 170).

by the thoughts of his last moments in this birth.[243] Untouchability was believed in and 'inferior' castes took care to keep at a respectable distance from 'superior' ones;[244] and generally people avoided the cremation ground.[245]

They believed in the efficacy of margosa leaves and white mustard as protectives against the influence of ghosts — *pēy*; women wore margosa leaves on their tuft as a sort of protective for the children from any evil that might be caused by supernatural forces; they applied *ney* and white mustard to the hair on the heads of children to protect them from evil influences.[246] Left was inauspicious. The dancer ascended the stage placing her right foot first on it.[247]

It was laid down that the husband must not leave the company of his wife for fifteen days after the start of menstrual flow for her; but is not to seek union with her during the menses period. Scientific enquiry would show that this was not mere belief but the result of careful observation. During those three days he was not to go within hearing distance of his wife.[248] It was customary for the women, after the child-birth to go to the public tank for bathing. During the period of 'impurity', they were 'unapproachables' and must not touch the domestic utensils.[249]

243 *Kuṟun* : 57.
244 *Śilap* : XVI : 107.
245 *Kuṟun* : 231.
246 *Puṟam* : 281; *Maṇi* : VII: 73.
247 *Śilap* : III : 131.
248 *Tol. Poruḷ* : 187.
249 *Puṟam* : 299. 'Kalamtoḍā Mahaḷir' can also mean 'the widows who have discarded the auspicious bangles'.

CHAPTER XI

EDUCATION, LITERATURE AND FINE ARTS

1 *Education*

THE TAMIL society of the *Saṅgam* age was an advanced and civilized society, which had reached great heights in commercial prosperity and in the field of the fine arts, and had a reasonable notion of the grandeur and the responsibilities of government and was in no wise 'savage' or 'barbarous'. Education which must be at the bottom of any secular or aesthetic achievement of any people was not merely known and encouraged but was a widespread social activity.

The pattern of education in Tamiḻaham was not merely reading and understanding of books[1] but listening to learned persons,[2] for it was rightly believed that by listening to the wise words of learned men one derives not only knowledge but the fruits of their ripe experience also. The *Kuṛaḷ* explains the absolute need for education and warns of the dangers of illiteracy in at least thirty stanzas and though Parimēlaḻagar narrowly interprets these verses as being addressed only to kings, it is inconceivable that Vaḷḷuvar would have suggested that the kings were the only persons who needed education. And in the chapters 'On Learning', 'On Failure to Learn' and 'On hearing Learned Men', there is no internal evidence or even hint in the *Kuṛaḷ* verses to show that the verses were intended exclusively for kings. The *Saṅgam* society, on the other hand reveals the picture of many persons belonging to many communities and both sexes being highly educated to the point of being able to write good poetry.

1 *Kuṛaḷ* : Chapter on 'Kalvi'. 2 *Ibid.*

Valluvar's ideas on education can be summarized as follows: One must acquire such knowledge as deserves to be acquired; and after acquiring it, one must live up to the ideals suggested by that learning.[3] Knowledge was understood to be of two kinds: the Humanities and the Sciences, the Humanities being represented by language and literature and the sciences by Mathematics and 'they are the two eyes' of a rational being.[4] The sense of discrimination of right from wrong in a person grows only if he is learned.[5] The learned person has the advantage of being able to claim any city or country as his own;[6] and verily learning is the only true wealth.[7] If an illiterate entered the assembly of scholars and tried to play a part there, it would be like playing a game of dice without the squares.[8] Even if an illiterate should speak wisely, the world will take it to be a mere accident and so will not accept it.[9] The wealth of an uneducated man is more harmful than the poverty of a learned man.[10] Even high caste persons, if they are not learned are not as worthy as those who are learned though they might belong to a lower caste.[11] Those who are not learned are not different from animals while learned persons alone can be called 'human'.[12] The advice given by wise and experienced men is like a support on a slippery ground.[13] Those that have listened to learned men alone are the very abode of humility.[14]

Education of a secular nature was not the peculiar preserve of any particular community or caste, sex or station in life. The *Saṅgam* scholars, whose poems are practically the only worthwhile source of information for our knowledge of the *Saṅgam* period, include representatives of practically all classes. It was believed that education gave a certain self-confidence and dignity to man and so it was sought after.

But the education of those days was different from what it is now. Today we find huge educational institutions with thousands

3 *Kuṛaḷ* : 391. 4 *Ibid*: 392. 5 *Ibid*: 396.
6 *Ibid* : 397. 7 *Ibid*: 400. 8 *Ibid*: 401.
9 *Ibid* : 404. 10 *Ibid*: 408. 11 *Ibid*: 409.
12 *Ibid* : 410. 13 *Ibid*: 415. 14 *Ibid*: 419.

of students on their rolls and employing hundreds of teachers, housed in spacious mansions with the knowledge required in those places being tested in periodical tests conducted by centralized agencies subsidized and variously supported by the government; and these are entirely modern phenomena. But all these features are not necessary for even the highest kind of education, ancient or even modern. For one thing, the range of knowledge and the subjects taught and learnt in those days were definitely limited; and can bear no comparison to modern knowledge. Education among women, in spite of the fact that we do hear of a few poetesses, could not have been as much as that among men; and it is extremely doubtful if among men it could have been as much as it is now. But it is certain that the modern education in spite of its diversified methods and widespread nature has failed to produce even one poet like Kapilar while the *Saṅgam* age produced a whole crowd of them.

The Brahmins must have preserved the traditional Vedic studies and the kings presumably had a slightly varied curriculam to follow for that must include target-practice, horse-riding, wrestling etc. the merchants and the royal servants ware probably more interested in Arithmetic for professional reasons while the Brahmins interested themselves in astromy to the extent of being able to foretell the eclipse, and that too was due to professional exigencies. The fine arts was cultivated by special artisans and the hetaerae. The learned man was not held in contempt but was respected and to whatever caste he might belong, the king paid heed to his words of advice.

The teacher was a *kaṇakkāyar*, i.e., 'he who collects a group of students and teaches them the *neḍuṅkaṇakku* (the literature and grammar based on the alphabet)'. We hear of a few *kaṇakkāyars* in the *Saṅgam* age. The poet Nakkīranar's father was a *kaṇakkāyar*; and 'a town without a *Kaṇakkāyar* would go to ruin.[15] *Āśiriyar*, *āśār*, *uvāttiyār* were also other appllations of a teacher; and the student was called a *māṇavan* or *piḷḷai*. It seems that teachers who collected a large number of students and

15 *Tirikaḍugam* : 10.

organized education on a large scale were called *kulapatis* and there was a *Saṅgam* poet called 'Kiḍaṅgil Kulapati Nakkaṇṇanār'[16] The school was a *paḷḷi*. The pial (*teṟṟi, tiṇṇai*) of the teachers's house was usually the *paḷḷi*. The students wrote on dried and cut palm leaf bits used in long, narrow strips usually 1" × 2". They were punched either at one end or at both ends and held together by tying them into a paginated bundle with strong strings and the entire bundle of such sheets was bound together between two thick planks of the same dimensions. These leaves were called *ōlai* and the bundle of leaves was a *śuvaḍi*. The pen was a kind of long and sharpened but thick needle attached to a wooden handle; it was called an *eḻuttāṇi*, literally meaning 'a writing nail' or *ūsi* i. e. a stylus. Holding this pointed 'pen' between their fingers and gripping it tightly with the thumb, the pupils wrote on the dried leaves. Only one side of the leaf was used for writing. As it was not possible to erase or overwrite or alter anything that was written on such a surface the scribes took great care to avoid clerical errors and for the same reason, once they crept in, they persisted. Calligraphy therefore developed into a fine art. Till recently primary class students spread sand on the floor and practised forming the letters of the alphabet on the surface with their fore-finger and this primitive practice must have obtained in the *Saṅgam* age also; as the simpler method must have originated earlier than an advanced method of writing.

The students were but the personal disciples of the teacher and it was enjoined upon the students to begin their education early in their life and it was believed that the ends of education were spiritual rather than secular.[17]

The teacher was paid either in cash or in kind by the students[18] The ideal student was a dependable assistant or help to the teacher in times or emergency or danger; he gave much wealth to the teacher, for whom he did odd service also. He never felt it *infra* his dignity to worship his teacher. Corporal punishment inflicted by the teacher

16 *Kuṟun*: 252. 17 *Kuṟaḷ*: 2. 18 *Puṟam*: 183.

on student was not objected to. Some students stayed in public rest houses like the *Maṇṛam* and they led a menticant life.[19]

The number of poets we classify as *Saṅgam* poets might be nearly five hundred; and these men lived within a period of three or four centuries and many of them surely belonged to the same generation; and their number includes kings and women. Even so it is a most marvellous fact that so many should have cared to acquire enough learning to enable them to write such a quantity of passable poetry. The one inducement to learning in those days could have been the great honour in which learned men were held.

The Madurai Tamil *Saṅgam* patronized by the Pāṇḍya kings, is however not to be understood as a 'teaching institution'. It was an assembly of scholars, and literary censors. It is noteworthy that the *Silappadikāram*, a leading contemporary work did not pass through the *Saṅgam*. The legend about the censorship exercised by the *Saṅgam* poets on the *Kuṛaḷ* was in all probability an afterthought. So we see that approval by the *Saṅgam* was not an invariable passport for acceptance by the public. Possibly the greatest service that the *Saṅgam* did was to have compiled some of the anthologies which now go by the name of *Saṅgam* works.

Works on grammar like the *Tolkāppiyam*, on poetics like the *Kākkaippāḍiniyam*, and mathematics like the *Ērambam* were subjects studied by any student. Astronomy was allied and ancillary to mathematics. Later day students had to get by heart dictionaries like *nikaṇḍus*, but in the *Saṅgam* age we do not know if there were *nikaṇḍus*.[20] The fine arts like music, dance, drama, painting, building architecture, sculpture, etc., were specialized in by the hereditary artists. Much of the teaching was oral; the teacher was seated on a small dais or on a mattress or a wooden seat called *maṇai* and the pupils stood in a row before him and listened to him respectfully; this was the usual way of teaching and learning.[21] The students

19 *Kuṛun*: 33.

20 We hear of a work called *Kalaikkōṭṭuttaṇḍu* mentioned as a *Nikaṇḍu* written in the *Saṅgam* age; the work is not extant.

21 'பிற்றை நிலை முனியாது கற்றல் நன்றே'—*Puṛam:* 183.

wrote but sparingly and got practically everything by heart. Training of the memory, cultivating the ability to reproduce thousands of verses by rote and even *verbatim* repeat every expression that came from the teacher were some preliminary requisites for an ideal student. The remarkable memory of the students of those days was largely responsible for the preservation of the literary production of that age, considering the poor writing aids they had.

The Brahmins did not confine themselves exclusively to a study of the Vedas, as is evident from the fact that there were many great Brahmin poets in Tamil during the *Saṅgam* age.

2. *Literature*

The Tamil *Saṅgam* period has been truly called the 'Augustan age' of Tamil Literature.[22] It may be said that literature is the foundation on which our knowledge of *Saṅgam* polity and social-conditions is based. That literature is different, in a fundamental sense, from Tamil literature of later periods, in that it alone can be called the undulterated literature of the Tamils' revealing their real genius, their ways of life and their bent of mind, their feelings, thoughts and institutions, secular as well as religious. Later periods of Tamil literature reveal a clear process of the introduction of Sanskritic forms of literature, turns of the phrase and periphrastic diction and an artificial jingle in the style and a tendency towards religious and devotional poetry; in short the *Purāṇa* type of literature so prominent in the medieval period was not known to the *Saṅgam* Tamils. The *Saṅgam* literature deals with secular matters relating to public and social activity (like government, war, charity, renunciation, worship, trade, agriculture, physical manifestations of nature like mountains and rivers) and private thoughts and activity (like conjugal love and domestic life of the inner circle of the members of the family). They are called *(a) Puṟam*, dealing with matters capable of externalization or objectification and *(b) Aham*, dealing with matters strictly limited to one aspect of subjective experience, viz. love. This is a very natural classification and any imaginable theme can be brought under either of them. Māṇikkavāchakar (author of the *Tiruk-*

22 Smith: *E.H.I.*, p. 445.

kōvaiyār) was able to bring a spiritual theme within the framework of *Aham* literature; while in the *ulā* a later day minor form of literature dealing with the 'king's sojourn through the streets of the capital city' the theme is partly *Puṟam* and partly *Aham* but it is in fact *kaikkiḷai* (unilateral love) aspect of *Aham* literature. This division of *Aham* and *Puṟam* is essentially Tamilian and *sui generis* to their literature.

The Tamils were not strangers to another form of classifying literary themes: viz. *Aṟam, Poruḷ, Inbam, Viḍu.* These naturally correspond to the famous *Dharma, Artha, Kāma, Mōksha* classification of the Sanskritists. These are four goals of life, and the literature which deals with them falls under the corresponding section. But this classification again is not much different from the *Aham-Puṟam* classification, for *Aṟam, Poruḷ* and *Viḍu* come under *Puṟam* and *Inbam* under *Aham.*

The language itself is and was called 'Tamiḻ'. Attempts have been made to derive the word from a variety of local and foreign roots. But the word does mean 'sweet', or 'pleasant' for obviously to those who spoke the language and claimed it as their mother-tongue it must have been sweet and pleasant. Tamil was the language of the country known as 'Tamiḻaham'. In fact the country was so called because Tamil was spoken in that area.

The poets played a very important role in the social life of the people. They were a source of education and they performed functions of laudatory as well as instructive nature. As in the case of Kōvūrkkiḻār they saved the lives of unfortunate men in the grip of unscrupulous rulers; this shows that even kings, otherwise very unreasonable, stubborn and wicked yielded to the pursuasion of some poets. As in the case of Auvaiyār and Kapilar, they served as ambassadors of peace. As in the case of Kapilar, Paraṇar, and others who interceded on behalf of Kaṇṇagi, the divorced wife of Vaiyyāvikkōpperumpēhan, they showed the spirit of universal kindness and benevolence. The important part which these poets in those days played in easing frictions in society is clearly brought out by the above instances.

Scholars wishing to establish their unequalled mastery of particular arts or sciences or other fields of thought held public discourses and a flag was allowed to wave over the place of disputation.

The entire body of that literature is true to the genius of the typical Tamil and conforms to Tamilian literary tradition and does not betray Sanskritic intrusion except in so far as Sanskrit words have been in varying degrees adopted by different authors, such adoption depending upon the theme on hand; the rules of poetics in Tamil prescribe six types of versification : *Veṇba, Kalippa, Vañjippa, Āśiriappa, Marutpa*, and *Paripāḍal*. *Marutpa* is a variation of other forms and *Paripāḍal* is especially suitable for devotional songs or treatment of metaphysical themes and is generally set to music, like the Vedic hymns. The *Nūṛpa* is the *Sūtra* style. There is no *Śaṅgam* work which is not in any of these forms. The *Viruttam* type which comes to be widely employed in the *Tēvāram* period (early 7th century A.D.) is a product of Sanskritic influence beginning an era of linguistic jingle in Tamil literature, the most typical being the *Bhāratam* of Villipputtūrār and the *Tiruppugaḻ* of Aruṇagiri. These trends are noticeable clearly in the *Tēvāram* hymns of Sambandar. But the *Tolkāppiyam* provides for the future introduction of any metrical form if such is called for by literary exigencies. The earliest instance of a metrical form corresponding to the *Viruttam* being effectively used is in the *Śilappadikāram*; e.g. in the *Kānal vari, Vēṭṭuva vari* and *Āichiyar Kuravai* we have instances of *Viruttam* metre being adopted, though of course these verses were then part of Iśai Tamiḻ and not Iyal Tamiḻ. But it is interesting to note that verses like the one beginning 'Tiṅgaḷ mālai veṇkuḍaiyān, śenni śeṅgōl aduvōchchi,' (திங்கள் மாலை வெண்குடையான் சென்னி செங்கோ லதுவோச்சி) employ the Aṛuśīrkkaḻineḍil Āśiriya Viruttam (the six syllable foot) perfectly; what was usual and perhaps necessary for Iśai Tamiḻ in the *Śaṅgam* period became usual and fashionable later and grew enormously under Sanskritic influence. The *Tolkāppiyam* itself adopts the *Nūṛpa* style; the *Kuṛaḷ* adopts a kind of *Veṇba* while all the other Kiḻkkaṇakku works adopt the *Veṇba*

metre in its various forms. The *Pattuppāṭṭu* and the eight anthologies and the twin epics (*Śilappadikāram* and *Maṇimēkalai*) adopt the *Āśiriyappa* metre, eminently suitable for epic narration for it closely corresponds to the blank verse.

The grammar of *Aṇi* or the figures of speech was very simple for the Tamils and they considered that the only figure of speech worth considering was *uvamai* or simile and that all other figures of speech were derivatives or varieties of *uvamai* so that the chapter on 'figures of speech' is entitled only *Uvamai Iyal* by *Tolkāppiyar*. The *Daṇḍi Alaṅkāram* and the *Māṛan Alaṅkāram*, later works on *Aṇi* closely follow the Sanskritic pattern of setting forth myriad figures of speech.

Again the division of literary themes into *Aham* and *Puṛam* as has been noted above is peculiar to Tamil. The entire structure of *Aham* literature involving the division of *Aham* situations into *Kuriñji*, *Mullai*, *Marudam*, *Neidal* and *Pālai*, as well as *Kaikkiḷai* and *Peruntiṇai* is also peculiarly Tamil; similarly the division of *Puṛam* situations into *Vetchi*, *Vañji*, *Tumbai*, *Vāhai*, *Nochchi*, *Uḻiñai*, *Kāñchi* and *Pāḍāṇ*. The kind of 'love' that is dealt with in the Aham literature is more psychological and dramatic than biological and sexual. The mental reaction of the lovers to each other and their behaviour in particularized situations is the business of Aham and not the physical aspect of sex with which Vātsyāyana is concerned.

The Tamil literature of the *Śaṅgam* period gives a clear picture of the evolving Tamil society at a stage when Sanskritic ideas and forms were attempting to dominate the picture but had not met with appreciable success. Judging from a distance, one can see that *Śaṅgām* literature is an isolated piece holding noticeably different ideas, forms and ideals from later ones. This literature reveals to us clearly a secular-minded people engaged in the battle of life in all its aspects refusing to yield to the blandishments of religious fanaticism which, however, in the succeeding age succeeded in disturbing even the generally balanced Tamil. It is occasionally felt by some scholars that the general tenor of

the anthologies is in contrast to the didactic nature of the *Kuṟaḷ* etc., and so the latter must nave come long after the former. It was not necessary; for while "the reflections of the enlightened" were enshrined in the didactic texts, "the habits of the superstitious" were mentioned in the anthologies.

The mass of literature which we call *Saṅgam* literature has for our purpose decided the period called '*Saṅgam* period'; and the Tamil political and social activities of that age are markedly different from those of later ages that it is justifiable to consider that age as distinctly different. We have taken it that the great grammatical work *Tolkāppiyam*, the ten poems (*Pattuppāṭṭu*) the eight anthologies (*Eṭṭuttogai*) and the eighteen *kiḻkkaṇakku* works and the two epics (*Śilappadikāram* and *Maṇimēkalai*) all belong to the *Saṅgam* age. There were other works which have completely or mostly perished and have left behind either only their names or just a few stray stanzas let known to us by the commentators. The extant literature itself consists of 7334 poems and we come across 490 mentioned poets besides about 102 anonymous pieces. Of these 7334 poems 1612 are the *Tolkāppiyam Sūtras* and 1330 constitute *Kuṟaḷ* aphorisms. The *Pattuppāṭṭu* is a collection of ten long poems composed in the *Āśiriyappa* metre. Of these *Mullaippāṭṭu*, *Kuriñjippāṭṭu* and *Paṭṭinappālai* belong to *Aham* and the rest are *Puṟam*. Of the eight anthologies *Puṟanānūṟu* consisting of 400 stanzas of which 2 are missing, and *Padiṟṟuppattu* consisting of 100 stanzas of which 20 are missing, and *Paripāḍal* consisting of 70 stanzas (of which only 24 are available) belong to the *Puṟam* group; while *Kalittogai* consisting of 150 stanzas, *Ahanānūṟu* consisting of 401 stanzas, *Naṟṟiṇai* 401, *Kuṟuntogai* 402, and *Aiṅguṟunūṟu* 500 of which 2 are missing belong to the Aham group. Of the 18 *Kiḻkkaṇakku* works *Tiṇaimālai* 150, *Aintiṇai* 50, *Aintiṇai* 70, *Tiṇaimōḻi* 50, *Kār* 40, and *Kainnilai* (or *Innilai*) belong to the *Aham* group and the rest, viz. *Kuṟaḷ*, *Nālaḍiyār*, *Paḻamoḻi*, *Ēlādi*, *Trikaḍukam*, *Nānmaṇikkaḍihai*, *Āchārakkōvai*, and *Kaḷavaḻi* 40, *Innā* 40, *Iniya* 40, *Śiṟupañchamūlam*, *Mudumoḻikkāñchi* belong to the *Puṟam* group. The fact that out of the 18 *Kiḻkkaṇakku* works, seven works belong to the

Aham group, clearly shows that it would be wrong to classify the entire *Kīḻkkaṇakku* group as 'didactic works', as has often been done. The two epics *Śilappadikāram* and *Maṇimēkalai* are grand epic treatment of an indigenous story, the first part of which is dealt with in *Śilappadikāram* by Iḷaṅgo Aḍigaḷ and the second part in *Maṇimēkalai* by Śittalai Śāttanār.

Tolkāppiyam is the oldest extant Tamil grammar and in fact the oldest extant Tamil work. It is so called because its author was Tolkāppiyar. It is divided into three major parts called *Eḻuttu Adikāram* (Orthography), *Śol Adikāram* (Morphology) and *Poruḷ Adikāram*, laying down the *Aham* and *Puṟam* conventions and dealing with a certain aspect of psychology in so far as it is related to *Aham*, with poetics, figures of speech and with social and other conventions. Each *Adikāram* consists of 9 *iyals* and in all 1612 *nūṟpas (sūtras)*. It is the traditional method of expounding Tamil grammar. It, however, does not deal with *Iśai-t-tamiḻ* (music) or *Nāṭaka-t-tamiḻ* (dance and drama) though the conventional division of Tamil is into *Iyal*, *Iśai* and *Nāṭakam*.

Agattiyam, said to have been composed by Agattiyar Tolkappiyar's master and the oldest exponent of Tamil grammar, it seems dealt with *Iyal*, *Iśai* and *Nāṭakam* but that *magnum opus* (if it ever existed) is lost to us, except for a few *śūṭras* here and there (which might be spurious) noted by the commentators. That should have been a standard treatise for all the three divisions of Tamil. The *Poruḷadikāram* of *Tolkāppiyam* and especially the *Puṟattiṇai Iyal* is of particular importance to us as it reveals to us the Tamilian concept and practice of warfare in elaborate detail.

The *Kuṟaḷ*, composed by Tiruvaḷḷuvar, is a very important literary piece in Tamil. The work is divided into three divisions (*Pāls*) — *Aṟam*, *Poruḷ* and *Inbam* and each *Pāl* is divided into *Iyals*. *Aṟattuppāl* is divided into *Illaṟaviyal* (dealing with the duties of a householder) and *Tuṟavaṟaviyal* (dealing with the duties of an ascetic) and to this is subjoined a chapter on *Ūḻ* or destiny. The *Poruṭpāl* is divided into *Araśiyal*, *Aṅgaviyal* and *Oḻipiyal*, the divisions dealing with 'kings', 'ministers' and

'other auxiliaries to government' and 'miscellaneous provisions' respectively. The third *Inbattupāl* is also styled *Kāmattupāl* which is divided into *kaḷaviyal* and *kaṟpiyal*. The whole work is prefaced by a *Pāyiram*. The *Iyals* are subdivided into *Adikārams* each one of which is a collection of ten stanzas. In all the *Kuṟaḷ* consists of 1330 stanzas. They are all of the *Kuṟaḷ Veṇba* metre and couched in very terse language. The author of the *Kuṟaḷ* is a master of the particular method of exposition he has adopted. He would disdain to waste a word and would not use two words if one would suffice. He is very temperate in his language, though some of his ideas are often unconventional and show that he is a very honest thinker who would not accept or preach a principle which his conscience or reason does not commend to him; so that we come across many Jaina and many Buddhist ideas in the midst of a host of traditional Hindu ideas and he often mercilessly belabours certain cherished Hindu ideas and in their place installs heretical ones. Some of his ideas also very closely follow certain Christian thoughts especially those mentioned in the Sermon on the Mount. This is so much so that sectarians have been vying with one another in claiming this rare man for themselves and it is amusing to see how people have 'finally established' that he is a 'Śaivite Nāyanmār', 'A Vaishnavite Saint', 'A Jaina Munivar', 'A pious Vaidic', and so forth. The truth seems to be that he was born probably a non-Brahmin Hindu and while not caring to convert himself to any further faith and continuing to pay loyalty to the religion of his birth, was courageous enough to eschew certain absurdities of his own mother religion and preach whatever he considered was true in other religions too: A truly cosmopolitan and eclectic spirit. That he was a Tamil and produced a classic in that language redounds to the eternal glory of Tamiḻaham. A detailed examination of his great work is not called for here. It may be necessary to point out that the *Kuṟaḷ* as poetry is very much inferior in quality to Kapilar's *Kuṟiñjikkali*, though he is an excellent and flawless versifier. Perhaps, his great poetic talents would have been in greater evidence if he had chosen another subject matter and a different metre. But, as it is, to

consider the *Kuṛaḷ* first rate poetry in Tamil, one is constrained to say, borders on bardolatry: but this does not detract from the eternal merit of the great man or of his great work. The place usually assigned to the *Kuṛaḷ* as a poetical work in the handbooks and manuals of Tamil literature sets one thinking on the tradition of literary criticism among the Tamils. It may be noted that Martin Farquhar Tupper *(1810-89)*, an English poet who was the author of 'Proverbial philosophy' is indissolubly connected with his long series of didactic moralisings in blank verse; 'for about 25 years he enjoyed an extraordinary prosperity'. But later he and his work have found their proper place in English literature. 'N. P. Willis, the American author took this work to be a forgotten work of the 17th cent'. The continued popularity of the *Kuṛaḷ* in the Tamil country and the place assigned to his work in Histories of Tamil literature is in striking contrast to Tupper's fate. This difference is obviously due to the different canons of literary appreciation prevailing in the English speaking world and in the Tamil country. This difference can be further identified as one between the western definition of literature as 'criticism of life' and the Hindu tradition of continuous and repetitive setting up and extolling of eternal norms and ideals.

The *Kuṛaḷ* however is of particular importance to students of Tamil *Saṅgam* polity. Though he was quite probably aware of Manu, Kautilya and Vātsayāyana there is no doubt that he came to his own conclusions and was not content to make a compendium.

Of the didactic works among the *Kiḻkkaṇakku*, *Āchārakkōvai* generally reflects Sanskritic ideas; and *Nālaḍiyār* is outspokenly Jain in its tone.

The *Pattuppāṭṭu* poems along with the *Padiṛṛuppattu* and *Puṛanānūṛu* are of great historical interest as they depict contemporary political and social life in clear detail The *Tirumurugāṛṛuppaḍi* of Nakkīranār and the Paripāḍal songs on Murugan and Tirumāl, the *Āichchiyar kuravai*, tne *Kuṛakkuravai* and the *Vēṭṭuva vari* in *Śilappadikāram* constitute the only devotional songs in Tamil *Saṅgam* literatuae. The prayer poems prefixed to the anthologies

were composed by Perundēvanār who was the author of a Tamil translation of the *Bhāratam* and who belonged to the *Saṅgam* group of poets.

Literature was promoted, encouraged and contributed to by the kings of Tamiḻaham. Men and women, commoners and kings (Chōḻas, Chēras and Pāṇḍyas), anchorites and householders, merchants and warriors—poets could be found in any cross-section of society. The general level of the extant literature is very high for much of it passed through the critical hands of the editors of the anthologies who would not care to include the second best.

The extant literature does not account for all the poems produced during the *Saṅgam* period; very many poems surely have been left out by the anthologists. It is very strange that all that has survived is only *Iyal* Tamil while *Silappadikāram* is the solitary text in so far as *Isai* and *Nāṭakam* are concerned. But that single text has let us into a vast area of knowledge which existed in literature that has since perished. *Paripādal* is the only fully Isai Tamil work.

Kākkaippāḍiniyam, a work on poetics by Kākkaippāḍiniyār, *Panniru paḍalam*, a work on the twelve different situations in warfare by Tolkāppiyar and eleven others, *Tagadūr Yāttirai* by Ponmuḍiyār, Arisil Kiḻār and others dealing with Peruñiēral Irumporai's invasion of the capital of Adihaimān Neḍumān Añji, and the *Bhāratam* by Perundēvanār are some works of *Iyal* Tamil which are lost except for a few stanzas here and there.

In the field of the immense literature on music, Aḍiyārkkunallār mentions *Perunārai*, *Peruṅkuruhu*, *Pañcha Bhāratiyam* by Nārada, *Isai Nuṇukkam* by Sikaṇḍi, *Indra Kāḻiyam*, *Pañchamarabu* and *Bharata śēnāpatiyam* as important works which were extant only in parts even during his days. He mentions *Seyiṟṟiyam*, *Guṇa Nūl*, *Bhāratam*, *Agattiyam*, *Muṟuval*, *Jayantam*, *Nāṭaka-t-tamiḻ Nūl* by Mativāṇan as important works on dance and drama and which also largely perished even then. Today we have only the *Suddānanda Prakāśikai* and Arabatta Nāvalar's *Bharata Sāstram* which however are post *Saṅgam* works; but these works do contain the ideas which those more ancient works must have set out in detail for these later

works only continue the ancient tradition. *Śilappadikāram* is of special importance to the student of Tamil fine arts, (i.e. music, dance and drama) and *Maṇimēkalai* its sequel and sister-epic is of particular interest to the student of religion and metaphysical discussion especially Buddhist. These two epics are indigenous stories written in epic poetry by Iḷaṅgo Aḍigaḷ (a younger brother of Chēran Śeṅguṭṭuvan) and Śīttalai Śāttanār respectively. It is possible to hold that Śāttanār was a Buddhist though he does not himself admit it anywhere; but it has been often affrmed without any substantial proof from any quarter that Iḷaṅgo was a Jain. The mere statement that Iḷaṅgo stayed as an ascetic in the *Kuṇavāyiṟkōṭṭam* is not sufficient to compel that conclusion. It will not be relevant to the task on hand here to enquire into the authenticity of Iḷaṅgo's authorship and date, a problem which has bothered many a student of Tamil literature and history.

Among the poets and thinkers of the *Saṅgam* age, therefore, Tolkāppiyar, Vaḷḷuvar, Iḷaṅgo Aḍigaḷ, Śīttalai Śāttanār, Nakkiraṉār, Kapilar, Paraṇar, Auvaiyār, Māṅguḍi Marudanār and a few others are outstanding judged of course from the available literature.

The *Saṅgam* anthologies are of three kinds:

I. The eight anthologies: (1) *Naṟṟiṇai*, (2) *Kuṟuntogai*, (3) *Aiguṟunūṟu*, (4) *Padiṟṟuppattu*, (5) *Paripāḍal*, (6) *Kalittogai*, (7) *Ahanānūṟu*, (8) *Puṟanānūṟu*.

II. The Ten Poems (Idylls): (1) *Tirumurugāṟṟupaḍai*, (2) *Poruṇar Āṟṟupaḍai*, (3) *Śiṟupāṇ Āṟṟupaḍai*, (4) *Perumbāṇ Āṟṟupaḍai*, (5) *Mullaippāṭṭu*, (6) *Maduraikkāñchi*, (7) *Neḍunalvāḍai*, (8) *Kuṟiñji Pāṭṭu*, (9) *Paṭṭinappālai*, (10) *Malaipaḍukaḍām*.

III. Of the Eighteen *Kiḻkkaṇakku* works *Nāladiyār* is the only anthology, the rest being composed by single authors.

I. *The Eight Anthologies:* Four of these anthologies are collections of nearly 400 stanzas; *Puṟam*, *Aham*, *Kuṟuntogai* and *Naṟṟiṇai* each consists of a prayer verse also. The *Padiṟṟuppattu*, consists of ten chapters (only eight are extant) of ten poems each with a Padiham or a long poetical colophon attached to those chapters; they all deal with the fame and greatness of various

Chēra rulers. *Kalittogai* was made into an anthology by Nallanduvanār who composed the *Neidal Kali* and prefixed a prayer poem also to the anthology. The *Aiṅguṟunūṟu*, consists of five chapters of hundred short stanzas each. The *Paripāḍal*, is a collection of long *ahavaṟ pās* devoted to devotional songs on Murugan and Tirumāl, as well as other stanzas on the River Vaigai and the city of Madurai. This kind of poetry (i.e. *Paripāḍal)* is always set to music and in the colophons of those poems the *paṇ* etc., are mentioned. Of the anthologies of nearly 400 stanzas each, *Ahanānūṟu* is also called *Neḍuntogai* as it consists of long *ahavaṟpās*, of lines varying from 13 to 31, and the poems relating to the *tiṇais Pālai, Kuṟiñji, Mullai, Marudam* and *Neidal* are carefully arranged schematically as follows: All *Pālai* poems bear odd numbers : like 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11 etc., all *Kuṟiñji* poems are 2, 8, 12, 18, 22, 28, 32, 38 etc., all *Mullai* poems are 4, 14, 24, 34, 44 etc , all *Marudam* poems are 6, 16, 26, 36, 46, etc., all *Neidal* poems are 10, 20, 30, 40, 50 etc., so that any student of *Ahanānūṟu* can at once say to which *Tiṇai* any stanza in that collection belongs, if he is given the number of that stanza. Though there was no particular purpose in arranging the stanzas in this order this at least shows that the Tamils imported a certain symmetry into everything they did and that accounts also for their fixing the 400 limit for the strength of the anthologies; that every chapter in *Kuṟaḷ* contains only 10 poems, that every *adikāram* in *Tolkāppiam* has only 9 *Iyals*, etc., perhaps also point to the same conclusion. The *Ahanānūṟu* was collected by Rudra Sarman at the behest of Pāṇḍyan Ugrapperuvaḻudi; the *Kuṟuntogai* is a collection of shorter *Aham* poems with number of lines varying from four to eight. This anthology was made by Pūrikko. The *Aiṅguṟunūṟu anthology* was made by Kūḍalūr Kiḻār at the behest of the Chēra King Yānakkaṭchēy Māntaran Chēral Irumpoṟai. Among the ten idylls in the *Pattup, pāṭṭu*, the shortest is *Mullaippāṭṭu* with 103 lines and the longest is *Maduṟaikkāñchi* with 782 lines. These anthologies, i.e., the eight anthologies and the Ten idylls are called *Mēlkaṇakku* (the longer serials) for they consist of stanzas composed of metre which permits fo a longer number of lines, e.g., *Vañjippa, Ahavaṟpa*, or *Kalippa*

or *Paripāḍal*. On the other hand, the *Kiḻkkaṇakku* works (the shorter serials) are so called because they consist of poems composed in the *Veṇba* metre which permits on an average 4 lines for each stanza; the two line stanzas of the *Kuṟaḷ* are *Kuṟaḷ veṇbas*.

This literature of the *Śaṅgam* age is entirely poetry and has no prose composition to its credit, if we exclude the *Urai Peṟu Kaṭṭurai* and the *Uraippāṭṭumaḍai* of *Śilappadikāram*. So it is clear that prose was not employed as a written medium of expression. It betrays familiarity with Sanskritic ideas, *Purāṇic* lore, the *Itihāsa* stories etc., and has in places made mention of them. It is often very abstruse and difficult to understand partly because the vocabulary is often obsolete and partly because the world of *Śaṅgam* ideas is a by-gone world and cannot be mentally recaptured by the modern student unless he is in the traditional way initiated into it. An exposition of the *Śaṇgam* works has been brilliantly done by a batch of great Tamil scholars Iḷampūraṇar, Pērāśiriyar, Śēnāvaraiyar, Aḍiyārkkunallār, Parimēlaḻagar, Nachchinārkkiniyar and mention must be made of a few anonymous commentators (like those of *Puṟam*, *Aham*, *Paḍiṟṟuppattu*, and *Aiṅguṟunūṟu*) and certain modern scholars like Pinnattūr Narayanaswami Aiyar, who has edited the *Naṟṟiṇai* with his valuable gloss and the inimitable Dr. U. V. Swaminatha Iyer who has not only edited most of the *Śaṅgam* anthologies in an wonderfully modern way but also written commentaries on *Maṇimēkalai* and *Kuṟuntogai* and E. V. Anantarama Iyer whose three volume edition of *Kalittogai* is a marvel. More recently N. M. Venkatasami Nattar and Auvai Doraisami Pillai have added to these efforts to familiarise these difficult texts to students of Tamil literature.

The Tamils seem to have developed certain sciences also but from available data it would seem that they were all of a primitive type. Surgery of some sort finds mention and we hear of the stitching up of battle wounds with needles. The medical science would therefore seem to include some surgery also. In addition to astronomy, astrology too seems to have been known and believed in. Foretelling was *Nāṭṭam* and the astrologer was called a *Kaṇi*. The royal courts always employed these astrologers.

They knew the year *(Yāṇḍu)* the month *(Tiṅgaḷ)*[23] and the days of the week, especially Friday. Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday had Tamil names; the copper colour of the Martian surface was apprehended by them and the planet appropriately called *Śevvoy* (the red planet). As they designated the month *Tiṅgaḷ* (Moon), it is clear that their month was a lunar month of 30 days. We have evidence of the *Śaṅgam* Tamils' astronomical knowledge in *Puṟanānūṟu*, *Śilappdikāram* and *Paṟipaḍaḷ*. They designated the stars as *Mīn* and the planets as *Kōḷ*, but occasionally knew the planets also as *Mīn*; *veḷḷi*—a planet is also called a star. The Pole star in the north was a symbol of constancy and stood for Arundhati, the typically chaste wife.[24]

They had no name for the numeral: 1,00,000; they called it *Nūṟu Āyiram* as in English 'hundred thousand'. The grammar of the word *onpadu* (i.e. nine) has been laboriously explained by Tolkāppiyar and unquestioningly followed by later grammarians; but evidently it was only from *toṇḍu (Toḷ*-root).[25]

The Tamils had their science of mathematics, elementary though it was. They attached considerable importance to the study of that science, even as a knowledge of the three Rs. is deemed essential as a basis for any education. To them as to all others, it was an abstract science as well as a set of principles applicable to day-to-day human transactions. *Ērambam* is the name of a treatise on mathematics mentioned by Parimēlaḻagar.[26] They called mathematics *Eṇ*.

As their knowledge of the material sciences was not in considerable, they knew the functions and the utility of a wheel; *uruḷai* was a wheel; *vaṭṭai* its circumference; *kuḍam* its centre; *Ār* the radius; *achchu* the axle and *toḷai* the point at which the spoke is fixed to the circumference. They knew the properties of matter in an elementary way and could imagine matterless and shapeless space *(Viśumbu)*.[27]

23 *Puṟam* : 87, 191.
24 *Perumbāṇ* : 303
25 *Malaipaḍu*: 21.
26 *Kuṟaḷ*: 392; Pari. com.
27 *Madurai*: 678.

3. *The Fine Arts*

Among the fine arts, painting was greatly developed. Painting was called *Ōviyakkalai*. The picture painted was *Ōviyam* and the community of painters *Ōviyaṟ*. The walls of the houses of the richer folk and of the courtesans were painted with appropriate pictures. In the theatre, screens on which suitable scenes were painted were hung on the stage; those screens were called *Ōviya Eḻini*. There was a treatise on painting called *Ōviya Nūl*[28] which elaborately dealt with the different systems of painting of 'moving' objects and 'static' objects. On the ceilings of houses and palaces, many objects and scenes were painted. The seated figure of *'Tiru'* flanked by two elephants holding up lilies in their trunks was a familiar figure often painted.[29] It was also usual to execute paintings of natural objects like flowers and creepers.

Sculpture was a familiar plastic art to them. The artists were called *Maṇṇiṭṭāraḷ*, experts in stucco work (those that professed the art of making dolls of *Chuṇṇam)* so that the sculptural art of the Tamils was but a development of the simple ceramic art of pottery. The sculptors were also called *Śiṟpāśarigaḷ*. Evidently the canvas on which the painting was done and the walls on which the painters exhibited their art and the *Śudai* (stucco) which was the sculptor's stuff were of such perishable nature that we have absolutely no concrete evidence about the *Śaṅgam* paintings and sculptures. Still, the mention in contemporary literature about the fine arts is incontrovertible proof of the advanced stage which these arts had reached then. But as V. A. Smith observes: "The statues and pictures apparently were executed in perishable materials and have wholly vanished".[30] So the dolls and images—*Pāvai* spoken of in the *Śilappadikāram* and which were the images worshipped in the temples of those days—were all made of such perishable materials.

28 *Śilap*: VIII: 23-26; Aḍiyār. com.

29 *Neḍunal*: 83. Though the explanation is not exactly clear from the statement in the *Neḍunal Vāḍai*, it is probably inferred from the reference in *Kali:* 44.

30 Smith: *E.H.I.*, p. 445.

Dance, drama and music were the three-fold and allied fine arts which received princely encouragement and were developed to a rare degree. Much information about these fine arts is found in the famous but difficult (and much admired but little understood) *Araṅgēṟṟukādai* of the epic, *Śilappadikāram*. That *kādai* sets out the circumstances under which Mādhavi's maiden dance performance was given; that description is in elegant detail as is customary with Iḷaṅgo.

Dance and drama could not function without music which was the very soul of the other two sister fine arts. Hence there is also a description of the system of music and the system of dance which Mādhavi had learned to perfection and which secured for her the royal award of 1008 *Kaḻañjus* of gold. Dance could be performed by men as well as women. Āṭṭan Atti, the celebrated husband of Ādi Mandi, a daughter of Karikālan, was a dancer. Madurai Tamiḻakkūttanār was a dancer from Madurai who had specialized in the kind of dance peculiar to Tamiḻaham. Dance was known by the Sanskrit name *Naṭanam* or *naṭam*; and drama was known as *Nāṭakam*; but the Tamil equivalent *kūttu* did service to both. A *kūttan* or a *porunan* was a male dancer or actor, and a *kūtti* a famale dancer. *Kaṇṇuḷar* is another name given to dancers who specialized in a kind of dance called *śāntikkūttu*.[31] The male dancer was called *āṭṭan*, the dance was *āṭṭam* and the stage *āḍu kaḷam*. The delicate dance of precariously poising on top of a tall bamboo stick was *kaḻaikkūttu* (*kaḻai*: bamboo) and these artists entertained the village folk especially during festivals which attracted great crowds. The dance performed on a taut rope held tight between two fixed bamboos was a kind of *Āryan* dance and those who practised it were called *Āriyakkūttar*.

The description of poses, *avinayam* etc., in *Araṅgēṟṟu Kādai*, suggests that the art of dance had in a sense reached perfection in those days and the classical *Bharata Nāṭya* of today has not, during the centuries between *Iḷaṅgo* and ourselves, changed

31 *Śilap*. V: 49.

materially. It was considered that considerable attainment in dance and music was essential for a dancer. These cultivated talents must show to advantage the natural physical beauty of the artist which is a necessary qualification for a successful dancer.[32] A dancer commenced learning the art at the age of five and studied the art under masters for seven years and at the age of twelve performed on the public stage.

The stage was *araṅgu*; the dais or the raised platform was 48' × 42' and was 6' above ground level. The height of the ceiling of the stage from the dais was 24'. The stage had two openings one for entrance and the other for exit. Three kinds of curtain were known; one was the usual drop curtain; another was a single curtain drawn from left to right or from right to left; and the other was a pair of curtains drawn from opposite ends of the stage to meet in the centre. These are the three varieties of curtains known to the modern stage also. The auditorium consisted of two parts; one which was meant for royal and aristocratic use and the other for the common people. Any dance performance included (a) the artist (*kūtti*), (b) the dance master (*āḍalāśiriyan*), (c) the music-master (*iśai āśiriyan*), (d) the composer (*kaviñan*), (e) the flutist (*kuḻalōn*) (f) the drummer (*taṇṇumai āśiriyan*) and (g) the player on the *Yāḻ* (*yāḻōn*). If the king was excepted to attend the show, the performance did not begin before the royal guest arrived. Then the dancer who was to perform her maiden performance ascended the stage from the right side of the dais with the right foot foremost. The performance began with an invocation to God.

In the case of dance, the system had reached a very high and complicated standard of perfection. The full implication of the *Saṅgam* Tamils' 'dance' cannot be set forth now, partly because most of the original works which were devoted exclusively to a discussion of this subject are lost, but also because even a cursory discussion of what little we know, thanks to Iḷaṅgo and the commentators on the *Silappadikāram*, will lead us into a discussion

32 *Ibid.*, III : 8, 9.

too large and too extraneous for our purpose here. But a few salient features may be observed:

Dances could be classified under two heads in a variety of ways: (*a*) Intended for the kings and intended for the common people, (*b*) the complimentary dances and the denunciatory dances, (c) the Tamil dances and the Āryan dances, (*d*) the natural and the simple dances and the *Dēśi* or the complicated dances. Further such divisions are also possible: *Dēśi* (or native) and *Mārgha* or *Vaḍugu*.

Dance was differentiated from drama in a narrow way; music and histrionics are common to both, the difference being that while dance is "an attempt to convey the meaning of poetry through gestures" to the accompaniment of music and subject to the rules of *tāḷa* (laya), drama was an "attempt to represent on the stage a story", of course to the accompaniment of music. The former was *vinayakkūttu* and the latter *nāṭakam*.[33] Probably the *nāṭakam* of the Tamils had no prose dialogue at all and was mostly 'grand opera'. But the fact that stories were represented on the stage shows that the elements of a drama were there. The chapter on the psychology 'of histrionics' (*Meyppāḍu*) in the *Tolkāppiyam* at least shows the author's acquaintance with the intricacies of the art of drama. The *Kuravai Kūttu*, which the cowherdesses of Madurai, under the leadership of *Mādari*, played before *Kaṇṇagi* included scenes from the 'Vālacharithai' (Bāla Charita) or the juvenile exploits of Lord Krishṇa.

Kumarikkūttu was also known as *taḻu ayardal* which suggests that while dancing this particular kind of dance the dancers hugged each other and danced. *Tuṇaṅgai* was essentially a feminine dance; but could also be performed by males.

There were 11 themes which were more popular than others and deemed eminently stageworthy; of these: (1) *Ālliyam*, (2) *Kuḍam*, (3) *Māl*, (4) *Marakkāl* were dances supposed to have been performed by Tirumāl; (5) *Koḍukoṭṭi* and (6) *Pāṇḍaraṅgam* by Śiva; (7) *Kuḍai* and (8) *Tuḍi* by Murugan; (9) *Pāvai* by Tirumagaḷ; (10) *Kaḍayam* by Indirāṇi; and (11) *Pēḍu* by Kāman.

33 *Ibid:* III: 12 Aḍiyār com.

These 11 themes can also be classified under four heads if we include Tirumagaḷ in Tirumāl and Murugan in Śiva: i e.

(I) Śaivite themes : (1) Śiva burning Tripura; (2) Śiva mounting the chariot brought by Brahma to take him to Tripura; (3) Murugan defeating the *Aśurās*; (4) Murugan fighting his enemies; (5) Iraivi (Kāḷi) crushing the *Aśurās*.

(II) *Themes relevant to Tirumāl* : (1) Kaṇṇan crushing the elephant sent by *Kañjan*; (2) Kaṇṇan wrestling with and killing Vāṇan: (3) Kaṇṇan destroying the fort of Vāṇan; (4) Tirumagaḷ cheating the *Aśurās*.

(III) *Kāmadēva disguised as a hermaphrodite entering the fort of Vāṇan to save his son Aniruttan.*

(IV) *Airāṇi, the wife of Indiran, appearing before the northern gate of the fort of Vāṇan.*

Koḍukkoṭṭi a Śaivite dance was also called *Koḍukottu* and represented the dance performed by Śiva after the final destruction of all creation.

Iḷaṅgo Aḍigaḷ has himself given examples of Āichchiyar Kuravai by the cowherdess in praise of Tirumāl or Māyon and Kuṟavakkuravai by the hunters in praise of Murugan.

Even as the Tamil dance survived to a large extent in the *Bharata Nāṭya*, the Tamil music (*Tamiḻiśai*) has survived as part of the Carnatic music; though the latter has shed all its Tamil terminology and has retained only the Sanskrit terminology and in fact added to it, the system of music explained in the *Śilappadikāram* and the commentaries thereon will clearly reveal the following points. Ancient Tamil music was aristocratic (high class); it was chamber music and very delicate and full of nuances far above and not intended for the untrained ear.[34] Vocal as well as instrumental music was known and widely practised and critically appreciated. Melody and not harmony was the very soul of this music. Music was *Iśai* and the *svara* was also *Iśai*; there were seven *svaras*, and they were: *Kuṟaḷ, Tuttam, Kaikkiḷai, Uḻai, Iḷi, Viḷari, Tāram.* Their Sanskrit equivalents are *Shaḍjam, Rishabham, Gāndāram, Madhimam, Pañ-*

34 *Puṟam* : 68 : "சில் செவித்தாகிய கேள்வி"

chamam, Daivatam, Nishādam respectively. But it seems that *Sa, Ri, Ga, Ma, Pa, Da, Ni,* were the written and mono-syllabic symbols for those terms; though the long vowels ā, ī, ū, ē, ai, ō, au, were also made to stand for them. There were 22 *śrutis* or *mātras* for these seven svaras. *Kuṛaḷ*-4, *Tuṭṭam*-4, *Kaikkiḷai*-3, *Uḻai*-2, *Iḷi*-4, *Viḷari*-3, *Tāram*-2; and in all 22. In *Puṛam* 152, Vanbaraṇar mentions the twentyone 'Musical Stages' (இருபத்தொருபாடற்றுறை). The commentator explains this as the twentyone stages obtained by playing the seven svaras at the three places (viz. தாரம், மத்யமம், உச்சம்). His alternative explanation is that no. 21 refers to the number of strings on a yāḻ. (i.e., the Pēriyāḻ). Aḍiyārkkunallār commenting on *Śilap* V: 35 to 37 also mentions the 'மூவேழ்திறம்' (21 varieties) peculiar to Paṇs. In the Tēvāram Tiruthāḻachati ''ஏழேயேழேநாலே மூன்றியலசை யிசையியல் பாவஞ்சத் தெய்வின்றிக்கே மனங்கொளப் பற்றுவோர்'' also the number 21 (7+7+4+3) is mentioned in connection with Iśai (music). The system of *Ālāpana* was known as *Āḻatti* and it was sung by using the supporting terms *Thenna* and *Thana* etc., which surprisingly enough happens to be the case even today. *Paṇ* was rāga or the tune. *Śevvaḻi, marudam, pālai* etc. were *Paṇś*; it was prescribed that *Śevvaḻi* was appropriate to the afternoons and marudam to the dawn.[35]

Instrumental music had attained a very high peak of perfection; the number of musical instruments in vogue was also very large. A musical instrument was called *Iyam*. The *Yāḻ* (which was really a harp and of which the *Viṇa* is perhaps a variant) was a stringed instrument. The strings of the *yāḻ* were adjusted by means of the white crescent shaped peg called kaḍai.[36] There were four kinds of *Yaḻ*: *Pēriyāḻ* played on 21 strings; *Mahara yāḻ* played on 19 strings; *Śakoṭayāḻ* played on 14 strings and *Śeṅgōṭṭu yāḻ* played on seven strings. The *Ādiyāḻ* was played on 1000 strings; the practicability of such an instrument is rather doubtful. Aḍiyārkkunallār says that the Pēriyāḻ had gone out of use even in his days. The instrument was put in a tanned red-dyed leather sheath called

35 *Perumbāṇ* · 11.

36 *Puṛam*: 146, 147, 149.

'Pachchai.'[37] The flute was the 'kuḻal' and it was made either of bamboo, or bronze or any other stuff; the bamboo flute constituted the ideal, bronze was not as good, while any other material was not commendable. Of all the musical instruments, the most pleasant and popular it seems were the *kuṛal* and the *yāḻ*; the *taṇṇumai* was the drum which perhaps corresponded to the *mritaṅgam* and was used to keep *tāḷa* for vocal and instrumental music and for dance. Even as there were variants of the *yāḻ* there were varieties of *taṇṇumais* (percussion instruments). They were the *taḍāri, paṛai*, etc. The *taḍāri* ;was a circular disc shaped instrument with a white leather piece on the side on which the dexterous fingers of the players beat to rhythm. It was perhaps a large sized *Kañjira*. Aḍiyārkkunallār gives a list of thirty leather musical instruments. Another type of *taḍāri* was the *padalai*[38] which was also a leather laya instrument; *maṇmuḻā* was another laya instrument which was either made of clay in which case it could be the *Ghaṭam* or had one side plastered with clay in which case it would be identical with the *Mritaṅgam* [mrit = Maṇ = earth];[39] applying Maṇ (Śōru) to the side of the *Maṇmuḻā* was called *mārchanai*.[40] *Tāḷa* or laya was meticulously observed and singing parts of a single piece to two *Tāḷas* is also mentioned. The *Pāṇar* of the *Saṅgam* age were wandering minstrels who went about singing and playing on the *yāḻ*. We hear of the Perumbāṇar and the Śiṛupāṇar; these names were derived from the kind of musical instrument they carried with them. The Pāṇar were called *Yāḻppāṇar*. Van Paraṇar mentions the *muḻā, yāḻ, peruvaṅgiam, salli, śiṛupaṛai, padulai*, as some instruments used by the Pāṇar.[41] The chief practitioners and exponents of the art of Music were, no doubt the hetaerae, but the *Silppadikāram* speaks of a whole village of Brahmins in the Pāṇḍya land where music was adopted as their profession. Those brahmins preferred this delightful profession to their prescribed Vēdic duties and so were looked down upon by the generally conservative public.

37 *Kali*: 143: 38 to 41. 38 *Porunar*: 5.
39 *Puṛam*: 65. 40 *Ibid.*: 15 com, 41 *Ibid*: 152.

A society which had developed these fine arts and especially music and drama to such a pitch of excellence could not have been anything but highly advanced in secular and aesthetic achievements. In certain quarters the tendency to look upon all Tamilian achievement as either totally borrowed from or considerably influenced by Sanskritic traditions is noticeable. But the facts that the *Araṅgēṟṟukādai* of *Śilappadikāram* does not openly admit of such indebtedness and the expressions *Ōviyam, Porunar, Kuravai, Tuṭaṅgai, Iśai, Talaikkōl, Yāḻ, Paṇ, Kaṇṇuḷ Vinai, Kūttu, Muḻavu, Kuḻal, Kaḷam, Tirai, Eḻini, Kural, Tuttam, Kaikkiḷai, Uḻai, Iḷi, Viḷari, Tāram etc.*, and a host of other such indigenous Tamil terms have even then existed may be remembered when such theses are advanced.

Tamil art influenced foreigners too. A silver dish found at Lampsacus partly inlaid with gold and partly enamelled "furnishes a valuable proof of the excellent knowledge which the Romans possessed about India and of the interest which they took in that country."[42] The dish contains a female figure seated on a peculiar Indian chair the legs of which are formed by elephant tusks. Her right hand is lifted in the gesture of prayer, in her left she holds a bow. Around her are grouped Indian animals, a parrot, a guinea-hen, and two pet monkeys. Under her feet are two Indians leading a pet tiger and a pet panther, ready to fight and making the gesture of adoration.'[43] This is clear proof that Tamilian themes inspired foreign artists too.

42 Rostovtzeff : *Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire* p. 126.

43 It is difficult to identify the figure as Lakshmi since the accompanying objects do not suggest that : As for its being the 'personfication of India', did the Mother India concept exist then?

CHAPTER XII

RELIGION

GENERALLY SPEAKING in India, "religion has not merely been the serious business of mankind" but perhaps "the only business of the bulk of mankind" and every other business was made to subserve a religious purpose. Religion can play a predominant role in society in two ways : i.e. either by claiming so much of the average man's attention and conscience that he has little of his personality left over for other (that is, more mundane) affairs; or by continuously feeding the fire of religious fanaticism and generating intra-social antagonisms.

The *Saṅgam* Tamils, however, seem to have fashioned for themselves a society where religion did play a dominant role and considerably influenced individual and social thinking and beliefs but was not allowed to seriously tamper with the very practical and wordly life which they chose to live.

Religion among the Tamils in the *Saṅgam* age, therefore, played a different, a milder and a more harmonious role in society than it did in the succeeding age. Religion, then, was certainly associated with the rituals and involved a certain amount of thought about the hereafter but had not succeeded in entangling society in any ritualistic labyrinth nor had compelled it to lose its head in metaphysical clouds. The religion of the *Saṅgam* Tamils was not a uniform or a single pattern; but a religion in the abstract, however, bound the mass of mankind into a life of willing discipline ordained by an intangible network of quasi-religious customs and practices the origins of which were lost in antiquity and which were the product of a beautiful blend or fusion between all that survived of the indigenous life and all the exotic idealogies, that succeeded in catching the imagination of the Tamils.

Religion is a technique for the establishment of a relationship between man, the known and the natural, and God, the unknown and the supernatural. The *Saṅgam* people knew and preached both the ritualistic and supplicatory aspects of religion; and their rituals were related to animism and other forms of anthropomorphic deity worship. *Tavam (tapas)* of the contemplatory type, not involving rituals was also known.

They knew and appreciated with greater clarity death more than birth; the former frightened and pained them and therefore was dreaded; hence their curiosity and consequent speculation related more to the former than to the latter; and the whole philosophy of reincarnations, hero-worship, ancestor-worship (shrādda), sati-worship etc., related to death. What happened after death was a matter of greater concern to them than what happened before birth; they contented themselves with the hypothesis that a death had preceded every birth.

Animist worship and their notions of rebirth, heaven and hell were integrated into a primitive religio-cultural base on which alien ideas like the worship of the personified elements and the apotheosis of the dreadful forms of nature were superimposed. The resultant was an odd mixture of different shades of 'superstition' to which sophisticated monotheistic notions were fitted later. Animism accounts for a good part of *Saṅgam* Tamil religion : tree worship, stone worship, water worship, animal worship of the stars and the planets. These were supposed to be divinely animated. There was of course a thin veneer of monotheism and a parallel strain of polytheism discernible throughout.

There are three strands of religion clearly marked off from each other during the *Saṅgam* period : *(1)* the indigenous gods, systems of worship etc., *(2)* the exotic Hindu Gods, systems of worship etc., (3) the exotic non-Hindu religious faiths, functions etc. All the three undoubtedly co-existed and till the very end of the *Saṅgam* age, no serious and open clash among them occurred, though the tendency for the protagonists of each religion was to promote the cause of one's own religion. But one does not bear of any organized attempts on the part of

any religion to oust any other from the country or any king to favour particular faiths and persecute the rest. There is no mention of even the negative virtue of tolerance, as if the very idea did not strike them. Without making any fuss about it, the Tamils of the *Saṅgam* age seem to have permitted all religions to flourish. This cannot, however, mean that they were indifferent to religion; for whenever we get any mention about religious observances or practices there is such a plethora of them that it is clear the Tamils were a sharply religious-minded people who just did not care to bother about the other man's religion. "Toleration" (usually a euphemism for indifference) "produced not only neutral indulgences, but even religious concord. The superstition of the people was not embittered by any mixture of the theological rancour; nor was it confirmed by the claims of any speculative system."

The primitive Tamil was clearly a believer in totems even as the Egyptians were. The carp of the Pāṇḍyas, the tiger of the Chōḻas, the bow of the Chēras, the particular tutelary trees of particular tribes were all totemic symbols. Ancestor-worship and totemic worship were inseparable and the worship of the dead hero was a phase of ancestor worship. But these belong to a period very much anterior to the *Saṅgam* age. During that age, however, except for the primitive people, ideas of godhead and worship had reached a maturer stage with most of the Tamils.

The primitive people believed in Gods who were supposed to reside in the hollows of trees.[1] The reference to the snakes that reside in those hollows seems to suggest that the object of worship was the snake itself; this is not improbable in view of the fact that we do come across Nāgas in the Tamiḻaham of the *Saṅgam* age and it is wellknown that the Nāgas were snake-worshippers.

A mere planted log of wood called *Kandu* was an object of worship for it was believed that a deity resided in that log of wood. It served as a god; and it was to be under the shade of a large tree preferably a banyan tree. So Lord Śiva also came to reside in the shade of the banyan tree.[2] The Banyan tree as well as the *Kaḍambu*

1 *Perumbāṇ* : 231, 232; *Puṟam*: 52; *Aham* : 307.

2 *Tirumurugu*: 256.

and the *Narām* housed different goods.[3] A rest place like a raised platform was built all around this log of wood, that was the deity, under the shade of a tree; and the whole place (platform, tree and kandu) were called *Podiyil* or *Ambalam*. Womenfolk, especially those brought as captives from enemy-land, bathed in the tank, repaired to the *Ambalam* and worshipped the God of the *Kandu* there. They cleaned the place with wet cow-dung paste, lit a perpetual lamp there and strewed the flowers all over the place and that was how they worshipped deity of the Kandu. The *Ambalam* or the *Podiyil* was a place of religious importance to which all people resorted and worshipped the God there. The trees themselves, being totems, developed into religious institutions and particular trees came to be attached to particular Gods and their temples like *Kaḍambu* for Murugan, *Kāyāmbu* for Tirumāl, *Koṉṟai* and *Vilvam* for Śiva etc. The later and widespread practice of setting up a particular *stala vriksha* (literally, 'a local tree') in the temple seems to have grown out of these humble beginnings.

That the shade of the banyan tree provided shelter not only to the Gods, but also to the village elders who treated the foot of the tree as a 'senate house' is borne out by innumerable references to *Maṉṟam*, *Podiyil*, and *Ambalam* serving both the purposes.[4] These Gods were propitiated for they 'terrorised' the sinners.[5]

Tolkāppiyar makes a reference to *kaḍavuḷ*.[6] The expression means 'He that transcends thought, word and deed'. In another context he makes a reference to four Gods being appropriate to *Ahapporuḷ Tiṇais* (or love situations): (1) *Māyōn* (Tirumāl) of the *Mullai*—the bucolic deity—(the situation of the pastoral land); (2) *Śēyōn* (Murugan) of *Kuriñji* (the situation of the hilly tracts); (3) *Vēndan* (Indra) of the *Marudam* (the situation of the farm land); (4) *Varuṇan* of the *Neydal* (the situation of the coastal areas).[7] The commentator Nachchinārkkiniyar explains (and the explanation is borne but by references in the *Śaṅgam* literature)

3 *Puṟam*: 199; *Kali*: 101, 106.
4 *Tirumurugu*: 226; *Puṟam*: 220.
5 *Kuṟun*: 87.
6 *Tol. Poruḷ*: 88.
7 *Ibid.*: 5

that the Gods were worshipped by the people living in those regions. The cowherds worshipped Tirumāl that he might bestow many milk cows on them; the worship consisted of *kuravai dance* and many 'offerings'.[8] Nachchinārkkiniyar states that *Māyōn's* son *Kāman* was also worshipped as a pastoral God by the cowherds.[9] The hunters of the hill tracts worshipped Murugan as the God of the hillock. The worship of Murugan was normally in the hands of the devotee priest, who also carried a spear or a *Vēl* like Murugan Himself and so was called a *Vēlan*. The worship took the shape of a dance called *Veṛiyāṭṭu* or *Veṛi Ayardal*.[10] That, however, was the primitive way of worshipping Murugan while the more advanced method of worship was practised by the Brahmins and the worship is described in the *Tirumurugāṛṛuppaḍai*.[11] This should not be hastily interpreted to mean that the *Tirumurugāṛṛuppaḍai* refers to a later practice.[12]. That both practices coexisted is borne out by the *Tirumurugāṛṛuppaḍai* itself. Other Gods and Goddesses of the hill side were also recognized and worshipped. They were the *Śūraramagaḷir (*a kind of *Mōhini* demoness*)*; and the *Kollippāvai*, a deity supposed to reside in the Kolli Hills (Salem District) was a famous Goddess of the hill side. *Aṇaṅgu* was a beautiful but deadly spirit which killed people by fascinating them. The Aṇaṅgu resided in the sea or on the hill.[13]

Indra, God of *Marudam* was worshipped by the agriculturists. The cultivators who depended for their produce on the rains naturally worshipped that God of thunder, lightning, the clouds and the rains.[14] There was a special festival instituted in Puhār in honour of Indra; the Chōḻa king himself managed this festival and it was called *Indra Viḻa*. The *Śilappadikāram* and the *Maṇimēkalai* speak about this.

8 *Kali:* 105. 9 *Ibid.* : 109. 10 *Aham* : 22.
11 *Tirumurugu* : 126 to 189. 12 *Ibid* : 218 to 249.
13 *Aham* : 70; *Naṛṛiṇai* : 155.
14 *Kali* : 98. The rainbow was Indra's bow; it was the 'imperfect bow' for it lacked the chord.

The fishermen and the people of the coastal regions worshipped *Varuṇa* the God of the wide ocean. The primitive worship of *Varuṇa* was done by planting the tooth of a shark in the sands of the beach and giving offerings to it.[15]

The God of the desert (or the situation called Pālai) is not specifically mentioned in the *Tolkāppiyam Poruḷadikāram Sūtra* 5, but by inference is mentioned as *Koṟṟavai* by others.[16] *Koṟṟavai* was the Goddess of Victory, and she was generally housed on the slopes of the Hills.

The worship of the Sun and the Moon (being the two visible and useful celestial objects) was known; of the two the Moon was more intimately worshipped than the Sun. Thus *Śilappadikāram* appropriately begins with a prayer to the 'Moon God' followed by one for the 'Sun-God'. It was usually the 'crescent moon' that was worshipped. This worship of the crescent moon has a vast history. The third phase of the moon, called the *piṟai* (the crescent) is the 'crescent worn by Lord Śiva' on His head.[17] The worship of the crescent moon did not involve any rituals but was the simplest possible; but it was enjoined upon every one who saw the crescent to worship it. It was an ancient practice in Tamiḻaham.[18] Women, more than any others worshipped the crescent moon; but a married woman would worship only her husband and not even the favourite *piṟai*.

Among the established Gods worshipped according to the rituals, the three-eyed God (Śiva), Murugan, Tirumāl, Vāliyōn (Balarāman) and Indra seem to have been the more important ones. Murugan was the deity *par excellence* of the Tamils; and the word means divinity, beauty, etc. and the worship of Murugan began as propitiation. He is supposed to reside generally on the hilltops. The abduction of Vaḷḷi, one of the sacredsports of Lord Murugan, is a typically Tamil theme and the situation in *Ahapporuḷ*

15 *Paṭṭiṉa* : 86, 87; *Aham* : 109, 240; *Kuṟun* : 164.
16 *Kuṟun* : 218.
17 *Puṟam* : invocatory verse; *Puṟam* : 60; *Kuṟun* : 307.
18 *Madurai* : 193. Pl. vide typescript.

parlance is 'Kaḷavu' peculiar to *Kuṟiñji*. Murugan was the presiding deity of *Kuriñji*.[19] The temples of Murugan are mentioned in the *Tirumurugāṟṟuppaḍai* in elaborate detail: (1) Tiruppaṟaṅguṉṟam; (2) Tiruchīralaivāi (Tiruchendūr); (3) Tiruvāviṉaṅkuḍi (Paḻani); (4) Tiruvēraham; (5) every hillock besides (was His rightful place of stay) and (6) Paḻamudir Sōlai. The last of these is identical with the Aḻagar hill. It would appear that originally there was only a Murugan shrine on that hill but at some time (even before the days of Iḷango), it got preeminently devoted to the worship of Tirumāl. It is a matter for controversy how the Lord of the Vēṅkaṭam Hill happens to be Tirumāl. The *Śilappadikāram* says that the deity there is Tirumāl; it has been suggested and not without reason that this is an interpolation in that text. But it is notable that there is a persistent tradition that the original deity in Vēṅkaṭam was Lord Murugan. Again Aḻagar Malai also known as 'Tirumāl irum Sōlai Malai' (perhaps a later title to the hill) is a hill now dedicated to the worship of Tirumāl but seems to have been originally prominently a place of Murugan worship. The *Śilppadikāram* itself mentions a holy tank near that hill, called 'Puṇṇiya Śaravaṇam',[20] and that expression is unmistakably reminiscent of Murugan. That in Vēṇkaṭam as well as in Aḻagar Malai, the only hillocks where Tirumāl is assigned a temple, a parallel tradition associates Murugan also, leads to the suspicion that Tirumāl was a great competitor to Murugan and that in those two places Tirumāl worship was instituted in the place of Murugan worship by the enthusiastic worshippers of Tirumāl. It is also to be noted that Tiruchengōde, famous for Murugan worship, has largely yielded place to 'Ardhanārīśvarar' worship. The *Śilappadikāram* also mentions Seṉdil (Tiruchendūr), Seṅgōḍu (Tiruchengōde) Veṇkuṉram (Svāmi Malai) and Eraham as the abodes of Murugan. Though there are many references that Śiva or Indra was the chief God for them, Murugan undoubtedly was the favourite God of the Tamils. He had not acquired the name 'Subrahmaṇyam' then, though occasionally he was called 'Kumāra'. But many of His

19 *Kuṟuḷ*: 63; Paṟi: 60m. 20 *Śilap*: XI: 41 to 46.

attributes had been earned even in the *Śaṅgam* age; and these are evidenced by the *Tirumurugāṟṟuppaḍai* and *Śilappadikāram* (*Kuṉṟakkuravai*) and in greater detail in *Paripāḍal*.

The worship of Murugan was done in the primitive way as well as in the more sophisticated and Brahmanical, ritualistic way. The *Vēlan* worship which was done by strewing paddy and flowers and offering Tinai ('the grains of the millet') and honey to the God of the Kaḍambu was primitive. The Vēlan also worshipped Lord Murugan by sacrificing a goat.

The shade of *Vēṅgai* tree was considered appropriate for installing an idol of Murugan: the devotees beat the *Toṇḍaham* drum and blew the bugle; bells were rung; sweet, odoriferous smoke pervaded the place; flowers were strewn. The devotees wore the protective anklet. "Occasionally the Veṟiāḍal was done by women-folk also".

But the Brahminical worship described in the *Tirumurugāṟṟuppaḍai* is different; the aged and learned Brahmin, wearing the sacred thread, having bathed in holy water and with cloth soaked in water still drying on his body did *Pūja* to Murugan by chanting mantras including the 'sacred six letters' of Murugan. They bent their bodies forwards and put up their folded hands above their head in the gesture of suplication. Murugan, however, had been assigned his parentage and he was 'Āl̤kel̤u kaḍavul̤ Pudalvan' (son of the great God under the banyan tree). The exploit of Murugan's overthrow of Śūran (the monster) was known and praised. A reference in the Kalittogai says that 'white cloth was inappropriate to Murugan'.[21]

Māl means 'Great' and Tirumāl was the 'sacred, great One'. 'Viṇḍu' a corrupted form of 'Vishṇu' was perhaps known to them, but it occurs in a doubtful passage in *Śilappadikāram* only. 'Baladēva' or 'Balarāma' is rarely mentioned as such but only as 'Vāliyōn'.[22] 'the white One' or 'He of the plough share weapon'. He is generally coupled with 'Tirumāl', the 'blue One'. The four great ones were: 'Śivan, Vāliyōn, Māyōn and Śēyōn'.

21 *Kali* : 105: 17. 22 *Puṟam* : 60.

Of these Sivan was reputed for His anger, Vāliyōn for His strength, Māyōn for His fame, and Śēyōn for His achievements. Sivan was associated with the *Koṉṟai* flowers and the bull-flag; and Murugan with the Kaḍambu flowers and the cock-flag or the peacock flag and Tirumāl with the eagle or the Garuḍa flag. Kūṟṟam or Yama was supposed to weild the Maḻu or the Kaṇichchi, the mace.[23] *Māyōn'* meant the 'black' One (mā: black), just as Śēyōn was the 'red' One. That *Śēyōn* can also mean the son (of Śiva) was but semantic accident.

Indra, Yama, Varuṇa and Sōma (Kubera) are mentioned as the guardians of the four directions: the east, the south, the west and the north respectively.[24] Gods on the basis of caste are also mentioned in the *Śilappadikāram*. *Andaṇar, Araśar, Vaiśyar, Vēḷāḷas*. Brahma (the four faced One), the thirty-three Devas and the eleven Gaṇas are also mentioned in *Tirumurugāṟṟuppaḍai*. Umai, Tirumāl, Kalaimagaḷ, Ayirāṇi (wife of Indra) were some of the Goddesses worshipped.

Analysis of the names of these Gods and Goddesses makes one thing clear: there seem to be parallel names in Tamil and in Sanskrit for the same Gods; Murugan and Subrahmaṇya, Tirumāl and Vishṇu, Śivan and Rudra; this seems to resemble the Venus-Aphrodite, Hercules-Herakles, Ulysses-Odysseus, Jupiter-Zeus, parallel names in Latin and Greek. But it seems probable at least in the case of Murugan, the entire worship started with the Tamils and Murugan got transformed into Subrahmaṇya carrying with Him His old legends and surrounding Himself with more and more new legends and myths. Much accommodation between indigenous religious practices and exotic Āryan beliefs and rituals seems to have taken place.

Among the temples in the *Śaṅgam* age there is specific mention of quite a large number. The temple was called *Nagar;*[25] in later day inscriptions also we hear of *Viṇṇagara* meaning the temple of 'Vishṇu'. *Kōṭṭam, Kōil, Nagar* and *il* or *griha* meant place of residence: hence the expression *Vishṇugriha* also meant 'Temple for

23 *Puṟam* : 42. 24 *Tirumurugu* : 160, 161. 25 *Puṟam*: 55.

Vishṇu'. The name 'Siva' is rarely mentioned in *Saṅgam* literature; but many of his attributes (viz. the three eyed One, the One that destroyed the three aerial forts, He that holds the *triśūla*, He that is seated under the banyan tree) are given in many contexts. Sivan, of course had his temple and Kāri Kiḷār advising Pāṇḍyan Palyāgaśālai Mudukuḍumipperuvaḷudi, says that his royal umbrella should be lowered when he comes round the temple of the Three-eyed One.[26] The Temple of Indra[27] is mentioned in *Silappadikāram* and in *Maṇimēkalai*; the festival of Indra was held in all pomp by the Choḷa king in Puhār and *Maṇimēkalai* calls it "the festival of the Thousand-eyed One."[28] His temple was called Vajrakkōṭṭam, for Vajra is Indra's weapon. The commencement of the festival of the Indra (*Viḻā Kālkōḷ*) was proclaimed by beat of drums placed on elephant back.

The festival was not merely in honour of Indra, the king of the Dēvas but the four varieties of Dēvas, and the eleven *Gaṇas*. On the occasion of the festivals, the streets were adorned with festoons, the entrances to the temples were cleaned and made fit for devotees to assemble; pots with sacred water were kept everywhere; doll-lamps were lit; plantains and sugar cane were planted on the road side. The old sand on the roads was removed and new sand spread. Festivals in honour of all the Gods from *Iṟaiyōn* (He, of the eye-in-the forehead) down to the God of the crossroads were simultaneously held. The Brahmins, well versed in the six aṅgas of the Vēdas were in charge of the rituals. Religious disputations were held in the *Paṭṭi Maṇḍapam* (a hall of learned discussion) at Puhār. This *Indra Viḻā* was held for twenty eight days commencing from the fullmoon day of the month *Chitrai* (April-May). The festival of Indra was however, not confined to Puhār. The large Sinnamanūr plates mentioning Neḍuñjeḻian say that he celebrated a festival in his country in honour of Indra, the God of rain to prevent the recurrence of famines in his kingdom.

26 *Ibid.*: 6. *Vide* also *Ibid.*: 55. 27 *Ibid.*: 241.
28 *Maṇi*: I: 26.

The *Śilappadikāram* mentions the temples for Tirumāl in Vēṅkaṭam and at Aḻagar Malai.[29] Mention of a Tirumāl temple at Tiru Ananta Puram (Āḍahamāḍam) is made by the same source.[30] The Tirumāl temple at 'Vehhā' in Kāñchipuram is also mentioned.[31] He was the parent of Brahma, the Four-faced One.[32]

In Puhār, the Festival of Indra from the days of Karikālan (who instituted the festival) onward to the days which marked the destruction of the city, was so popular that there were temples for each of his paraphernalia, too, e.g., there was a temple for *Vajrāyudha*, for *Ayirāvadam*, and for *Kalpaka Vriksha*.[33] There was a temple for *Kāman*[34] (son of Tirumāl) in Puhār and it was believed that the effects of an evil dream (perhaps the one caused by Sūr or Mohini) could be warded off by worshipping *Kāman*. In Madurai, the festival of *Kāman* was celebrated in the later part of the month of *Paṅguni* (i.e., about the third week of April), the last month in the year.[35] The *Śilappadikāram* gives a list of temples in Puhār.

1. The temple of the *Kalpaka* tree (*Amara Taru*); 2. The temple of the White Elephant (*Ayirāvadam*, the court elephant of Indra); 3. *Veḷḷai Nāga's* temple (Baladēva's temple); 4. the Sun temple; 5. the Kailāsa temple; 6. the temple of *Vēl* (i.e., Murugan temple); 7. the Vajra temple (the temple of *Vajrāyudha* or Indra's weapon); 8. the Sātavāhana or the Śāttan temple; 9. the Aruhan temple; 10. *Nilākkōttam* (the temple of Moon). In addition to the Sun and Moon it seems 'Agni' or (fire) was also worshipped. He was worshipped by the Brahmins as the messenger who carried the *Āhudi* to the Gods. *Śilappadikāram* speaks of the *Aṅgiyam Kaḍavuḷ* who appeared before Kaṇṇagi at Madurai, as He did before Arjuna to destroy the Kāṅḍava forest. There was a temple for the God of Death in the cemetery at Puhār and it was known as 'Chakkaravāḷakōṭṭam'. 'Kumari' is a Goddess mentioned in the *Śilappadikāram*.

29 *Śilap*: XI: 41 and 91. 30 *Ibid.*: XXVI: 62.
31 *Perumbān*: 373; *Malaipaḍu*: 230–234.
32 *Ibid.*: 402-405. 33 *Maṇi*: V: 114.
34 *Śilap*: IX: 60. 35 *Ibid*: XIV: 111 and 112.

She is associated with Śiva and She is said to have an eye on her forehead. There was a belief that a bath in the holy waters of the cape of 'Kumari' (where there was, and is, a temple) could ward off the sins of adultery and so forth. The following passage from the Periplus is very revealing in this context; "There is another place called Comari, at which are the Cape of Comari and a harbour; hither come those men who wish to consecrate themselves for the rest of their lives, and bathe and dwell in celibacy; and women also do the same; for it is told that a goddess once dwelt here and bathed."[36]

The worship of the *Pattini* ('the Chaste Lady') was perhaps a very early institution and was but an extension of the worship of a hero. But this seems to have become popular with Seṅguṭṭuvan's worship of Kaṇṇagi and spread to distant places like Ceylon in the South and Malwa in the North. The images of the *Pattini Dēvi* ('The Chaste Lady'), according to Dr. A. K. Kumaraswami, were preserved in temples till recently; some of the images depicted in illustration of the ancient art of Ceylon are of this 'deified woman'. The worship of the *Maṅgaḷa Maḍandai* was instituted by the Kōśar who in the Tuḷu Naḍu set up a shrine for her; the place soon became Maṅgalāpuri or Mangalore on the West Coast.

An analysis of the Gods worshipped in the *Śaṅgam* age brings out prominently two facts: in the first place while Tirumāl as Tirumāl and as Kaṇṇan is quite often mentioned and was worshipped and associated with *Vāliyōn* (Baladēva) and with *Kāman*, it is strange that 'Rāma' now greatly worshipped is not mentioned as a deity along with the other Gods. There are just a few places where he is treated as a distinguished and victorious human[37] and is not raised to the level of a God to the extent to which *Vāliyōn* — *Balarāma* — (now comparatively relegated to the background) is mentioned and praised. No temple or worship or festival for Rāma is mentioned. No *Śaṅgam* personality bore Rāma's name while Kaṇṇan was quite a popular name.

36 Quoted in K. A. N.: *Foreign Notices*, p. 59.
37 *Aham*: 70: 15; *Śilap*: XIII: 65.

The other and possibly a more intriguing fact is the total absence of the deity that is now perhaps the most popular one: Gaṇēśa, i. e. Gaṇapati or Vignēśvara. The term 'Piḷḷaiyār' is mentioned only in connection with Murugan even in the commentories.[38] It was a later literary practice to invoke Gaṇēśa before commencing a work but no prefatory prayer poem to any *Saṅgam* anthology mentions Vigneśvara, such prayer poems as we come across relate either to (1) Aruhan as in the case of *Nāladiyār*, or (2) Tirumāl as in the case of *Naṟṟiṇai* or (3) Sivan as in the case of *Kalittogai*, *Puṟanānūṟu*, *Aiṅguṟunūṟu*, *Ahanānūṟu*, or (4) Murugan as in the case of *Kuṟuntogai*, or *Pattuppāṭṭu*. But the total absence of any reference in *Saṅgam* literature to Gaṇēśa is equalled only by the invariable reference to Him in all later works, when even declaredly Vaishnavite works like Villiputtūrār's *Bhāratam* condescend to sing His praises.[39] This is generally treated as a mere enigma and left at that. The Gaṇēśa cult has been considered by some scholars to be of Mahratta origin. V. R. Ramachandra Dikshitar says :[40] "While (S)kanda is a Tamilian deity identified later on with Kārtikēya, Gaṇēśa must have been imported from Western India." While it is true that the Skanda cult and Subrahmaṇya worship branch off from the original Murugaṉ worship of Tamiḻaham, it is very doubtful if the Gaṇēśa cult had an exclusively West Indian origin. For it seems, on close scrutiny, to be a South Indian deity; at least the evolution of the elephant-God worship in Tamiḻaham seems to have been a purely local and native process. It is true that 'Gaṇēśa' is not particularly mentioned either by that name or any of its modern equivalents in the *Saṅgam* literature; but it seems quite proper to trace him back to the Perum Chadukkattu Bhūtam of Puhār or Vañji. In Puhār there was the Chadukka

38 *Puṟam*: 56: Com. *Tirumurgu*: 162; com.

39 The earliest reference to Gaṇēsa as the son of Sivan is to be found in the *Tēvāram* (beginning with 'Piḍiyananuruvumai') in the *Tiruvalivalam Padiham* by Sambandar, i.e., early 7th century A.D.

40 V. R. R. Dikshitar: *Gupta polity*, pp. 315, 316.

Bhūtam which punished all offenders and had a *pāśam* or rope in its hand; it gave 'Vigna' to those who offended and protected from 'Vigna' those who behaved; so it had 'pāśahasta' and was 'Vignarāja'; it was the demon on the crossroad distinguished from the Gods who were housed in temples. Vignēśvara, too, punished the offenders and protected the good; he has a *Pāśam* in His hands and He is generally on the cross-road. The Demon on the cross-road was 'Bhūta-Nātan', a literal equivalent of 'Bhūta' or 'Gaṇa Nātan' or 'Gaṇapati'. The elephant face in fact indicates a South Indian origin, and the pot-belly suggests an ancestry traceable back to the Demons. There was a *Śaṅgam* poet called 'Perunchatukkattu Bhūta Nātanar' and it is known that the Chēra king Iḷam Chēral Irumpoṛai instituted the worship of the 'Chatukkattu Bhūtam' in Vañji (the Chēra Capital) and also introduced the mantric form of worship distinguished from the primitive worship.[41] That was perhaps the beginning of the spread of the Gaṇēśa Cult. Even as Murugan of the hills became a son of Śivan, the Bhūta Nātan on the cross-road also became the Son of Śivan, for it was necessary for the Great Gods to be very closely related to the very Great God, Śivan, who was considered to be God *par excellence* of the Tamils. The worship of the Chatukkattu Bhūta was accompanied by offering fermented toddy or honey; it is, in the modern day, substituted by the unfermented sweet coconut juice, which is an absolutely necessary offering to 'Gaṇēśa'.

While Śaivism in its primitive lineaments could be traced back to the *Śaṅgam* age, Vaishnavism apart from the worship of Tirumāl[42] is not detectable in the *Śaṅgam* literature; Tirumāl had not been set up as an opponent to Śivan. The identification of Poygaiyār (a *Śaṅgam* poet) with one of the three first Āḻvārs (viz Poygai Āḻvār) would militate against the general trend of religion and worship in the *Śaṅgam* period. Chēran Śeṅguṭṭuvan was a Saivite but true to the *Śaṅgam* tradition was not a persecutor of or a hater of persons professing other religions or worshipping other Gods; he

41 *Śilap* : XXVIII : 147, 148; *Paḍiṛṛu* : IX Ten *Paḍiham*.
42 *Paḍiṛṛu* : 31:9, 10.

accepted the remnants of the offerings to Tirumāl of Āḍahamādam in Tiruvananthapuram. Nannan, the hero of Malaipaḍu Kaḍām was a Śaivite; he preserved, protected and promoted the Śiva temple at Naviramalai; he maintained an army division to guard the temple (possibly against organized robbery of temple property) of Kāri Uṇḍikkaḍavuḷ',[43] the presiding deity there.

The great Śaṅgam poets Kapilar and Nakkīrar were also Śaivites. But it is clear that there was no feeling of religious antagonism. The *Paripāḍal* praises Tirumāl, the Āichchiyar Kuravai of *Śilappadikāram* and the prefatory prayer poem in *Naṟṟiṇai* are by persons who have praised the other Gods also.

So in the *Śaṅgam* age, religious opinions and ideas had not taken sharp and intolerant attitudes which they did during the suceeeding age commencing from the seventh century A.D. There is a reference in *Puṟanānūṟu* by Āvūr Nūlaṅkiḻār in which the poet says that the great, learned and philanthropic Brahmin Viṇṇantāyan had conquered the men of false religion and understood the 'Vēdic' religion as the true one. This is in all probability a reference to the Non-Hindu or the Buddhist or Jaina religions and not to Vaishnavism or other subdivisions of Hinduism.

The temple was *Kōil* or *Kōṭṭam* or *Puṟai* (*Dēvālayam*). God was *Kōn, Iṟaivan, Kaḍavuḷ* It was considered charitable and proper for kings to grant ornaments and other valuables to the temples.[44] The particular place in the temple where offerings were placed for Gods i.e. the altar, was called *Bali Pīḍihai.*[45] Flags were waving on temple tops. Private worship at home of the family deities was also common and those gods were *Illuṟai* Deivam. The act of installing an idol in a temple was called *Kaḍavuḷ Maṅgalam*; and making an idol out of a stone was *Kaḍavuḷ Eḻudal.*[46]

43 *Malaipaḍu* : 81 to 85.

44 *Paḍiṟṟu*: XV: 37. 45 *Śilap*: *Uraiperu kaṭṭurai.*

46 *Idid* : XXV: 130. The expression 'Eḻudal' literally means 'writing', and might perhaps refer to 'painting'. There is no reason however, to suppose that the God was not represented by an idol but only by a painted image. As the word 'Paḍimam' (idol) is used in *Śilap:* XXVIII: 228, there can be

The cities of Madurai and Puhār and perhaps Vañji, too, witnessed many festivals which the Tamils called 'Viḻa' or 'Śaṛu'. 'Viḻavu Mali Mūdūr' means the ancient town of many festivals. The commencement of a festival was marked by a ceremony called *Kālkōḷ* and on the seventh day from then, the sacred bathing ceremony (bathing the idols in holy water) took place.[47] During festivals the public was entertained to drama, dance and music; and the Maṛavar indulged in mock fight.[48] It is not as if these festivals were few and were celebrated occasionally. There was a regular cycle of such festivals. Almost daily the Gods were taken out in procession to the accompaniment of music played upon flute, *yāḻ* and drum etc.,[49] and the procession passed through the bazaar streets of Puhār. Women assembled behind the windows in their houses and witnessed the procession, much as they do even now.

Murugan festival at Tirupparaṅguṇram was famous in those days. In the Tiruvōṇam asterism of Tirumāl, a special festival was celebrated. In the spring season appropriate to *Kāman* a festival in His honour was held in Madurai.[50] The *Ahanānūṛu* mentions an *Uḻḻi Viḻa* in the Koṅgu Nāḍu during which the Koṅgar wearing bells around their waists used to dance in the street. But Kāñchi more than any other centre of religious activity, was noted for its cosmopolitan nature in regard to worship; devotees attached to different religions congregated at Kāñchi to worship their respective deities. The daily festival was called *pūśanai* and the special annual festival *siṛappu*. The latter was held to make up for deficiencies in the former.[51]

Simpler festivals of a more or less social nature were known. *Nir Viḻa*[52] was the bathing festival and it related to the festival of bathing in holy rivers on auspicious occasions. Bathing in *Kaḍaimuham* or the estuary of the Kāviri is even now a popular festival. *Andi Viḻa* was the evening festival when, to the accom-

no doubt that the representation was sculptural and three dimensional and not merely through painting.

47 *Madurai*: 427, 428.
48 *Ibid.*: 596.
49 *Paṭṭina*: 155, 156.
50 *Kali*: 92.
51 *Kuṛaḷ*: 18.
52 *Kuṛun*: 295.

paniment of instrumental music, ornamented ladies used to carry to the temple flowers, incence etc., needed for the *pūja*. This occured in Hindu and Buddhist places of worship. The practice of ringing the bell at the time of *pūja* was known and practised even then.[53] *Śiṟu Śōṟṟu Viḷa* (festival of the light lunch) was celebrated by distributing rice balls mixed with ghee and curd to all those who came.

Nōnbu was part of the religious activity of the people. *Nōnbu* means *tapas* which is *tavam* in Tamil. This along with the sacrifices of a primitive and indigenous as well as an exotic type was practised. The popularity and prevalence of the Brahmanical *Vēḷvi (Yāgas)* is well attested by the *Śaṅgam* literature. Other religious practices like the *Śrāddha* were also known. Offering the *Piṇḍa* to the dead persons is mentioned in the legend associated with Peruñjōṟṟu Udiyan Chēralādan. Fasting was a well known *Nōnbu* and fasting for a month is also mentioned.[54] Bathing in the cold water in the tank in the wintry month of *Tai* (January-February) was a *Nōnbu* practised by the girls.[55] This is now being done in the month of *Mārkaḻi* evidently as a result of the tradition started by *Tiruppāvai* and *Tiru Empāvai*. Certain domestic practices were also called *Nōnbu*; e.g., it was customary to remove on the occasion of one's marriage the anklet worn by a girl when she was but a maiden. That was called the 'anklet-removing ceremony' *(Śilambu kaḻi Nōnbu)*. Evidently another kind of anklet suitable for the married state was worn by her then; similarly, 'Kiṇkiṇi Kaḻaidal' (removing the child's anklet) was also a Nōnbu and the practice is mentioned in *Puṟanānūṟu*.

The inspired priests and priestesses danced a frightful dance and spoke as if God spoke; and these oracular utterances were believed in by the Tamils of that age. It was also widely believed that if the Vēlan touched a sick person's forehead with mud mixed with goat's milk, the patient would be cured.

It was imagined that the *Vēlan* and the *Kaṭṭuvichi* could foretell

53 *Padiṟṟu* : 31 : 56.

54 *Tirumurugu* : 130-131. 55 *Naṟṟiṇai* : 80 : 7 and 8,

events. They used to spread some paddy on a wicker plate, count it and predict events and explain unseen cauaes. This was called *Kaṭṭu* and there was the practice of counting *Kaḷarkōḍi* and paddy.

The *Saṅgam* Tamils prayed to God to enable pregnant girls to safely deliver their children especially when it was a first delivery.

When Buddhism and Jainism made their way into Tamiḻaham is more then anybody can say, but it is definite that the Āryan Brahmanical Hinduism had reached Tamiḻaham and begun to work its way into the social and religious life of the local people much earlier than either of these two dissenting sects. When these sects moved down, the Tamils were grappling with the problem of accommodating Brahmanism. They had decided to do so with out giving up any of their indigenous practices or faiths. A distinctly different language constituted the strongest bulwark for the Tamils against which the Āryans could achieve only a feeble compromise but never and overthrow.

It is well known that the Jaina and Buddhist religions sprang up almost simultaneously into prominance and that while Buddhism received royal patronage and larger popular support Jainism lacked these advantages: it was therefore constrained to wander about in search of a favourable atmosphere for its growth.

K. A. Nilakanta Sastri says that the existence of the rockcut caves etc., "confirms the impression derived from a careful study of the Tamil Classics that while Buddhism came in earlier, Jainism was the more persistent in its influence on Tamil Literature". Even a study of the Tamil classics will show that while it is true that the Jains who had produced the *Jivaka Chintāmaṇi*, *Chūḷāmaṇi*, *Nīlakēsi*, *Nannūl*, *Yāpparuṅgala Virutti*, *Yāpparugalakkārikai*, *Nēmināthaṁ* etc. were intellectual giants who had made foundational contribution to Tamil literature it is also true that the authors of the *Maṇimēkalai*, *Viraśōḻiam*, and the *Kuṇḍalakēśi*, were great Buddhists. But even a careful study of the classics does not show that Buddhism came to Tamil India earlier. In fact there is the persistent tradition that Badrabāhu was the spearhead of Jain advance into South India and that it began with Sravaṇa Belgola;

that it took place under the leadership of Chandragupta Maurya. The advance which started in right earnest due probably to Chandragupta's friendly attitude to Jainism must have been accentuated by Aśoka's softness for Buddhism; and that must have been the period of considerable Jain movement to the South. The nearest place of importance where they could entrench themselves was Kāñchipuram, which throughout has been a stronghold of Jainism. Smith's argument in favour of earlier advent for Jainism than Buddhism seems to be still sound.[56] The rockcut caves by the way argue nothing. Whatever their influence on the Tamils and their opposition to the established religion of the land, the heterodox religions were treated on a par by the religious revivalists of the *Tēvāram* age.

During the period lighted by the *Saṅgam* literature we see as much of Jainism as of Buddhism but both are clearly subordinate to the indegenous practices or the Brahmanical Vēdic religion. There were in important cities like Puhār a concentration of Jains known as the *Samaṇas* and their places of stay were called *Samaṇappaḷḷi* or *Amaṇappaḷḷi*, *Chāvakar*, a sect among Jainas are mentioned in the *Maduraikkāñji*; they were householders observing religious observances; the lay Jainas were called '*Ulaga Nōnbigaḷ*. At *Uṟaiyūr* there was an Aruhan temple called 'Sri Kandappaḷḷi', also called 'Nikkandappaḷḷi' or 'Nikkandakkōṭṭam' and the deity in the Uṟaiyūr Jain Temple was called 'Uṟaiyūr Sri Kōil Nāyānār'. Nikkkandakkōṭṭam was usually abbreviated as Kandakkōṭṭam; and it was very easy to confuse this, at a later period, with a Murugan temple; the expression 'Kōṭṭam' usually associated with Jaina Paḷḷis will give away its origin, anyway. We hear of a Kandakkōṭṭam at Kāñchi which is a Muruga temple where Kachchiappa Śivāchāriyār (author of the *Kanda Purāṇam*, in Tamil) served as a priest. It would be interesting to enquire into the origins of these Hindu temples called *Kōṭṭams*. The *Amaṇappaḷḷis* were retiring and resting places of the Jaina anchorites and these places were surrounded by gardens full of flowering plants. That there were also Buddhist Paḷḷis of a similar order is indicated in Maṇimēkalai.

56 Smith: *E.H.I.*, p. 440.

Ājīvikas were another sect of Jainas; Kaṇṇagi's father was reported to have joined this order and become a Jaina monk. It was quite common for women in those days, for private or domestic reasons, to become Buddhist ascetics for that religion like Jainism permits such an order. In fact Mādhavi, the courtesan associate of Kōvalan, and Maṇimēkalai her daughter had the benefit of conversion at the hands of the esteemed Saint Aravaṇa Aḍigaḷ (a Buddhist ascetic); Kaundi Aḍigaḷ was a Jaina ascetic who is said to have escorted Kōvalan and Kaṇṇagi to Madurai. The Jaina monasteries were centres of learning and preaching. Internicine quarrels among these sects are not heard of. The kind of strife mentioned by Mahēndravarman in his *Matta Vilāsa Prahasanam* seems to have been happily absent, which again is a reason why one is constrained to reject a post-Pallavan date for the twin epics, *Śilappadikāram* and *Maṇimēkalai*.

The effect of all this Jain and Buddhist teaching on individuals might have been considerable but its general effect on society must have been negligible and whatever inroads they might have made were offset by the assaults of the 7th century made by the neo-Hindus (the revivalists of the 'Bhakti' movement). It is a singularly special feature of the Hindu mind to imbibe without being affected, to incorporate without assimilating and to learn without being converted. This stood the Tamils particularly in good stead in their endeavour to save the individuality of their own culture. This state of Tamilian religious life was not free from the disharmony of unbelief and atheism though the holders of such views must have been a negligible minority. Though so, their influence, if not warned against, might grow to disproportionate importance. 'They were people who had no faith in the consequences of good and evil.' The Chōḷa King Nalaṅkiḷḷi was warned against such company by a poet of Uṟaiyūr, 'Mudukaṇṇan Śāttan'.[57]

The Tamils of the *Śaṅgam* age were aware of certain spiritual and philosophical truths. They believed that life is distinct from body;

57 *Puṟam* : 29.

that life is *uyir or āvi* and body is *uḍal* or *mey;* that death means the parting of life from body. They called vowels *uyir* letters *(*i. e. life letters*)*. The God of death was known as *Kūṛṛam* (He that divides the life from the body). They held certain highly ethical views i. e. self respect and dignity of personality were more important than life for man, and that *Kaṛpu* or 'chastity' was more important than life for a woman. Promoting the integrity of the family or tribe and attachment to royal authority were other public virtues insisted upon by them. An adherence to these principles of life would earn fame and they felt that fame was more important than life. But the over-all and inescapable superiority of destiny was believed in by them. The *Śilappadikāram* theme derives its framework from this principle of ūḻ (fate*)*. Penance, e.g. dying for a noble cause like a hero dying in the battle-field or the self-immolation of a *sati* it was felt would lead one to *tuṛakkam*. *Tuṛakkam* was their Valhalla or the world of the Dēvas called 'Puttēḷir Ulagu' by the Tamils.

Kaṇiyan Pūṅgunṛan, a *Śaṅgam* poet preached against gay and boisterous life of pleasures; and as a result of his realizing the absolute truth, he 'neither praised the great nor scorned the lowly.'[58] Nariverū Talaiyār pleaded for 'restraint from doing evil, even though one might not be able to do good.'[59] Renunciation or the realization of the instability of life and its earthly pleasures was preached[60] and the vanity of human wishes expressed.

A study of *Śaṇgam* literature does not reveal to us the picture of a pervasive looseness or immorality or reckless life. Much of the literature of the age was secular and a small part of it religious. There are no specialist treatises on religious matters; even the *Kuṛaḷ* chapters on *Tuṛavu* are but derivatives or conclusions from certain ethical principles. There is not a single instance of profane literature.

One final impression that is left on the minds of the students of *Śaṅgam* literature is*:* The richer folk among them lived a life of luxury and ease and comfort*;* their activities were many-sided;

58 *Ibid.*: 192. 59 *Ibid.*: 195. 60 *Ibid.*: 194.

while the poorer ones lived a precarious life. Their actual achievements in the field of music and literature, dance and drama were considerable. In spite of their brilliant academic and commercial distinction, they contributed practically nothing to metaphysical speculation of the type of the Upanishads. Their religion did not mature into any philosophical system and they had no elaborate mythology of their own. These two deficiencies in Tamil culture gave an immense superiority to the Sanskritic culture of the Āryans who had reached dizzy heights in metaphysics and that is how while the Tamils managed to hold their own in matters of secular interest, they yielded place to the Āryans in the matter of philosophical speculation.

But it was not a natural deficiency of the Tamils. They simply had not thought about that aspect of things. But once it was brought home to them, it was they that spread the light later on throughout India through the Bhakti movement led by the *Āḻvars* and the *Nāyaṉmārs* and the great philosophical systems of the succeeding centuries, propounded by intellectual giants like Saṅkara, Rāmānuja and Meykaṇḍār.

The social polity which is described in the few chapters here was contemporary with the Roman Empire which according to Gibbon "comprehended the fairest part of the earth and the most civilized portion of mankind" and the Golden age of Tamil literature was coevel with the Augustan age of Latin literature. The decline of the Roman empire was followed by a barbaric dark age and the *Saṅgam* age was similarly followed by the Kaḷabhra rule. Europe as well as the Tamil country happened to be sustained by a religious faith which unified the former into a fraternal Christendom and spread in the latter the Bhakti cult which was to unify India in the cultural sphere. The memory of the *Saṅgam* age has often been a welcome invigoration to the Tamils of later days, for they are the inheritors of a culture and civilization of which any nation can be justifiably proud.

CHAPTER XIII

THE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF THE ŚAŃGAM TAMILS

ANCIENT INDIAN literature has no work on political theory. No doubt there is the chapter in the *Śānti Parva* in the *Mahābhāratā* which is in the nature of an advice to a king as to how his subjects are to be governed. The *Artha Śāstra* group of works in Sanskrit, of which *Kautilya's Artha Śāstra* is the best known and the most elaborate, is concerned with certain basic details about the monarchical form of government and the administrative routine—central, provincial, military, etc.,—appropriate to that form of government. The *Kuṛaḷ* in Tamil tries to idealize certain contemporary practices. But in none of these ancient texts is there (1) any mention of constitutional remedies for misrule, or (2) any abstract political thought e.g. speculation about the origin of the state and philosophical justification for particular forms of government, or (3) idealized pictures of imaginary and 'most desirable' forms of political arrangements like the *Republic* or the *Utopia*, or (4) philosophical explanation for political behaviour such as one finds in Hobbes or Bentham. In the West, political thought has been developing from the days of the ancient Greeks; in certain cases like Hobbes or Locke, it reflects the reactions of philosophers to contemporary political events; and in certain cases like Rousseau or Marx, these thinkers have influenced history; but in India we do not have such a literature which either produced or was the product of great movements in history; we may say so with emphasis when we confine our attention to the Tamil *Śaṅgam* literature.

The Tamils have a branch of literature called *Poruḷ*, roughly corresponding to the *Artha Śāstra* of Sanskrit literature; *Poruḷ* or

Artha like 'substance' means 'wealth'; and so *Poruḷ-iyal* or *Poruṭpāl* or the *Artha Śāstra* ought to mean essentially a science of wealth. But it is not merely Economics; it is concerned generally with public affairs; and particularly with government. In Tamil *Poruḷ* is treated as a vast literary field of which the *Aham* and *Puṟam* classification of literature forms part. *Aham* is concerned with pre-marital as well as conjugal love; while *Puṟam* is concerned with all that class of literature which does not deal with *Aham*. So *Puṟam* deals with government, war, finance (taxes and charity), trade and all other varieties of public relationship. In the *Kuṟaḷ* all these are treated in the *Poruṭpāl*.[1] If political affairs, military organization, public finance and other ancillary matters constitute politics, the *Poruṭpāl* of the *Kuṟaḷ* is a political treatise. But we must, even at the outset say clearly that there is no speculation on the foundations of the state (in the abstract) in *Kuṟaḷ* or any other ancient Tamil text; and it can be stated that all the references to political institutions in *Śaṅgam* literature relate in some way or other to certain existing institutions and their functions. These are useful in giving a picture of the contemporary polity; but it is very doubtful if a cogent political philosophy of the ancient Tamils can be drawn from this scanty material. But whatever can be said about the philosophy of the social life of the *Śaṅgam* Tamils and their mental attitude towards the political and social institutions which they supported will constitute the core of their political philosophy.

The Tamil *Śaṅgam* polity was one of hereditary monarchy. The monarch was an autocrat whose powers could not be checked or curtailed by institutional devices. His own will in the last resort, was the only effective check on his arbitrary rule. But men in whatever exalted office they may be placed, naturally function subject to certain physical limitations and to that extent despotism gets curtailed and becomes inoperative, i.e., beyond the point actually sustainable. The pattern, the tradition and the conventions of the society of which he was a part and the explicit injunctions of

1 The second of a triad of major chapters.

the *Aṟanūl*[2] necessarily weighed with any king. He was a rare king who was influenced neither by flattery nor by fear. That is how positive and prolonged injustice is not much heard of. But as we shall see below, these checks were not the same as constitutional checks. Whether they were as effective as constitutional checks or not is another matter.

The *Saṅgam* Tamils, perhaps, willingly accepted hereditary monarchy as the best form of government. So far as Hindu polity is concerned once the *Varṇa* system[3] is granted, the *Kshatriya* community and the sovereignty of the warrior-ruler become given factors In Tamiḻaham of the *Saṅgam* age where the 'three crowned monarchs' had been ruling, perhaps, from proto-Dravidian days, the people could not but accept the hereditary monarchical form of government. The people (the wise ones in the community) expected the kings to adhere to a certain decent code of royal behaviour. Whether these expectations were fulfilled is more than one can say in the present state of one's knowledge of Tamil *Saṅgam* history; but from the available evidence it can be said that aberrations from the normal were very few.

The king was expected to maintain the dignity of the office by looking after the welfare of the people and maintaining law and order. He had his prerogatives and his duties. The throne was not a bed of rose petals but was one of thorns. 'A king who does not look after his subjects as a mother looks after her children, goes to hell'.[4] It is often said that a king should be kind and merciful towards law-abiding and loyal subjects and be terrible in his punishment of offenders and law-breakers; so he is to be a 'moon' that 'equally pleases' all good men, and a 'sun' that 'equally scorches' all bad men; he must also be charitable like the very clouds that shower the rains.[5] The three ambitions of an ideal king were (1) aspiring to the spiritual wealth that is in store

2 The *Dharma Śāstras* in Sanskrit.

3 The class division (the priests, the rulers, the merchants and the peasants) of Hindu Society.

4 *Puṟam* : 5.

5 *Puṟam* : 55.

after the earthly life comes to an end; *(2)* conquering the other rulers in the world; and *(3)* leaving behind a good reputation.[6] "The king's primary duty is by his subjects; the fundamental need of the people is food, and a sound economic policy alone can achieve that goal; the givers of food are the supporters of life".[7]

The king should not only punish evil but must also reward virtue.[8] It was the duty of the king to protect the subjects from all kinds of dangers, big and small; if an elephant ran amuck in the streets and accidents occurred, the king would be blamed.[9] He is advised to submit to the Brahmins and the Gods,[10] he should be wise, kind and sympathetic. But at the same time it is the might of the king that secures the peace of the land.[11] Peace then was not the result of a proclaimed and practised peace-policy, but the result of the presence of a dreaded army. In a significant passage the duties of a king are summarised: 'He must punish evil, run a fair government, collect the tax that is his due and do impartial justice to all'.[12] A king must not be ungrateful; it was a disgraceful crime for a king to forget the good that was done to him.[13]

The greatness of a king was measured by his ability to tolerate his enemies and the extent and mode of punishment meted out to them when they became intolerable.[14] The king who bears the onerous responsibilities of government is likened to the ox that drags the heavily laden cart uphill.[15] The axled chariot can go its way smoothly only if the driver knows how to drive it; so the chariot of government cannot be driven well if the king is a bad driver'; if not it will get stuck up in the mire of enmity and will lead to ruin.[16] That a ruling prince[17] should have expressed this

6 *Puṟam*: 18.

7 *Puṟam*: 18; "உண்டி கொடுத்தோர் உயிர் கொடுத்தோரே".

8 *Puṟam*: 29; "கொடியோர்த்தெறுதலும் செவ்வியோர்க் களித்தலும்"

9 *Kali*: 56. 10 *Puṟam*: 6; *Paḍiṟṟu*: 63. 11 *Puṟam*: 20.

12 *Puṟam*: 17; "கொடிது கடிந்து, கோல் திருத்தி,
படுவது உண்டு, பகல் ஆற்றி"

13 *Kuṟun*: 225. 14 *Puṟam*: 2. 15 *Puṟam*: 60.

16 *Puṟam*: 60, 185. 17 Toṇḍaimān Iḷantiraiyan.

sentiment in a way proves that the *Śaṅgam kings* were aware of their responsibilities. The duties of the king were so fundamental and multifarious and his responsbility for the welfare of the subjects was so undoubted that it was said that the king must be held responsible for any evil or misery in society. The kings of the *Śaṅgam* age were expected to be the embodiment of 'justice', indicated by the *Śeṅgōl* or the 'unbent (impartial) sceptre'. Any imputation of injustice to a king was unbearable shame and it was this consuming sense of shame that killed Neḍuñjeḻiyan who had ordered the execution of Kōvalan. Śeṅguṭṭuvan the Chēra king who heard about royal injustice in the Pāṇḍyan kingdom himself felt ashamed of the neighbouring king's misrule and said, "The injustice committed by Neḍuñjeḻiyan has assumed the aspect of justice because he has repented ... ... If the rains fail or if the subjects in any manner suffer any hardship, it is a source of great fear to the king, for he will be held responsible. He must fear misrule (like eating away the substance of the people); being born of the great family of rulers leads to misery and is not enviable".[18]

It was a king's duty to set an example to his subjects; for the subjects but followed him. Then *Puṟanānūṟu* mentions it clearly as a 'duty of the king to give good character to the subjects'.[19]

An important consideration which made misrule rare was that it was impressed upon the king that (1) fame (good reputation) alone was permanent and that (2) power, riches, beauty and youth are transient. "As the power to do good is also transient, never postpone doing good; do it now and here" is the parting advice in *Śilappadikāram*.[20] In all these matters, the king was to be guided by tradition which was embodied in the *Aṟanūl* (the ancient texts which prescribe the *aṟam*).[21] *Araśiyal* or the science of government consisted of well understood conventions. If these were adhered to by a king, he was supposed to follow the path of *Aṟam*

18 *Śilap :* XXV : 98 to 104.

19 *Puṟam :* 312; in this context this can also have a restricted meaning that the kings must impart military education to his subjects.

20 *Śilap :* XXVIII : 179, 180. 21 *Madurai :* 191, 192.

i. e., the example of wise ancestors. This is sound conservatism. The duties of a king were not only to follow the *Aṟam* (the accumulated wisdom of the ages) himself but to interpret to the people the *Aṟam* and lay down the path of justice.[22] It was, therefore, held that 'education' (in the political and military arts of government, i. e., debating, diplomacy and warfare) was essential for a king.[23]

This account of the duties of a king makes it appear as if the kings were hemmed in by many restrictions and were in perpetual danger of being overthrown if they transgressed the provisions of the *Aṟam*. It was not so. The king enjoyed his absolute and unquestioned discretion. He had his advisers whom he consulted if he wished to and accepted their advice if he felt like doing so. The learned men in general and the *Āśān* (the *Purohit* or the priest) and the astrologer (the *Kaṇi*) in particular influenced the king much more than any others could. But there was no constitutional or conventional requirement for the king to abide by clearcut and proclaimed rules. All acts of the king were arbitrary. Though the advisory bodies existed, their advice could be rejected.

Obedience to royal commands was an imperative duty of the subjects. 'Even the lover who would not part from his wife, goes out on official duty, for the 'king cannot be disobeyed'.''[24] The king's powers were unquestioned. The king's valour and might were called *Koṟṟam* and the king was *Koṟṟavan; Koṟṟavai*, the Goddess of power, military might and victory was offered primary worship; the government was, therefore, organised force in a very real sense.

The king could be a tyrant; and he would suffer no ill consequences. If the king was a cruel despot, the people only felt miserable and complained that 'their lord was a cruel man.'[25] So royal authority was irresistible even if wrongfully exercised. ''When the king himself forcibly enslaves a person, how can it be helped? When *Kūṟṟuvan* (the Lord of Death, *Yama*) takes away a person's life, he does not argue with the dying man or consult his

22 *Madurai* : 191, 192; Nachchinārkkiniyar's Commentary.
23 *Kuṟaḷ*. Chapter 40. 24 *Kuṟun* : 242. 25 *Puṟam* : 72.

wishes.[26] Wise men will not resist royal despotism; for a deer is helpless before a man-eater.[27] It is futile to resist even naked despotism": that is the core of this fatalistic sentiment. So consciousness of injustice did not lead to revolt against it and the inevitability of royal despotism was fully conceded. There was no safeguard against that despotism.

The king was an absolute and full sovereign; government was unitary and the sovereign could be located and his sovereignty was undivided. "There can be no authority coeval with royal authority" says *Muṉṟuṟai Araiyar*.[28] The king was the chief executive and the highest judge and whatever laws were 'made', were made by him; there was no human power to punish him if he broke those laws. These powers were not shared by others with him, though some officials perhaps assisted him in those royal functions. To say that there was no legislation does not mean that the king passed no orders or made no rules. The arbitrary orders which he caused to be proclaimed by beat of drum were in the nature of ordinances and the reversal of existing practices constituted legislation. Unlimited despotism exercised in an indifferent manner being in any case accepted and tolerated by the people at large was the general order. So the limitations imposed on the king's absolutism were not human, institutional or legal but physical, environmental and practical.

It was the immensity of royal power and the abundant chances of abuse of such power that made the ancients harp so often and so much upon the 'undesirability of despotism'.[29] Though they were anxious to set limits to royal absolutism curiously enough, despotism was even justified. "Doing things which the king may not like" was a crime: and the king did not like people hating his authority or trying to subvert it or conspiring to supersede him by another king. No doubt, the king could not control the seditious thoughts of disloyal subjects; so they are put down as sinful. Seditious utterances and acts can, of course, be detected and

26 *Paḻamoḻi*: 110.
27 *Paḻamoḻi*: 234; *Vide* also 291.
28 *Paḻamoḻi*: 311.
29 *Śilap: Padiham*, 55.

punished by the king.[30] It is to be remembered that 'appreciating the difficulties in overthrowing a despot' is one thing, while 'justifying despotism on that ground is another'. Both were done by the ancient Tamils.

The king was like a fire. He could be useful like fire and consume things up like a conflagration. Getting on with a king was a delicate job. All references to punishments for misrule mention 'the God of *Aṟam*' or 'a Demon in *Puhār*' as the avenging agent and do not mention any human agency. There was no remedy for misrule. There was no question of inventing a remedy, for the Tamils of the *Saṅgam* age could not imagine a kingless state and there was no guarantee that one king would be better than another.

To summarize, the autocratic instinct of a king, who functions without legal checks on his practically unlimited powers, were attempted to be restrained by the wise men constantly reminding him of the instability and vanity *(Kāñji)* of human wishes and the ultimate transience of all earthly things and the final futility of oyal ambitions. This was in the nature of a convention which operated as a mild pressure which could at best blunt the edge of autocracy occasionally.

Divine qualities were attributed to the king; he was treated with the respect and given the worship due to God. King and God were called *Iṟai* for their authority was pervasive; it is quite probable that *Iṟai* originally referred to God only but later by extension and by simile was applied to the king who 'protected the world' like God.[31] *Kō* stands for king and God; and *Kōil* means the palace as well as the temple. The presence of the king was divine presence and a king was in that sense Tirumāl, the tutelary deity.[32] 'In conventional poetry the king is identified with

30 *Paḻamoḻi*: 281. 'Is it necessary for one to have committed a crime to be punished by the king?' asked a poet quite frankly and added 'there is no escape from it'. *Kali* : 89 : 10.

31 *Kuṟaḷ*: Chapter 39; preface by Parimēlaḻahar.

32 *Tiruvoymoḻi*: IV Ten—IV *Tirumoḻi*—8.

God (i.e., the God who wears the *Kāyā* or the *Pūvai* flower—Mamecylon edule) and that literary situation is called *Pūvainilai*. So the king's divine right to rule was fully accepted. *Oḷi* referred to the divinity that hedges kings;[33] even if the king were asleep, his *oḷi* spread over the world and protected the subjects.[34] This is quite in keeping with the tradition of deep-seated respect for authority which the Tamils have always upheld. "The divine right theory in India is as old as the days of the *Brāhmaṇas*."[35] Though it may be said that the king had no divine right to rule wrong, punishment for violation of that excellent principle was not in the hands of any secular institution. The victims of misrule could not but curse the despot or escape tyranny by fleeing the tyrant's jurisdiction. So to speak of democracy in connection with ancient Hindu polity (and especially the Tamil polity) is to misapply modern and western terminology to different circumstances. The king was guardian of his subjects as his title *Kāvalan* (protector) implies; so he was responsible for the welfare of his subjects. The ancient Tamils felt the absolute need for a king, for the alternative was unthinkable to them. They had, in fact, a Hobbesian obsession of the dreadful alternative—dark anarchy.

The king's power over his subjects is also treated as paternal; this is only an extension of the idea that God is the father of all creation; it is remarkable that subject population like the children is called *Makkaḷ*. In one instance at least the king's protection is treated as maternal. But it is needless to add that these expressions have nothing to do with the patriarchal and the matriarchal theories of the origin of the state familiar to students of western political thought.

Certain consequences of misrule were contemplated: (1) The people in the country would suffer terribly; (2) the tyranny will scorch the world like wild fire; (3) the world will wither away; (4) the subjects will cry out in anguish; (5) the subjects will get con-

33 *Kuṟaḷ*: 698. 34 *Jīvaka Chintāmaṇi*: 248.
35 *Vēdic Age*: The Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Series, p. 430.

fused and bewildered;.[36] (6) wealth and culture will be lost;[37] (7) "the very planets will move out of their orbits; the rains will fail; life will be destroyed." The penance of the sages and the chastity of the wife must be protected by the king.[38] "Life in this world is sustained neither by rice nor by water but by the king; so he must realize that he is the soul of his subjects."[39]

"The result of misrule, in short, was not rebellion but famine."[40] The king could not be overthrown by revolution; that would be immoral, i. e., *adharma*. Rebellion against king was as unthinkable as rejection of God. The idea simply never occurred to the ancient Tamils. "The early Sanskrit political thinkers, like some Roman Catholic writers of the 16th century, justified tyrannicide under conditions. Tamil literature does not seem even to sanction resistance to the king's will."[41] This is one of the basic distinctions between Tamil *Śaṅgam* political thought and the *Artha Śāstras* of Sanskrit literature. We hear of Republics or *Janapadas* of the Gangetic valley, but the very idea is alien to the Tamils. Though the possibility of tyranny and its consequences to the tyrant form the subject matter of many verses in the *Śaṅgam* literature, it is obvious that even in the face of intolerable tyranny there were no formal or legal remedies available to the people.[42]

The above analysis does not necessarily disprove V. Kanakasabhai's dictum that "the system of government was far from despotic and (was) conducive to public welfare."[43] Dr. S. Krishnaswami Iyengar says, "while in form the Hindu government may be

36 *Kali* : V : 12; VIII : 2 to 4; X : 5 to 7; XXXIV : 14, 15.

37 *Kuṟaḷ* : 560.

38 *Maṇimēkalai* : XXII : 208, 209; *Śilap* : XXVIII : 207, 208; *Jivakachintāmaṇi* : 255.

39 *Puṟam* : 186; this is supported by *Peruṅgadai* : II : XI : 17, 18; *Jivakachintāmaṇi* : 255.

40 K. A. N.: *Cōḷas*, p. 69 (II edn.).

41 K. A N.: *Cōḷas*, p. 69 (II edn.).

42 *Kuṟaḷ* : 555, 556; K. A. N. : *Cōḷas*, p. 67 (II edn.).

43 V. K. : *The Tamils*, 1800; p. 109 (I edn.).

described as a monarchy and even an autocracy and while it may readily even be conceded that the Hindu monarchy had autocratic powers for application in times of emergency, the actual use of the power was made in a way to satisfy the exacting demands even of a pure and complete democracy, not only in form but more completely in spirit, and that is what is really wanted, not the form of it."[44] While one can draw a distinction between benevolent and malevolent despotism, it is decidedly wrong to identify 'benevolent despotism' with 'democracy'. The large measure of self-government that prevailed in the rural areas was due to the difficulties in the way of centralizing the government and not because of a realization of the benefits of self-government. The relevant test regarding autocracy is not whether a king was actually exercising autocratic powers or whether there was any sanction for autocracy or whether the people supported the autocracy, but whether the people could have checked the autocracy by taking legal or constitutional action against the ruler if he were autocratic. So far as Tamil *Saṅgam* literature is concerned, the answer to the last query is clearly a 'no'. So it cannot be said that the *Saṅgam* monarch was a constitutional monarch. The only real check on the autocracy of the king was the wise man, whether he was 'minister', 'priest', or 'poet'.[45]

The king was induced to conform to certain desirable standards of political behaviour and to act upon the advice of wise counsellors. Though the king was not bound to do so, he was persuaded to do so by suggesting that (1) if he did so, the king's fame would spread through his ministers, (2) if he did not do so, dire consequences would follow in the next world and (3) unstinted loyalty of the people would be forthcoming only then; and by appealing to the sense of justice, righteousness, mercy, vanity and fear of the king and by mentioning good rulers in the neighbourhood, implying that the subjects under a bad king might prefer to migrate to the neighbouring lands. Still the kings were governed only by their temper and their needs. No fundamental grounds of public policy

44 S.K. : *Hindu Institutions*, preface, p. vi. 45 *Puṟam*: 55, 183.

governed the actions of the Kings and their public activities had always a personal motive behind; e.g., it is unthinkable that to-day anywhere in the world a nation's military resources would be used by their chief executive to secure a wife for himself; *Mahatpāṛkañji*, a common military situation in *Śaṅgam* Tamiḻaham, mentions only such an exigency.

It is in this context that it appears clearly that there was no 'public opinion' in those days. V. R. Ramachandra Dikshitar says that "the king's power was so limited by a system of checks and balances, the council, the Purohita and public opinion that he dared not misuse his rights".[46] But it is extremely doubtful if there was such a thing as 'public opinion' in those days. If there had been a public opinion which could assert itself, the kings could not have enjoyed the autocratic powers which they are known to have used. To speak of a free and articulate public opinion in the *Śaṅgam* Age is an anachronism.

The attributes of a political state are: (1) Territory, (2) Population, (3) Sovereignty and (4) Government. These are the physical, personal, spiritual and legal aspects of the state. To the Tamils the territory is *Nāḍu* (country), population is *Kuḍi* (subjects), government and sovereign were *Mannan* (King. The concept of sovereignty could be expressed only as *Iṛaimai* or the essential characteristic of the king). *Oḷi* was the divinity in the king and *Āṉṉi* represented the king's power to order, regulate and direct, promote and prohibit, but these cannot be considered to be the equivalents of Grotius' or Austin's concept of a legal sovereign.

The ruler was *Iṛai*[47] the 'king' and the ruled were *Kuḍi*[48] the 'subjects'. It is necessary to make here the well-known distinction between a 'subject' and a 'citizen'. While a citizen has civic rights, a subject has no such rights. The subjects of the king had no legal rights (against the government) which could be enforced in a court of law; so that particular aspects of law or legislation based upon the rights of the individual were unknown to the *Śaṅgam* Tamils. Civil liberties and fundamental rights are concepts totally alien to

46 V.R.R.: *Studies*, p. 196. 47 *Kuṛaḷ*: 388. 48 *Kuṛaḷ*: 381.

them. Absence of rights against the government naturally destroyed all possibilities of 'puplic opinion' developing in the country. Apart from a mere social consiousness, a religious affiliation or a caste attachment, there was no public opinion as such on political matters. As criticism of institutions or policies was unknown, public opinion could not develop.

The *Saṅgam* society was a pluralist society which recognized many claimants to the individual's loyalty; but carefully provided for frictionless functioning as most of the sources of power were rendered sterile by the appropriate 'Laws' (of Society) or '*Aṟanūl*': *Aṟam* was to be the basis for human action whether in the field of public relationship or social activities (*Poruḷ*) or conjugal love (*Inbam*).

K. A. Nilakanta Sastri says: "The general impression left on the mind by the literature of the age is one of contentment on the part of the people who were proud of their kings and loyal to them."[49] But it looks as if the attitude of the people was more one of 'indifference' than of 'contentment' and 'loyalty' to the king was not conscious but habitual.[50]

Aristotle said the individual could perfect his own personality only through the state. But the particular manner of so developing one's personality should be a matter of one's own choice and discretion, i.e, the state is not to dominate the individual but must assist the individual to grow in society. In pre-Christian Europe there was no unifying force like Catholic Christianity but there was a deep political consciousness and a sense of local patriotism which guided the city-states in their career. This means that if the state declined, the individual had little to lean upon and so was famished. But in India the social organization was such that the individual had (by birth) a definite place and status in society; he did not need the state for his status or his progress. The state itself was not the legal embodiment of society but only a part of

49 K. A. N.: *Cōḷas*, p. 67 (II edn.).

50 'Who cares whether Rāma rules or 'Rāvaṇa rules' is a latter day expression of an ancient attitude.

society with *locus standi* there like any other institution or person and did not much engage the attention of scholars. That is the reason why concepts about the state did not develop here on lines familiar to students of European thought. The individual cared little what the state (the king) did or demanded or who functioned as the king (whether it was a benevolent despot or an unbridled autocrat). Some would search in vain for a Hampden in *Saṅgam* Tamil society or in Hindu Society of any age for that matter. The state, therefore, had limited duties to perform, though in fact it asked for and obtained much from an indifferent people. This indifference to political arrangements is typical of Hindu social organization; for, the king and his advisers owed their position to a particular social arrangement by which they were assigned certain duties. But there was no provision for punitive measures for violating this arrangement, if the violater happened to be the king.

The indifference could be in the last analysis traced to the crux of Hindu thought. Fatalism: that thought dominates the Hindu mind. It pervades all speculation and influences all action. The chief moral of the story of Kōvalan[51] and the crucial chapter in the *Kuṟaḷ*—Ūḻ[52]— confirm this view. It is often stated that even kings are not exempt from the ravages of misfortune or the inexorable functioning of destiny.[53] The wise instruct the rest to remember that Providence has the final say in all matters. The inference is that nobody need be frightened about the transient and secular power exercised by the kings.

It is generally held that the *Chakravarthi Kshētra* which Kautilya mentions represents the idea of an Empire. In the *Saṅgam* period while we get an idealized and general picture of any king, separate mention of emperors, kings and feudatories is not made. The Chēras, the Chōḻas, and the Pāṇḍyas were the 'crowned monarchs' and there were numerous feudatories paying tributes to them. Occasionally it happened that one of those crowned monarchs overcame one or both of the others and temporarily ruled over practic-

51 *Śilap: Padiham*: 57.

52 *Kuṟaḷ:* Chap. 38.

53 *Nālaḍiyār*: 3.

ally the whole of Tamiḻaham. But on that account, it is not known if that victorious king was called an emperor, i.e., a *Chakravarthi* or a *Pērarasar* The court poet, no doubt, praised his patron as 'the sole ruler of the unified world' or 'one who has brought the entire world under his victorious white umbrella'. This does not mean that the concept of 'Empire' as known to the Romans of the Imperial Age was familiar to the Hindu king's in general or to the *Saṅgam* kings in particular. Some kings are proudly mentioned as rulers of the whole of India that lies between the Himalayas and Cape Comorin but they have no name for India, as a political unit. *Nāvalan tivu* of the Tamils is only a translation of *Jambudvīpa* and it is a mythological area and has no geographical connotation. *Bhārata Varsha* which is really India has no name in *Saṅgam* Tamil. The pan-Indian concept had simply not occurred to the Tamils. They either speak of Tamiḻaham or the whole world. The present nation-state of India had no Tamil name. No Tamil king of ancient Tamiḻaham established an imperial dynasty. The word 'empire' carries with it many ideas associated with the Roman Imperial Government that it is very doubtful if it is proper to use that word at all in connexion with the Indian 'enlarged kingdoms'. The observations made by P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar in this connection are relevant here. "The connotation of the word Empire is such that it cannot be used in Indian History. The Roman Empire meant the establishment of the *Pax-Romana*, the gradual extension of Roman citizenship, the institution of Roman jurisprudence, and the spread of the Latin tongue. The British Empire means the establishment of British methods of maintenance of law and order, the use of the English language for purposes of administration, the spread of English schools and universities, the wide extension of British commerce, the starting of Christian propaganda and the slow development of British democratic institutions. The establishment of empire in ancient India meant none of these things."[54]

Political philosophy without a concept of law is like a body with-

54 P. T. S.: *The Tamils*, p. 146.

out bones. The Persian emperor who was curious to know who the emperor of the Athenians was, was told that 'Law' was their emperor; the Romans of the Rebublican and Imperial days made the most massive contribution to jurisprudence; and the British in recent times have popularized the idea of the 'Rule of Law'. Jurisprudence as a secular discipline is not native to Tamilian thought, though there are Sanskrit texts which deal with legal problems extensively. But some of the Tamilian ideas about 'Law', though not in the abstract at least in practice, can be gauged from stray mention in *Śaṅgam* literature of royal behaviour and popular reaction to such behaviour.

The king was clearly above any secular law. That the *Dharma* or *Aṟam* held the Damocles' sword over his head could have influenced a pious and well-meaning king; but an unscrupulous king could brush these ideas aside and keep himself above law. True, such defiant kings were few; but when one generalizes, one cannot lose sight of them. The only law which held Indian society together and each person in his place was the *Dharma* — permanent, unalterable, valid for all time, affecting all aspects of human life and totalitarian in its effects. In that sense the king, too, was subject to that *Dharma*.

Apart from the abstract ideas about 'law', there was great respect for 'justice'. The sense of justice became such an obsession with the majority of Tamil rulers that Neḍuñjeḻiyan was not able to bear the thought of having committed an injustice. The bell of justice was a visible emblem of their sense of justice.

Aṟam is the Tamil near-equivalent to *Dharma*. It literally means 'division' or 'discrimination'. Discriminating 'right' from 'wrong' was *Aṟam*. But it was not punishment. Manu, on the other hand, says that *Daṇḍa* is *Dharma*[55] which is one way of positing the force theory. The Tamils recognized the need for the forcible removal of criminals and other undesirables from the society.[56] In that sense, king and subjects only carry out inescapable duties cast upon them by the social order; failure to do so by the subjects can be

55 *Manu* : VII : 18. 56 *Kuṟaḷ* : 549, 550.

punished by the king for it is part of his duty while failure by the king to carry out the arrangement ordered by providence can be punished only by the providence for no other segment of the society can arrogate to itself that right. That is how, while despotism was easily possible, regicide and revolution were unheard of.

The *Kuṟaḷ* is the major work which pays considerable attention to matters pertaining to political government, so that the *Śaṅgam* Polity has often been called the '*Kuṟaḷ* Polity'. The *Kuṟaḷ* like any other political treatise of a practical nature ought to reflect contemporary conditions; but this is true only in a broad sense. While Vaḷḷuvar, the author of the *Kuṟaḷ*, mentions the king and his associates, their qualifications and some of their functions, he does not chronicle contemporary conditions in a factual record. He idealizes the picture and just as he says in the Aṟattuppāl (the division dealing with *Aṟam* or *Dharma*) what an ideal man's way of life ought to be, in the Poruṭpāl (the division dealing with the government) he speaks of an ideal government; of course he takes care to mention the bitter consequences of aberrant government. But he does not portray an Utopia creating non-existing institutions; all the *Kuṟaḷ* institutions existed in the *Śaṅgam* Tamiḻaham. He does not exhaustively deal with all the contemporary institutions. He only chooses the prominent and major political institutions and draws an ideal code of behaviour for them. These observations will make it clear how we should handle Vaḷḷuvar's material in the *Kuṟaḷ*.

No student of '*Kuṟaḷ* Polity' can escape the temptation to compare the political material in that text with the famous *Artha Śāstra* of Kautilya. It has been attempted in detail by Dr. S. Krishnaswami Iyengar and V. R. Ramachandra Dikshitar. A re-examination of those views is called for now for our purposes here.

It is our view that while Vaḷḷuvar was in all probability quite aware of Kautilya's *Artha Śāstra*, he did not give merely a Tamil version of Kautilya's views. In fact Vaḷḷuvar was not 'indebted' to Kautilya for his views; the political conditions and institutions of South India were not broadly speaking fundamentally different

from north Indian polity; the king, his advisers, autocracy and its checks were all there in both places. These institutions provoked certain thoughts in the minds of Kautilya and of Vaḷḷuvar. There is no wonder that Vaḷḷuvar and Kautilya reacted alike in these contexts and it is notable that they reacted differently elsewhere. When this is the position, there is no ground for saying that there was any 'indebtedness' suggesting that the *Poruṭpāl* is all but a Tamil translation of the *Artha Śāstra*.

V. R. Ramachandra Dikshitar has attempted[57] to give a long list of parallel sentiments between the *Kautilyam* and the *Kuṟaḷ*. That certain chapter headings in the *Kuṟaḷ* look like adaptations of certain *Kautilyan* chapter headings is suggested as a supporting reason and the mention of *Kuṟaḷ* 501 as closely following the Kautilyan dictum in Book I, Chapter 10 of the *Artha Śāstra*. But it is very clear that Vaḷḷuvar as well as Kautilya have both borrowed from a common source, namely, anonymous *Pūrvāchāryās* and existing practices.

The very first *Kuṟaḷ* stanza of the *Poruṭpāl*[58] has been suggested as reproduction of the *Śaptāṅga* theory of the Sanskritists. The *Śaptāṅga* 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.[59] The *Kuṟaḷ* says on the other hand "He is the most ideal of kings who *owns* (1) army, (2) subject population (or territory), (3) food supply (treasury), (4) ministers, (5) friends and (6) defences (fort)."[60] It is said that the 'king' and his six 'associates' make the *saptāṅga*. But the *Kuṟaḷ* does not mention the six as the 'associates' of the king but only as 'aids' or 'auxillaries'. In the *Kuṟaḷ* 'six aṅgās' of the king are mentioned, while the *Artha Śāstra* speaks of the 'seven *aṅgās*' of the state. So while to the *Artha Śāstra* the 'state' is a concept superior to that of the king and includes the other *Aṅgās*, to Vaḷḷuvar the 'king' can be identified with the 'state'; while to Kautilya the king is *primus*

57 V.R.R.D.: *Studies*, p. 159. 58 *Kuṟaḷ*: 381.
59 Kautilya: The *Artha Śāstra*: Bk. VI: 1; Kāmandaka: I: 18.
60 *Kuṟaḷ*: 381.

inter pares in the context of the state, to Vaḷḷuvar, the king is above the *Aṅgās*. These two ideas are not merely dissimilar but fundamentally opposed in ideology. The constituent parts are not equal in status to the constitute whole; the *Artha Śāstra* treats the 'king' as 1/7 of the state, while the *Kuṛaḷ* treats the king as a compound of six parts. This is a vital difference. The *Kuṛaḷ* speaks of an absolute monarch, who has no secular superior while Kautilya speaks of a monarch who is restricted by the *Aṅgās*. The historical explanation for this difference is that both these authors were influenced by contemporary political practices. So there seems to be no reason for saying that "the Sanskritic conception of the state (Rājya) as an organism with seven limbs (aṅgās) was known and accepted".[61] The 'state' as such is never spoken of. It is the king, his advisers, his army, his subjects, his territory, his allies of whom mention is made. The abstraction called the 'state' was unknown to the *Śaṅgam* Tamils.[62]

The author of the *Kuṛaḷ* is primarily concerned with *Aṛam*. The necessity for the individual to adhere to Aṛam mentioned in the *Aṛattuppāl* is basic; but there was also the belief that if the individual is to do so, he must have the necessary facilities. These facilities are provided only by the state. The ancient state had to be a strong state if the individual was to be protected;' hence the removal of all practical checks on the king, the deification of the king and the acceptance of monarchy as the sole form of government; willing toleration of even despotism followed. A strong state is a necessary ancillary condition for the fulfilment of the *Aṛam* mentioned in the *Aṛṛattuppāḷ*. The penance of the sages and

61 K.A.N.: *Cōḷas*, p. 66 (II edn.).

62 A.L. Basham in his *Ancient Indian Kingship* : *Indica* : (I: 2: p. 121), says : "I doubt very much if any real concept of the state in the modern sense, as something distinct from the king and his officers, existed in ancient India. Some authors have pointed to the formula of the seven prakritis, the seven elements of government, and that may have had the making of a concept of the state. But in none of the references known to me do they amount to anything like a state in say, the Platonic and the Hegelian sense."

the chastity of the maidens were *Aṟam* and these were not possible if the king did not protect. Politics and government have only this secondary significance to Vaḷḷuvar. If he has dealt with *Aṟam* in fewer chapters than *Poruḷ*, it is only because *Aṟam* can be dealt with in general terms while *Poruḷ* requires details to be given.

An understanding of the nature of the impact of government on society and the impact of the age old *Aṟam* on government and society and the reaction of the society to these two impacts alone will render an understanding of the politico-social arrangements of those days possible.

The *Dharma*, which is a near equivalent term for *Aṟam* (or the Fundamental and Natural Law), is in Sanskrit 'that which supports' (*Dhṛ*: to support) and in the social context can be interpreted to mean 'that which supports the society' or 'that which contributes to the integrity of the society'. In this way, the *Varṇāśrama Dharma* (or the social order based upon classes and stages) is a particular ordering or arrangement of society which enables that society to hold together. The *Dharma Śāstras*, therefore, are a collection of injunctions, references, and suggestions which collectively constitute and order a way of life which can be roughly called the 'Hindu way of life'. The *Karma* (*Kṛn* : to do) or the action of any true Hindu is therefore to be calculated to further the *Dharma*. The *Vēdās* are the first and the most sacred among a series of texts allegiance to which is presumed in a true Hindu. As the historical origin of these texts was lost, they were considered of divine origin and that consideration added to the sacredness of the texts. That idea had a great beneficent result in practice, however. The *Śāstras* could not be periodically amended to suit secular convenience, as modern laws can be, though through clever interpretation subtle changes were occasionally brought about. So a continuity in social tradition marked very rarely only by the most imperceptible changes here and there became a feature of Hindu life. Another important feature of this arrangement was that none, whomsoever it be, was exempt from unquestioning acceptance of and obedience to the dogmas of the *Dharma*. Human life—male and female, high and

low, private and public, past, present and future—was also bound up in a vast network of injunctions all of which could be traced back to one or another of the *Śāstras*. The king—in spite of his being made 'divine'—was also bound by them in his private and public life. The king as a conqueror, as a judge, as an administrator, etc , was a *Śāstraic* king. So the society over which the king presided was 'unified' society; the integration or the unification was so thorough going and inescapable that it could be with justification called 'totalitarian'; it was not a dictator with total powers that ruled over ancient Hindu India (and Tamiḻaham was part of it), but a king limited by a totalitarian *Dharma*, a king holding office for the purpose of interpreting and upholding the *Dharma* in a spirit consistent with the general tenor of the Hindu *Śāstras*. If the king pursued this policy he was above reproach; if he strayed from the right path — the *Śāstraic* injunctions being the measuring rod of judgment — he could be deposed; history in certain cases in ancient India bears out the existence of this practice; or he could be exiled. But in most cases, the people left the domains of the unjust king and migrated to places ruled by juster kings. As most of the Hindus temperamentally leaned on the *Śāstras* for spiritual support, no king dared to incur the displeasure of the vast masses or weaken himself by allowing his land to be depopulated. This might induce an average king to adhere to traditional behaviour. In these circumstances, no ancient Indian ruler could have been much of an autocrat.

But there is a crucial turning point in the argument.

All that has been said above explains why autocracy did not often turn into bitter and cruel tyranny. But the real point is that it could have become tyranny without any ill-consequences to the tyrant. Benevolent despotism was prescribed and prayed for while malevolent despotism was feared bnt not provided against. That there were no formal remedies available to the subject against tyranny is clearly brought out in the *Kuṟaḷ*;[63] but the author of the *Kuṟaḷ* does warn the kings against the absolutely corrupting in-

63 *Kuṟaḷ*: 555, 564.

fluence of absolute power.[64] There were advisers like the *Aimperuṅ-kuḻu* but in practice they must have sunk to the level of the courtiers. Flattery must have been more easy to give and pleasant to take than harsh advice; further flattery could be encashed while advice could not be enforced. Dr. S. Krishnaswami Iyengar's view that "the actual use of the power was made in a way to satisfy the exacting demands even of a pure and complete democracy"[65] is, therefore, not tenable.

64 *Kuṟaḷ* : 448.
65 S. K. : *Hindu Institutions:* Preface, p. vi.

APPENDIX

A. *Some Parallel Polities*

The Tamils of the Śaṅgam age had in their culture Polynesian as well as Anglo-Saxon features and attitudes to life. The areas from which these traits reached the southern part of the country are separated by thousands of miles but we are coheritors of cultural characteristics from such disparate lands; and clearly one can distinguish these different traits in our cultural heritage. The Polynesians like the pre-Dravidian South Indians were an ethnically mixed lot, because of constant migrations over great expanses of territory with its western boundary in South India and the eastern boundary near Hawaii. It has been, in fact, claimed by anthropologists that we should regard the Polynesians as being of Caucasian origin, with an admixture of Melanesian blood. It will be noted that we have no decidedly negroid type in Tamilnad; the pre-Dravidian elements like the Veḍḍas and the Kaḷḷars resemble rather the Polynesians noted for their 'slight prominence in the region of the eyebrows, while their cheekbones are moderately projecting, and the nose is comparatively straight and narrow. Their hair is certainly not negro but is mostly wavy. There are certain very striking and suggestive similarities in social practices and attitudes berween the primitive inhabitants of Polynesia and Britain on the one hand and Śaṅgam Tamiḻaham on the other.

a) The Polynesians

Today the Polynesians are practically westernised and no trace of their old customs is discernible. But luckily in the later part of the 18th century when Cook visited Polynesia and even as late as 1873 about a century later when the 'Challenger' touched the shores of the islands, the native habits remained intact and these visitors had recorded faithfully most of those practices. The

amount of damage caused to the native habits can be gauged from the fact that at the time of the Challenger's cruise the missionaries had compelled the Tonga women, under pain of a fine, to cover their bosoms. To begin with, it appears that the Polynesians were worshippers of the sun and the moon: This twin worship is seen in the opening lines of the Śilappadikāram: திங்களோப் போற்றுதும், திங்களோப் போற்றுதும் followed by ஞாயிறு போற்றுதும், ஞாயிறு போற்றுதும். 'The Polynesians i.e., the Tonga or Friendly Islanders, are so whimsical in their fashions of wearing their hair that it is difficult to say which is most in vogue'. Compare this with the *Aimbāl* or the Five-fold way of hair-do familiar to the Saṅgam Tamils. 'Two holes are perforated in the lobes of the ears, in which they wear cylindrical pieces of ivory, of the length of three inches, introduced at one hole and drawn out at the other; or bits of reed filled with a yellow pigment...' This reminds one of the *thōdu* which really means 'a reed ear ring'. Among the inhabitants of Solomon Islands, there is a curious custom of enlarging the lobes of the ears. When a child is born, the ears are at once pierced with a large thorn, which is thrust through to the thicker end. After a time it is replaced by a large one, and in course of time, the lobes are stretched to such an extent that it becomes possible for the owner to pass them over his head. This may be compared to the Greek classical account of Indian tribes who slept on their ears. Personal cleanliness is their delight, to produce which they bathe frequently in the ponds. Though the water has an intolerable stench in most of them they always prefer them to the sea. நீராடல் among the Dravidians has been such an indispensable habit that it has become a religious ritual as seen in தைந்நீராடல் and instituting sacred bathing ghats on the banks of sacred rivers. 'The pillow-stools they used were about a couple of feet in length by four or five inches in height and four in width and were made of polished dark hard wood'. The pillow stools are even now in use among the more orthodox in the Tamil country and indicate a common tendency to sacrifice comfort for the sake of custom among primitive people.

In Samoa, 'hospitality to strangers is a very serious and important duty. It is stated to be contrary to etiquette for a native to kill his pigs and fowls for his own enjoyment, as they should be reserved for the enjoyment of strangers'. One of the key injunctions on the householder in the Kuṛaḷ is 'Virundombal' or hospitality to known guests and unknown almsfolk 'A very important feature of the old Polynesian life was the doctrine of Tabu or taboo-a Polynesian word which has been incorporated in the English language'. It means both 'holy' and 'unclean'. The numerous taboos which are an integral part of the functioning of the caste system in India were evidently in their pre-Varṇāśrama pattern greatly influenced by these taboos and pollutions. The notion of pollution links our society to that of Polynesia strongly. In the Friendly Isles when a person died, 'every individual living there had his or her head shaved on such an occasion'. 'The taboo for touching the body of a deceased, or anything that he wore at the time of death, lasted for at least ten months, and in the case of near relations for fifteen months'. The counterpart custom in Tamilnad where the pollution lasts for at least ten days can be easily recognised.

The Fijians, whose islands Britain occupied in 1874, worshipped numerous gods, among whom the God of War was the one to whom they did most worship; Murugan in the Tamil country was also God of War, and he became the Dēvaśēnāpathi. Mention of Murugan in this context does not mean that the totality of the concept and worship of Murugan was taken from the Polynesians. Many people from various quarters and at different times contributed to the image of the perfected Murugan who is a classic example of divine evolution. The Fijians worshipped the weapons which won them victories and the Vāḷmaṅgalam of the Tolkāppiyam may be remembered in this context.

Now, an interesting practice among them is that 'on the death of a relation it was customary to cut off the little finger; this was supplemented by shaving the head and covering the face with a sticky substance like tar. Among the Tamils of course the shaving of the head is common among near relatives in case a death occurred and the idea seems to be to make a sacrifice. Shaving the

head is symbolic for sacrificing the head; while cutting off the finger was a more serious form of paring the nails. Covering the head is done among the Tamils by throwing a towel over it and hiding the face. In the context of the Sati or தீப்பாய்தல் of the early Tamils, it may be mentioned that among the Polynesians, widows were strangled at their husband's funerals; perhaps those widows insisted on being so killed.

All Samoans are excessively fond of flowers; and we know the Saṅgam Tamils were made after flowers and bedecked their literature and religion and warefare and love with many varieties of flowers. 'Mullai' meant chastity and 'Kuṟiñji' meant premartial love and 'Vāhai' meant victory and so on among the Tamils.

The New Caledonians believe that here are many spirits, evil or otherwise who occasionally take up their abode in the bodies of living persons. To get rid of these, gourds filled with certain beads and personal trinkets are hung on trees, by which means the spirits are supposed to be driven away. In New Guinea the Papuans wore scanty dress, 'a diminutive bunch of grass strung to a fibre and tied round the waist' often being their only garment. The foliar garb was the national costume of the Veḍḍas, a pre-Dravidian stock in South India and in Ceylon. Among the Papuans, 'girls become mature at a very early age, and are often the mothers of large families before they attain the age of seventeen; and as to religion ... there is among them a belief as to the existence of a certain spirit who generally is supposed to dwell in the mountains'. Early marriages among the girls of the Pāṇḍyan land was spoken of even by Megasthenes who said that in the land of Paṇḍaia girls become mothers at the age of six. The mountain deity reminds one not only of the *Varai ara Mahaḷ* but also of Murugan who resides on hill tops. Rev. Copland King's observations [in 'The East and West' (Jan. 1905)] regarding some family customs of the Papuans are interesting. He says: 'Marriage within the family is strictly prohibited ... The mother's brother has more parental authority than the father, but it should be noted that all a man's brothers are counted as fathers to his son (in Tamil paternal

uncles are known as younger father, elder father etc). All a man's brother's children are his son's brothers and sisters, but his sisters are called aunts.' This is exactly what happens among the Tamils too, though in all patrilineal families this is likely to happen. Throughout New Guinea all married persons treat their relations by marriage with a large amount of reserve and restraint. The son-in-law, for example, never on any account mentions the name of his father-in-law, while the daughter-in-law observes the same reticence in regard to her mother-in-law. 'Stranger still' adds R. Lydercker 'is the fact that the husband and wife dare not even mention each other's names'. These habits can be at once recognised by the Tamils.

The Anglo-Saxons

It has been noticed earlier how the name Kūdal resembles the Anglo-Saxon Hundred or the Wapentake, in that it stands for not only an association of persons but also a place when the association exists. The Anglo - Saxon polity was severely warrior-based and the songs of early bards like Caedmus and the anonymous writer of the 'Beowulf' and a study of the Anglo-Saxon chronicle will let us into the details of such a polity in England of the pre-Canute days, when Christianity had not converted the land fully and the heroic tradition persisted still

'Their annals breathe not the atmosphere of a democratic and peaceful peasantry, but the passions and virtues of fighting men. As were their annals, so were their songs when loud to the harp the lilt made melody, and horses stamped in the cold courtyard. They sang of war, of boar-crested helmets, of nights when the swords flashed as if all Finnburg were on fire, of the shield shattered by the spear, arrows sleeting like hail, booty and women, of the eagle, wolf, and raven shiftily watching dying men' (as in the *Kaḷavaḷi* song). 'They sang of heroic kings, givers of bracelets and ringed mail and swords'; and one of their songs said 'come south to me, beloved; I am in a rich land'-a sentiment which Kautilya had expressed in regard to the Tamil country a few centuries earlier.

Their beliefs were also rough and related to fierce gods. 'Behind and overruling them the Saxon saw a God or Demon in every manifestation of nature'; especially 'weird, the force of Fate, to whom both gods and heroes bow' and this Vaḷḷuvar called 'Ūḻ'. Even Christianity for many centuries did not change this heroic temper: even as the Tamil heroic tradition is seen as much in the Kaliṅgattupparaṇi as in the Padiṟṟuppattu, though Buddhism and Jainism had come and gone and sophisticated Bhaktism strove its best to soften the heroic temper.

The Anglo-Saxon scale of values and virtues was older than Christianity. Nothing in this life, or life to come, was certain except the ultimate doom of weird: 'mighty kings who had ruled fifty winters, honourable and chaste women who rewarded them with mead and bracelet in hall and urged them to battle...all must perish'. The grammar of life as related in the Tolkappiyam and in the Purapporuḷ Veṇbā Mālai born out of the history of war as found detailed in the verses of the Puṟanānuṟu relate a not dissimilar tale among the Tamils. Was not the life of man only that of the bird flying from the cold into the lighted hall, and out into the cold again? This does most singularly remind one of a typical Kuṟaḷ couplet' 'குடம்பைத் தனித்தொழியப் புட் பறந்தற்றே உடம்போடு உயிரிடை நட்பு' (the relationship between body and life is like that of a bird released from a nest) ... But the brave man must fight on, must never desert his lord or abandon steadfastness, his bosom's treasure'. 'Fortitude in life (பொறை), fame after death (புகழ்) was the fighting man's faith'. 'In a heroic age it is vain to expect constitutional rulers; the early king reigned because he was strong and not in virtue of a constitution', says the historian of Anglo-Saxon England and he clearly reminds us of the ancient rulers of the Tamil country. Surely a society of fighting men divided into clans must, if unchecked, mean war without end.

The Vikings who ruled Britain after the Saxons also came from the Baltic and their gods and heroes were those of whom an English poet had sung in Beowulf. 'Heaven itself, they thought was waiting for the fighting man, and the saga tells how there was thundering

at the door of Valhalla' (the equivalent of the Tuṛakkam of the Tamils)...'their qualities were those of the fifth century Saxon enlarged; their cruelty (in war) was fearful...wives perished on the funeral pyre...wine, women, and fine clothes were their desire...' (Compare Padiṛṛuppattu 18)...their bards travelling from Oslo to Winchester, glorified their war...as other bards sang of the glorious secular achievements of rulers in the Pattuppaṭṭu, i. e., the Pāṇāṛṛuppaḍais, the Paṭṭinappālai, and the Maduraikkāñji.

Bands of robbers infested the dreaded forests; and 'on its edge would stand the wooden temple of the village God or Frea, the sacred tree defending the home from evil spirits that lurked in shrouded places exactly like the Kāval Maram or the Kaḍi Maram, the tutelary tree of the Tamils.

B. *Some Proto-Gods of the Saṅgam Age*

1. *Rāma* : The absence of any reference of importance to Rāma as a deity in the *Saṅgam* literature, needs an explanation. An obvious explanation seems to be that the *Rāmāyaṇa* gained currency even in north India only at a much later period than the *Mahābhārata*. I would consider the opinions of two great scholars conclusive proof in this regard.

R. G. Bhandarkar, in his *Early History of the Deccan* says: "The date of the *Rāmāyaṇa* is uncertain; the present Hindu belief based on the Puraṇas is that Rāma's incarnation is older than Krishṇa's and consequently the *Rāmāyaṇa* is older than the *Mahābhārata*; but it is not a little curious that while there is an allusion to Vāsudeva and Arjuna and Yudhishthira in Pāṇini, Patañjali frequently brings *Mahābhārata* characters in his illustrations and examples; there is not one allusion to Rāma or his brothers or their father Daśaratha in the works of those grammarians. Even a lexicographer, in his list of the synonyms of Vishnu gives a good many names derived from the Krishṇa incarnation, but the name of Rāma, the son of Daśaratha does not occur, though Rāma or Balabhadra the brother of Krishṇa is mentioned."[1]

1 R. G. Bhandarkar : *Early History of the Deccan*, p. 17.

Prof. A. L. Basham, in his '*Wonder that was India*' says: "The Āryans passed further eastward and set up kingdoms in Kōsala, to the east of the Doab, and in Kāśi, the region of Benares. The former which grew in importance with time was the realm of Rāma, the hero of the second of the great Indian Epics, the *Rāmāyaṇa*. For all his later fame, the literature of the period ignores Rāma and his father Daśaratha completely; so we must conclude that they were both comparatively insignificant chieftains, whose exploits were by chance remembered, to be elaborated and magnified by later generations of bards until around the beginning of the Christian era, they received their final form. It is not even certain that Rāma was a king of Kōsala at all, for the earliest version of the legend that we possess makes him a king of Benares, which was for a time a kingdom of some importance, but was conquered by Kōsala towards the end of this period." "Though Rāma is ignored in the literature of the period his traditional father-in-law, Janaka, king of Viedha is more than once mentioned and is clearly a historical figure."[2] As for the story of the *Rāmāyaṇa* itself, K.A. Nilakanta Sastri says with conviction: "Religious faith apart, the *Rāmāyaṇa* is neither allegory nor history, but poetry resting on mythology."[3]

This must be the reason for the dominant places assigned to Krishṇa and Baladēva, and the comparatively obscure and stray references to Rāma in the *Śaṅgam* literature. The historicity and early deification of Krishṇa are in sharp contrast to Rāma, a later fashion in popular religion.

2. *Gaṇeśa* : Many scholars usually hold the view that Gaṇeśa was introduced into Tamiḻaham from the Chāḻukyan country (i.e., from Vātāpi, its capital) after the capital of Pulakeśin II was sacked by Narasimha Varman I, and that the Gaṇeśa icon brought from there and installed at Gaṇapatīśvara (Tirucheṅgāṭṭaṅkuḍi) came to be called 'Vātāpi Gaṇapati' popularly. But we know that in the Vallam temple built by Mahendra Varman I, there is an inscription

2 A. L. Basham ; *The Wonder that was India*, pp. 39, 40.
3 K. A. N.: *History of India*, Vol. I. p. 34.

on the two pillars in front of that cave temple (situated at Vallam lying between Tirukkaḻukkuṇṛam and Chingleput), which indicates the authorship of the temple.

பகல் விடுகு ளளிதாங்குரன்
சத்துரும்மல்லன் குணபரன்
மயெந்திரப் பொத்தரெசரு அடியான்
வயந்தப்பிரி அரெசருமகன் கந்தசென
ன்செயிவித்த தெவகுலம்.

We know also that in this temple there is in addition to (1) a liṅga, (2) two dvārapālakas (with two arms), and (3) a horned Jēshṭā Devi, a Gaṇeśa icon also. Definitely this Gaṇeśa (it may be presumed it is a contemporary of the other icons in the shrine) is anterior to the Vātāpi Gaṇapati; this will considerably weaken the theory that Gaṇapati was imported from the Mahratta country. Gaṇēśa, in so far as Tamiḻaham is concerned, can be taken to have evolved from the Perum Chatukkattu Bnūtam, as shown in Chapter XII of this work. Further, it can be held that the Gaṇēśa brought from Vātāpi was one recovered from there; i.e., one that Pulakeśin II presumably took away from Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam during the days of Mahendra Varman I, and not introduced for the first time from there.

3. *Naṭarāja :* The Naṭarāja concept which reaches its culmination with the beautiful icon at Chidambaram is in, a general sense mentioned by Appar in his *Tēvāram*; but the *Saṅgam* literature has no reference to this fine concept. So it seems the idea must have developed during the interval between the end of the *Saṅgam* period and the age of the Bhakti movement. There is little doubt that the concept is entirely Tamilian. The idea of a dance or 'Tāṇḍavam' by itself does not represent the Naṭarāja concept fully. Of course, the invocatory verse in the *Kalittogai* mentions the dances (Pāṇḍaraṅgam, Koḍukkoṭṭi etc.) of the 'Umai amarndu viḻaṅgiya Iṛayavan' but they knew also of the other dances performed by Murugan, Tirumāl, Kāman etc. But we do not hear of the cosmic dance of Naṭarāja as such.

The Śiva icon in the cave temple at Tiruchirappalli (with four

hands, Muyalakan the Demon, i.e. the *apasmara*, the deer and with only one leg upraised) must have been the proto-Naṭarāja.

It seems quite probable—and to me a certainty—that Naṭarāja evolved from Dakshiṇāmūrthy, the south-facing God who is the cosmic and eternal teacher. Naṭarāja always faces south like his proto-type. Dakshiṇamūrthy often sits with his left leg crossed over his right and if the pedestal on which he sits is removed he will assume a dancing posture exactly similar to that of a Naṭarāja. The *Kalittogai*[4] associates Dakshiṇāmūrthy with the *tillai* tree in addition to the *āl* (banyan) and the well-known association of Naṭarāja with Tillaivanam (or Chidambaram) naturally points to a plausible identification between the two deities. The dance theme, no doubt, seems to have been a further stage in the evolution.

The stag, the serpents and the river inalienably connected with the Naṭarāja icon are easily identified as objects of the forest wherein Dakshiṇāmūrthy under the banyan tree taught the Great Truth. The serpent tail of Patañjali and the tiger feet of Vyāgrapāda also point to a similiar association of ideas. The further derivation of the Dakshiṇāmūrthy in Yogic posture from the Mohenjo-daro forest God (the Paśupati) yields very considerable antiquity to the entire theme.

C. *The Ancient Tamil Script*

It is common knowledge that the script adopted for the earliest cave inscriptions in the Tamil Country is a variety of Brāhmī, though the language is Tamil. From this it is deduced by some scholars that in those days Tamil had no independent script and the modern Tamil script is an evolution out of the contemporary Brāhmī script improvised for Tamil writing: But there have all along been feeble voices which have been protesting against this conclusion and asserting that though we have no means of identifying it there did exist an idependent Tamil script, but for reasons unknown to us, its use is not in evidence.

It is indisputable that practically all the rock-bed inscriptions, etc., in the Tamil country of the pre-Christian era coming down to

4 *Kali:* 133: 3 to 5.

us are in the Brāhmī script; but it is also true that in most of these cases the donees happen to be Jaina ascetics. The Aśokan and the immediately post-Aśokan periods in the history of north India when Buddhism was in greater favour was the time when there was considerable influx of Jains into the South. When they got as far away from Magadha as they could i.e., when they reached the Pāṇḍyan and the Chēra countries where there were natural facilities for the monks to stay, the kings of those lands treated them with kindness and provided the hospitable shelter they required for their ascetic seclusion; and the Tamils who were unfamiliar with the practice of lithic inscriptions learnt it from these refugees, and earmarked the cave beds for these monks by inscribing thereon in the script familiar to those northerners. That was how the script came to be Brāhmī. The language of course was Tamil, for it was easier for the northern Jainas to learn the language rather than its script.

One gets some confirmation of the existence of an independent Tamil script from another source. Mr. T. N. Ramachandran (Retired Joint Director-General of Archaeology, Government of India) published a Brāhmī inscription discovered in a cave at Arichalur, near Erode; and adverting to the occurrence of the letter ḻu (ഴു) in that inscription he observes: "The occurrence of the alveolar (ḻu) which is special to Tamil *eḻuttu*, speaks for the existence of a separate script for Tamil from ancient times. The Tamil sound ḻa not occurring in any of the known languages always rendered in Brāhmi, it has evidently been copied in the inscription under discussion from the then flourishing Tamil script."[5] The occurrence of exclusively Tamil sounds like ḻa (ഴ) and ṟ (റ) in these inscriptions would show that the Brāhmī alphabet accommodated these letters by borrowing from the contemporary Tamil script. But it need not be surprising that many Tamil letters can be shown to be variations of corresponding Brāhmī letters. The clue to this situation lies in the fact that the Tamil language as well as its script was derived from a middle-eastern source, possibly Mesopotamian and this would emphasise the view that Brāhmī it-

5 *The Hindu:* May, 20, 1962.

self is to be derived from the same source. The subsequent changes which these scripts experienced after coming into India (the former in the south and the latter in the north) were responsible for the local variations; Tamil derived its language as well as its script from the eastern Mediterranean; but Sanskrit derived the language from a central European source but got its script from the middle east; so that in regard to these language groups while the scripts resemble, the languages widely differ. Of course the view that "the Tamils evolved an angular script known as *Grantha*, which is still sometimes used in the Tamil country for writing Sanskrit, and from which modern Tamil alphabet is derived"[6] will continue to be held by some scholars. But that would mean that before the Grantha was evolved in the early Pallava period Tamil language had no independent script and depended on Brāhmī for its writing.

D. Tree worship

The concept of *Kaḍimaram* presumes a certain supernatural or divine faculty inherent in trees. Marshall reporting on the relics in Mohenjo-daro says, "we have at both Mohenjo-daro and Harappa two forms of tree worship represented; one in which the tree itself is worshipped in its personified and endowed with human shape and attributes ... tree worship was essentially a characteristic of the Pre-Aryan not of the Aryan population and the tree spirit must have loomed far more important in prehistoric days among the peoples who originated this worship than it did later in an Aryanised India where tree worship inevitably became subordinated to alien or semi-alien cults. The personification of trees, or indeed of any natural object, has never presented any difficulty to the Indian. In accordance with his ideas of metempsychosis every tree and plant has a personality and soul of its own, and is treated therefore as a conscious human being ... ... the non-Aryan gonds will not shake a tree at night or pluck its fruit for fear of disturbing the sleeping spirit. Indeed the process of anthropomorphising

6 A. L. Basham: *The Wonder that was India*, p. 398.

is carried even further than this among many non-Aryan tribes, brides being married to a tree before being united to their husbands ... trees also may be solemnly married one to another'.

It is possible that the Tamils of ancient times thought that the soul of the chieftain resided in the tree and any damage caused to the tree would spell ruin to the chieftain and his clan.

ABBREVIATIONS

Aḍiyār — Aḍiyārkkunallār.
Aham — Ahanānūṟu.
Aiṅguṟu — Aiṅguṟunūṟu.
Beginnings — Beginnings of South Indian History.
Chintāmaṇi — Jivaka Chintāmani.
Cōḷas — The Cōḷas.
Com — Commentary.
E. H. I. — Early History of India.
Eḻuttu — Eḻuttadikāram.
Hindu Institutions — Evolution of Hindu Administrative Institutions in South India.
H. S. I. — History of South India.
Iḷam — Iḷampūraṇar.
Innā — Innā Nāṟpadu.
Iṟai. Ahap. — Iṟaiyanār Ahapporuḷ.
J. I. H. — The Journal of Indian History.
J. R. A. S. — The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society.
Kaḷavaḻi — Kaḷavaḻi Nārpadu.
Kali — Kalittogai.
K. A. N. — K. A. Nilakanta Sastri.
Kuṟaḷ — Tirukkuṟaḷ.
Kuṟiñji — Kuṟiñjippāṭṭu.
Kuṟun — Kuṟuntogai.
Madurai — Maduraikkāñchi.
Malaipaḍu — Malaipaḍukaḍām.
Maṇi — Maṇimēkalai.
M. U. J. — Madras University Journal.
Mullaip — Mullaippāṭṭu.
Nach — Nachchinārkkiniyar.

Nāladi —Nālaḍiyār.
Nānmaṇi — Nānmaṇikkaḍigai.
Neḍunal — Neḍunalvāḍai.
Padiṟṟu — Padiṟṟuppattu.
Paḻamoḻi — Paḻamoḻi Nānūṟu.
Pari — Parimēlaḻagar.
Paṭṭina — Paṭṭinappālai.
Pērā — Pērāśiriyar.
Perumbāṇ — Perumbāṇ Āṟṟuppaḍai.
P. K. — Pāṇḍyan Kingdom.
Poruḷ — Poruḷadikāram.
Porunar — Porunar Āṟṟuppaḍai.
P. T. S. — P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar.
Puṟam — Puṟanānūṟu.
P. V. M. — Puṟapporuḷ Veṇbā Mālai.
Sēnā — Śēnāvaraiyar.
S. I. I. — South Indian Inscriptions.
Śilap — Śilappadikāram.
S. I. Polity — South Indian Polity.
Śiṟupāṇ — Śiṟupāṇ Aṟṟuppaḍai.
Śiṟupañcha — Śiṟupañchamūlam.
S. K. — S. Krishnawami Iyengar.
Smith — V. A. Smith.
Śol — Solladikāram.
Studies — Studies in Tamil Literature and History.
The Tamils — The History of the Tamils.
The Tamils, 1800 — The Tamils eighteen hundred years ago.
Tirumurugu — Tirumurugu Āṟṟuppaḍai.
Tol — Tolkāppiyam.
T. V. M. — T. V. Mahalingam.
V. K. — V. Kanakasabhai.
V. R. R. Dikshitar — V. R. Ramachandra Dikshitar.

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INDEX

Abdication 66-70
Āchārakkōvai 22
Āḍahamāḍam : Tiruvananta-puram, 373, 377
Ādaṅkoṭṭāśān, 3, 4
Adihaimān Neḍumān Añji 62, 85, 106, 146, 171, 180, 181, 350
Ādimandi 356
Ādirai 312
Aḍiyārkkunallār 23, 83, 98, 350, 353, 360, 361
Āḍukōṭpāṭṭu Cheral Ādan 50, 63, 225
Agambaḍiyār 262
Agastya 11, 23, 161, 266, 278
Agattiyam 347
Agriculture 235 ff
Ahalaṛai 168
Aham: literature 137, 342, 343, 351 352 ff
Ahanāḍu 167
Ahanānūṛu 12, 22. 179, 306, 308-311, 352, 375, 378
Ahappā 170
Ahapporuḷ 366, 368
Ahavalar 173
Ahavar 114
Aimperuṅkuḷu 95-101
Aindiram 31
Aiṅguṛunūṛu 12, 22, 261, 311, 351 ff., 375
Aintiṇai 305
Aintiṇai Aimpadu 22
Aintiṇai Eḻupadu 22
Aiyar 304, 306, 309
Ājivikas 382
Akkuran 63
Āl: worship of 140
Aḻagar malai 369, 373
Āḻakku: a measure 228
Ālañchēri 293
Alaric, the Goth 251
Aḻavai 226
Alexandria 248
Āḻi Keḻu Kaḍavuḷ: Śiva 370
Allaṅgāḍi: the evening bazaar 244
Aḻumbil Vēḷ 101, 222
Aḻundūr 293
Āḻvārs 376
Amaichchar: ministers 54, 101, 112
Amaichchu 102
Āmbal, an infinitely large number 227
Ambalakārar 262
Ambalam 118 ff, 366

Ambaṇam, a measure 217, 227, 228
Ambaṛāttūṇi 160
Ambassadors 104 ff
Aṇaṅgu 367
Andaṇar 99, 191, 192, 195, 270, 271, 274 ff, 276, 304
Andikkaḍai, *Vide* allaṅgāḍi
Aṅgāḍi : market place 121, 243
Aṅgaṇam 125
Anglo-Saxon Polity 265, 407
Animism 364
Añji 292
Aṇu : a linear measure 229
Appar : also Tirunāvukkaraśar 5, 9, 12
Āputtiran 201, 301
Aṛa Āḻi : The wheel of justice 90
Arabatta Nāvalar 350
Arabia 249
Aṛakkaḷam 191
Aṛakkaḷattu Andaṇar 69,93,114 191, 275
Aṛakkuḍi 264
Āralai kaḷvar : Highway robbers 246
Aṛam 192
Aran : Siva 276
Araṇ 99
Araṅgu : the gambler's den, 329, the stage - its dimensions etc. 357
Aṛaṅkūṛu Avaiyam 191
Aṛanūl 97, 279
Aṛappōr 146
Āṛaṛi Andaṇar 275
Araśan : Rājan 45 270,277,291
Araśu : tree-worship of 140
Araśu Kaṭṭil 81
Araśu Kaṭṭil Ērudal 81
Araṭṭan Cheṭṭi 292
Aravaṇa Aḍigaḷ 382
Aṛavōr : distinct from Andaṇar 275
Archaeology : as source material 14, 18, 19
Argaritic : Uṛaiyūr Muslin 250, 255, 322
Argaru : Uṛaiyūr 250
Ari 276
Arisil Kiḻār 63, 71, 225
Aṛivar : The wise ones 16, 275
Aṛivuḍai Nambi 61, 210
Ariyaṇai 53
Āriyapaḍai Kaḍanda Neḍuñ-jeḻiyan 56, 65, 72, 81, 183, 272, 288, 300, 314
Āriyappēḍiyar 73
Arjuna : and Pāṇḍyan Princess 23, 43, 303
Armoury 156 ff
Army 148 ff
Arrian 19
Artha Śāstra 14, 21, 38, 40, 60, 111, 112, 248, 256, 386, 402, 403
Artisan 294
Aruhan 375
Aruṇagiri 344
Arundhati 283, 309, 355
Aṛuvai 240
Aṛuvai Vaṇigar 240

Aṟuvai Vīdi 240
Āryakūttar 264, 356
Aryanization 265, 266
Āryans 252, 262, 266, 308
Āśān: Purohit 54, 68, 93 112, 280
Ascetics 274 ff
Ashṭamaṅgalam 89
Ashṭa Pradhān 98
Ashṭa Sahasras 289
Āśiriyar: the various teachers of a dancer 357
Aśoka 133, 175
Aśokan edicts 16, 38, 40
Āśrama 188
Astrologer 112, 113, 280
Astronomy 353
Aśvamēdha 57, 281
Aśva Vāriyar 211
Ātandōmbal: Cattle lifting 143
Āṭṭan Atti 356
Augustan Age 13; of Tamil literature 25, 248
Augustus 18, 20, 225, 324, 327; temple of 20, 252
Auvaiyār 54, 62, 64, 106, 118, 146, 285, 302, 343
Avai: Sabhā 52, 56, 118 ff., 192, 193, 201, 202
Avaiyam 4, 8, 9, 192
Avaiyattān 120, 194
Āvaṇam 121, 234
Avanti 239
Āvūr Mūlangiḻār 236, 281, 377
Āy 62; Aṇḍiran 89
Āyakkaṇakkar 114, 222, 235
Āyakkārar 223
Āyam 98, 216, 222
Ayan: 276
Āyar: 271, 295
Āy Eyinan 179, 180
Āyiram 226
Āykuḍi 62

Bacon 127
Balarāma: Baḷadēva 414
Banner 84 ff
Barter 243
Battles 178 ff
Becare: *Vide* Nelcyndon 249
Beliefs and Superstitions 334 ff.
Bell of justice 190
Benevolences 218
Bentham 385
Bēri Sattanār 242
Betel leaves 316
Bhadrabāhu 380
Bhāratam: by Perundēvanar, 22, Villiputtūrār, 344
Bharata Nāṭya 359
Bhils: the bowmen 263
Bhūta Pāṇḍyan 301, 312
Bible, the 247
Bindusāra 17, 133
Bow: the Chēra emblem 131
Brahatcharaṇas 289
Brahmam 282
Brahmatāyam 63, 214
Brāhmi 416
Brahmins 16, 65, 234, 252, 262, 267ff., 274ff, 304, 309, 361; their paraphernali a 271

Brahmi 266
Buddhamitra 42
Buddhists as Tamil authors 380
Bull: as royal emblem 75
Burial: modes of 331

Camara: Kumari 250
Carp, the double: the Pāṇḍyan emblem 75, 131 225
Caste 188; Caste system 262 ff
Catamaran 253
Catherine 70
Cattle-lifting 142 ff
Cavalry 130, 148 ff
Cerobothra 250
Ceylon 133, 233; Ceylon chronicles 21
Champa 320
Chandradattan 292
Chandragupta Maurya 19, 41, 141
Chandravalli 18
Chariot 74, 91, 92; the Chariot force 130, 155, 156
Cheṇḍuveḷi 125
Chēran Poṟaiyan 176
Chēri 121, 124, 280, 284
Chetti 292
China 239; Chinese Coin 18
Chōḷās, the Imperial 252
Chōḷia Ēnādi 95:
Clowns 114 ff
Coiffure 325
Coinage 224 ff
Colandia 253
Colchis: Koṟkai 250
Comeri: Kumari 250
Communities other than Brahmins 290 ff
Comte, Auguste 126
Conch 75, 160
Coronation 45 ff
Cosmetics 322 ff
Cottanara: Kuttanadu 255
Courtesans 317 ff
Courtiers 114 ff
Court of Justice 190 ff
Court, the royal 52 ff
Crest, the royal 84 ff
Crime and Punishment 200ff
Crown 76,77
Cubic measures 228

Dakshiṇāmūrthy 203
Dakshiṇapatha 21
Damirica: Tamiḻagam 250; also Damirike
Damirike: *Vide* Damirica
Dāmōdaranār 242
Dance 356: native and exotic 358; the eleven themes of 369
Daṇḍattalaivar 293
Darwin 126
Dasaratha 414
Death: of the king 66-70
Dharmāsanam 191
Dharmāsanattukkaruttākkaḷ 191
Dharmasāstras 187
Dharma Vinaiñar 114
Dhar(u)mi 5
Dinnaga 29
Divākaram 97
Divine right theory 393

Drama 356
Draupati 136, 303
Draviḍa Saṅgha 11
Dravidians 262, 265
Dreams 334, 335
Dress 322 ff
Drum 74, 75, 81 ff
Dūtar 104 ff ; dūtu 104 ff
Dvijas : the twice borns 268

Economic activities 230 ff
Education 336 ff
Egypt 216, 251
Ēlādi 22, 99
Elephant, corps 130, 148 ff
Elephant, the royal 75, 91
Eligibility for kingship 45 ff
Elizabeth I 70
Eḻumuḍiāram 77
Eḻumuḍi mārban 77
Eḻupon (man) kōttai 184
Ēma Muraśu 82
Emblems, the royal 75 ff, 223, 265
Empire: the concept of 399
Ēnādi : title 92 ff., 150, 317
Ēnādinātha Nāyanār 94
Ēnādippāḍi 94, 317
Enādi Tirukkiḻḻi 42
Eṇṇāyiram 289
Eṇpērāyam 95 ff., 223
Entertainments 328 ff
Epigraphy : as source material 15 ff
Ēppuḻai 170
Ērambam 341
Eriparandeḍuttal 164
Eru : manure 238
Erumai ūran 181
Ēru taḻuvudal : Bull fighting 328
Espionage 108 ff., 203
Eṭṭi : title 92, 93
Eṭṭuttogai 33, 346
(Vēḷ) Evvi 181
Eyinar 118, 122, 133, 145, 151, 263, 264

Fa-hien 14, 21
Fatalism 398
Feudatories 37, 44
Figures of speech 347
Fine arts 355 ff
Fish : symbol of, as one of the regalia 75
Flag 74 ff; the military flag 130
Fly whisk 75, 89, 90
Food and drink 319 ff
Footwear 325
Fortress 163 ff
Fractions 227
Freud, Sigmund 127
Funerary rites 331 ff

Gajabāhu I 28
Gajabahu-Śeṅguṭṭuvan synchronism 14, 21, 28
Gallus 20
Gambling 329
Games 328 ff
Gaṇapati : *Vide* Gaṇēśa
Gāndharvam 303, 305

Gandhi 127
Gaṇeśa 375, 376, 414
Gaṇgas 38
Garland : royal emblem 87, 88, 89; totemic 327
Gibbon 384
Gods: Tamil and Sanskrit parallel names 371
Gotra names 280, 281, 303
Government at the capital 37 ff
Grantha 418
Greeks 251

Hammurabi 204
Harappa 266
Hathigumpha inscription: of Khāravēla 16
Hebrews 247
Helen 136
Herakles 48, 302
Hero-stones 17, 137 ff
Hippalus 248
Hiuen Tsang 14, 21, 171
Hobbes 385
Horse: one of the regalia 74, 91
Houangtche: Kānchi 21
Hun: a coin 18

Iḍai Chēri 124
Il 121
Ilai: betel leaves 98
Iḷai: a line of defence 170
Iḷampūraṇar 23
Iḷandattan 64, 109, 203
Iḷaṅgō (aḍigaḷ) author of the Śilap 29, 53, 166, 244, 286, 314, 327, 351, 356, 359, Prince 45, 49, 72, 109, 131, 218, 310
Iḷaṅgo Vēṇmāḷ 116
Iañjeḻiyan 43, 46
Iḷañjēral 46
Iḷañjēral Irumpoṛai 50, 58, 63
Iḷaṅkaṇḍīrakkō 195
Iḷaṅkōśar 46
Iḷaṅkumaṇan 46, 62
Iḷavandihai 121
Iḷaveḷimān 46
Iḷavichchikkō(n) 46, 195
Iliad 136
Imayavaramban 41, 77
Imayavaramban Neḍuñjēral Ādan 45, 50, 62, 156, 176, 179, 183, 320; Kuḍakkō 178
Indica, the 19
Indra 368; the festival of 221, 366, 368, 369, 37, 373
Industry 239 ff
Infantry 151 ff
Iniya Nāṛpadu 22, 23
Iñji 170
Innā Nāṛpadu 22, 32, 285
Innilai 22
Iṛaiyanār Ahapporuḷ: *Kaḷavial* 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 21, 304; *Urai* 23, 27, 197, 199, 238, 298
Iṛaiyili nilam 214
Iṛaiyōn 372
Iravu 210, 217
Irukkai : the royal presence 52
Irumbiḍarttalaiyār 69
Ivuḷi Maṛavar 98, 101

Iruṅgō Vēṇmāḷ 53, 181
Iśai : the seven tunes 359

Jainas 321; as authors of Tamil literature 380
Janaka 414
Jāti 267
Java 216
Jayaṅkoṇḍār 137
Jehangir 70, 74 fn
Jus Connubium 272, 291, 293

Kā 63, 228
Kachchu 98
Kaichchāḍu : gloves 159
Kaḍai kāppaḷar 98, 101
Kaḍaluḷ māinta Iḷamperum Vaḷudi 67
Kaḍamai 209
Kaḍambu : tree 92, 156, 180, 366, 367 tribe 186, 263, 273
Kaḍāram 216
Kaḍavuḷ 366
Kaḍuṅgōn 13
Kaḍimaram : the tutelary tree 92, 140
Kaḍiya neḍu Vēṭṭuvan 64
Kaḍiyalūr Rudran Kaṇṇanār 101, 122
Kahsu 229, 238
Kaikkiḷai : a love situation 305, 343, 345
Kaikkōḷar 262
Kainnilai 22
Kākkaipāḍiniyam 341, 350
Kākkaipāḍiniyār 'Nachcheḷḷaiyār 63, 225, 301
Kaḷabhras 11, 30
Kāḷadar 125
Kāḷagam: cotton textiles 239; country 255
Kaḷaikkūttar 264, 356
Kālaimuraśu 82, 217
Kalam karai ilaṅgu chuḍar: lighthouse 154
Kaḷaṅgāikkaṇṇi Nārmuḍichchēral 50, 63, 76, 175, 180
Kaḷaṅgu 116
Kaḷañju 18, 119
Kaḷarchikkai: *Vide* Kaḷaṅgu Kaḷāttalaiyār 178, 179
Kaḷavaḷi 137
Kaḷavaḷi Nāṛpadu 12, 32, 33, 80, 137, 167, 182
Kaliṅgam: Country 16, 239, 256; Cotton textiles 239, 245, 256, 324
Kaliṅgarāyan 81
Kaliṅgattupparaṇi 137
Kalittogai 5, 6, 9, 12, 22, 276, 286, 297, 311, 346 ff
Kaḷḷar 151, 262
Kaḷumalam 66, 183
Kāman 367, 373, 374, 378, 415
Kāmandaka 146
Kammāḷar 262
Kaṇaikkāl Irumpoṛai 66, 176, 182, 207
Kanaka Śuṛṛam 98, 101
Kaṇakkāyar: teacher 339
Kānappēr Eyil 182

Kānam 18, 63, 225
Kaṇayam 170
Kāñchi: town 121, 146, 160, 180, 233, 302; tree 237; a *Puṟam* situation 164
Kandakkōṭṭam: at Kāñchi 381
Kandāram 174,
Kandu 71, 365, 366
Kaṇi: astrologer 113, 280, 353
Kaṇiyan Pūṅguṉṟan 383
Kañjan: Kamsa 359
Kañjugam 55, 98, 107, 241
Kañjuga mākkaḷ 107, 110
Kañjuga Mudalvan 107, 110
Kaṇṇagi: wife of Kovalan 27, 65, 70, 81, 123, 138, 145, 190, 194, 196, 208, 220, 277, 292, 299, 300, 308, 309, 314, 334, 358, 374, 382; wife of Pēhan 71, 72, 343
Kaṇṇan 359
Kaṇṇan Puhundārāyattanār 242
Kaṇṇeḻuttāḷar 113
Kaṇṇeḻuttu: Variety of script 113
Kaṇṇuḷar: dancers 114, 356
Kapāṭapuram 6, 21
Kapilar 17, 32, 54 63, 67, 71, 146, 185, 284, 288, 327, 339, 343, 348, 377
Kāppiyāṟṟu Kāppiyaṉār 63
Kaṟai: tax, tribute 209
Karanattiyalavar 98, 101, 223
Kāraṇikan 199
Kari 193
Kāri 62, 292
Karikālaṉ 29, 49, 58, 61, 62, 66, 69, 87, 133, 173, 178, 179, 191, 193, 219, 226, 252, 282
Kāri Kiḻār 288, 293
Kāri Uṇḍikkaḍavuḷ 377
Kariyan 193
Kāriyāṟṟuttuñjiya Neḍuṅkiḷḷi 184
Kāriyāṟu 184
Karma 126
Kār Nāṟpadu 22
Kaṟpu 299, 300, 301, 305, 306, 383, 398, 401, 402
Karuma Kārar 98, 101
Karuma Vinaiñan 112
Karuṅgai oḻvāḷ Perumbēr Vaḻudi 157
Karuṅguḻalādanār 173
Karūr 121, 142
Kāśu 18, 226
Kaṭṭil 68, 81
Kaṭṭil Nīttapāl 66, 68
Kaṭṭūr 168
Kātyāyana 38, 43
Kaundi Aḍigaḷ 202, 286, 302
Kauṭilya 21, 22, 128, 146, 218, 248, 256, 385
Kavalai 123
Kāvalāḷar 204
Kāvalmaram 92, 140, 156, 180
Kavari 89, 90
Kavāṭa 21
Kāvidi 69, 92, 93, 103, 194, 223, 275, 293

Kāvirippūmpaṭṭinam 121, 142
Kavuriyar: the Pāṇḍyas 43
Kayavōy: harbour 254
Kēḍaham 159
Kēraḷa: Chērala 42
Khāravēla: the Hāthigumpha inscription of 16, 17
Kiḍaṅgu: moat 170
Kiḍuhu 159
Kiḻār 293
Kīḻkkaṇakku: Eighteen works 12, 22, 33, 34, 346, 351
Kiḻḷi: the Chōḻa 42
Kiḻḷvaḻavan 42, 203, 236
King, the: 39 ff., Kingship origin of 39, 40
Kō 39, 73; God and King 392
Kōḍai: hills 64
Koḍaimaḍam 64
Koḍi 85
Koḍinilai: flag staff 85
Koḍivaḻi 123
Koḍu Koṭṭi 358, 359, 415
Koḍuṅkōl 78
Koḍuṅkōnmai 78, 209
Kōil 70, 73; Kōilāḻ 73
Kōilmākkaḻ 70
Kōl 39, 77 ff
Kōmahan: prince 47, 72
Kōn: Kō, the King 39
Koṅgiḻaṅkōśar 46
Koṅgu maṇḍalam 120
Koṅgu nāḍu 46, 121
Koṅguvēḻ 23
Koṅkāṇam 179
Kōnmai: Kingship 3 9
Kōpperum Chōḻan 46, 66, 73
Kōpperundēvi 73, 115, 190, 300, 314, 334
Koṛkai 20, 72, 121, 156, 205
Koṛṛam: royal valour 390
Koṛṛavai 172, 178, 264, 368,
Koṛṛavan 44
Kōśar 16, 38, 46, 152, 154, 292
Kōṭi 227
Kōṭṭam 121
Koṭṭanara: *Vide* Coṭṭanara
Kōvalan 27,123,200,201,206, 273, 286, 292,295,309,318, 327,382,389,398
Kōvalūr 62, 181
Kōvūr Kiḻār 64, 106, 109 131, 147, 184, 203, 293, 343
Kōyil: palace and temple 41
Krishṇa 296,359,413,414
Kshatryas 268, 272, 277, 291
Kuḍaināṭ Koḻal 80
Kuḍai Veṇkoṛṛa 78 ff
Kūḍal 8, 9, 10
Kūḍalur Kiḻār 284
Kuḍandai *207*, 224
Kuḍa Pulaviyanār 219
Kuḍavar: the Chēras 41, 43
Kuḍavāśal 207
Kuḍavāyil 182, 207
Kuḍavāyir Kōṭṭam 207
Kuḍi 99
Kuḍumiyāmalai: music inscription 17
Kūḻ 99
Kūḻai 154

Kuḷamuṟṟattuttuñjiya Kiḷḷivaḷavan *213*
Kulasēkhara Pāṇḍyan *195*
Kuḷi *27*
Kūḷiyar *115*
Kulōttuṅga I *137*
Kumaṇan *62*
Kumari *201, 373*; Cape Comorin *38, 301*
Kumarikkūttu *358*
Kumarippaḍai *150*
Kumaṭṭūr Kaṇṇanār *62, 320*
Kūni *319*
Kuppāyam *153*
Kuṟaḷ *22,31,60,78,100,102 104,105,106,108-112,118, 120,138,146,148,149,152, 157,166,191,198,205,215, 217,218,238,246,275,278, 279,291,313,337,348* ff,*385, 386,398,401* ; on the army *146,147,149*; on education *337* ff
Kuravai *296, 359*
Kuṟavar *262,264, 273*
Kuṟi edirppai *234, 243*
Kuṟiñji *137*; land *261* ff, *352, 366*; love situation *305*
Kuṟiñjikkali *348*
Kuṟiñjippāṭṭu *22, 31, 351*
Kūṟṟam: territorial division, *121*; Yama *371*
Kuṟṟam Kaḍidal *205*
Kuṟumuḍi *293*
Kuṟuntoḍi magaḷir *70*
Kuṟuntogai *22, 233, 285, 351, 352*
Kūttar *356*
Kūttu *356*
Kūttuḷ Paḍuvōn *53*
Kuṭṭuvan Chēral *63*
Kuṭṭuvar: the Chēras *41*
Kuyattiyār: of Venni *179*
Kuyiluvar *114*

Land: measures of *227*
Land revenue *209* ff; rate of *211* ff
Law and justice *187* ff, *399*
Legends: as source material *23, 24*
Legislation *187*
Linear measures *229*
Literature: as source material *19* ff; Tamil *Saṅgam* *341* ff
Locke *385*
Louis XIV *69*

Māḍalan *70, 175, 288*
Mādari *202, 295, 358*
Mādhavi *65, 299, 318, 319, 327, 356, 382*
Madurai. On the Vaigai *3, 5, 6, 9, 12, 48, 70, 72, 89, 121-124, 142, 196, 228, 233, 239, 244, 256, 277, 282, 294, 317, 378, 382*; mint at *18, 19, 21, 26, 43*
Madurai Kāñchi *4, 22, 57, 95, 97, 108, 122, 124, 167, 173, 181, 191, 244*

Madukkoḷ Veḷvi: Śōma yajna *58*
Madurai Maruḍaniḷanāganār *4*
Madurai Pērālavāyar *312*
Madurai, Ten *6*
Madurai Tamiḻa Kūttanār *356*
Māduram *248*
Māgadar *115*
Magadha *239, 296, 415*
Mahābhārata *14, 21, 38, 40, 136, 385, 413*
Mahā prastānam *67*
Maharattas *239*
Mahaṭpārkāñchi *136, 137*
Mahāvamśa, the *14, 21*
Mahendra Varman I *17, 382, 414, 415*
Mahmud: Of Ghazni *64* fn
Maindan: Of Ālañjēri *25* fn
Makkaḷ tāyam *70*
Malai nāḍu *39*
Malaipaḍukaḍām *8, 22, 139, 301*
Malaiyamān *17, 288*
Malaiyar: the Chēras *41*
Malar Vanam *121*
Māḷava *296*
Maḻavar *133*
Maḻavarāyan *81*
Malaya *133, 239, 256*
Malayamān *64, 203*
Malayamān Tirumuḍi Kāri *91, 156*
Malik Kafur *133*
Mallar *133*
Māmūlar *16*
Maṇai *121*
Maṇḍalam *120, 121*
Maṇḍala talaivar *293*
Maṇḍilam *120*
Maṇḍila mākkaḷ *120*
Mandirakkaṇakkar *69, 113*
Mandira Ōlai *113*
Maṅgalāpuri *374*
Māṅguḍi Kiḻār *172, 186, 273*
Māṅguḍi Marudanār *54, 289*
Māṇikkavāchagar *342*
Maṇimēkalai: epic *4, 12, 22, 26* ff., *95, 97, 122, 208, 301, 312, 314, 318, 321, 332, 346, 367, 372, 381, 382*; Mādhavi's daughter *203 302*
Manjāḍi *18*
Mannan *44, 76*
Maṇṇuḍai Muḍaṅgal: Sealed epistle *114*
Manṟam *71, 118* ff., *139, 145 190, 193, 196, 264, 294, 341, 366*
Manṟu *118*
Mantri *94, 101*
Manu *204, 212, 315, 316*
Manu Nīti Kaṇḍa Chōḻan *190, 196, 204*
Maṟakkuḍi *135, 264*
Maṟaṅkaḍai Kūṭṭia Tuḍinilai *134*
Māṟar: the Pāṇḍyas *43*
Maṟarvar: *133, 151, 262*
Maravuri *240*
Mārāyam, title *92, 93, 150*
Marriage *302* ff
Marudakkali *310*

Marudam, tree *237, 327*; land, *237, 260, 261, 322*; situation, *305, 317*
Marudan Iḷanāganār *310*
Marumān : nephew *47*
Maruttar *97*
Maruvūrppākkam *245*
Marx, Karl *126, 385*
Marxists *126*
Mary *70*
Mathematics *338*
Mativaṇan *350*
Mattavilāsa Prahasanam 382
Ma-twan-liu *21*
Mauryan Polity *206*
Mauryas: and the south *16, 17*
Māvaḷattān *112, 329*
Māyōn *366* ff
Medicine *353*
Megasthenes *14, 19, 26, 40, 48, 141, 222, 249, 311*
Meimmaṛai *153, 159*
Meippai *116*
Mēlkaṇakku *352*
Meykaṇḍār *384*
Miḷai *169*
Miḷalaikkūṛṛam *182*
Mīnas *263*
Mīnavar : The Pāṇḍyas *43* ; the fishermen *263, 293*
Miñili *179, 180*
Ministers *101* ff
Mint *225*
Miscellaneous Officials *113, 114*
Modura : Madurai *249*
Mohenjodaro *266*
Mōhūr *16, 92, 180*
Moon : Worship of *44, 368*
Mōsi : Kīran *90*
Muḍali : title *95*
Muḍamōsi *253*
Muḍaṅgal *114*
Muḍi *76, 77*
Muḍi Kavittal *76*
Mūdil *293*
Mūdil Maḥaḷ *134*
Mūdil Peṇḍu *134*
Mudirai : hills *62*
Muḍi Śūṭṭal *76*
Mudukaṇṇan Śāttan *185, 382*
Mudumoḻikkāñchi 22
Mūdūr *121*
Mukkāval Nāṭṭu Āmūr Mallan *183, 184, 330*
Mullai, land *39, 260, 261, 327*; flower *306*; Aham situation *305*
Mullaippāṭṭu 22, 280, 351
Municipal and Village government *117* ff
Munnūrppodiyil *118*
Munṛuṛai Araiyanār *199, 223, 274, 285*
Muṛai *193, 198*
Muṛai Mudal Kaṭṭil *45*
Muraśu *81 - 83*
Muraśu Kaṭṭil *81, 82*
Muṛi *114*
Muṛṛūṭṭu *234*
Murugan *80, 89, 137, 157; 358, 366* ff, *375, 376, 415*; His abodes *369*

Music *359* ff
Musical instruments *360* ff
Musiri *121, 156, 186, 233, 250,252,255*
Muttaraiyar, Peru *33*
Muttūr Kūṟṟam *182*
Mūvan *176*

Nachchinarkkiniyar *4* fn, *7, 9, 11, 23, 33, 47, 58, 97, 104,108,114,115,118, 163, 172, 184, 194* fn, *278, 280, 283,293,307,353,367*
Nāḍu *121*
Naḍukal *138, 139, 312, 314*
Nagai Pulavar *114*
Nagai Vēḷambar *114*
Nagar *73, 121*
Nagarmāndar *98, 101*
Nāgas *262, 365*
Nakkīrar *5* fn., *286, 339, 377*
Nāladiyār 12, 22, 33, 227, 278, 288, 331, 349, 375
Nāḷangāḍi : the morning bazaar *244*
Nalaṅkiḷḷi *132,147,184,218, 382*
Nāḷavai *52*
Nāḷi *228*
Nāḷigai *58, 59, 228*
Nāḷigai Kaṇakkar *113*
Nāḷigai Vaṭṭil *113, 228*
Nāḷirukkai *52*
Nallanduvanār *352*
Naḷḷi *62*
Nallūr *62*
Nalluruttiranar *329*
Nāḷ mahiḷ irukkai *52*
Nāṅgūr *293*
Nānmāḍakkūḍal *9*
Nāṇmaṅgalam *51*
Nānmaṇikkaḍigai *22*
Nannan *57,175,179,180,195, 200,202,301*
Nappaśalaiyār *156*
Narasimha Varman I *133, 414*
Nariverū talaiyār *383*
Nārmaḍi *240*
Nāṟperuṅkuḷu *97*
Nāṟṟiṇai *12,22,353,375,377*
Naṭarāja *415*
Nāṭpali *139*
Natural History, the, by Pliny *20*
Neura *250*
Navira: hill *63, 377*
Ñāyil *170*
Neḍumbāratāyanār *68, 112*
Neḍunalvāḍai *22*
Neḍuñjeḷiyan *49,130,131,176, 181, 194, 201, 203, 206, 208, 219, 372*
Neduñjēral Ādan *62*
Neḍuṅkiḷḷi *109, 132, 147, 184, 203*
Neḍuntogai 182
Neidal *260, 261, 366*; flower *327*; situation *305*
Nelcyndon *250*
Nērivāyil: battle of *180*
Neṭṭimaiyār *175*
Ney *98*
Nikaṇḍu *341*

Nīlakaṇṭan of Muśiri *6*
Nilan *110*
Nilandaru Tiruviṛ Pāṇḍyan *4*; as Tirumāl *4*
Nimittar *97*
Nīr Viḻā *378*
Nitrias *186*
Nittār *275, 279*
Nōnbu: penance *379*
Noose *75*
Nuham *125*
Nūl: Aṛanūl *187*
Numismatics: as source material *14, 18*
Nūṛ-āyiram *227*
Nurjehan *70*
Nyāyamuraśu *83*
Nyāyapravēśa 28

Ōḍam: boat *253*
Ohandūr *65*
Okkūr Māśāttiyār *134*
Ōlai *113*
Ōlai mandiram: Official *113*
Ōlakkam *52*
Omens *163, 334, 335*
Onnārtterupporuḷ *215*
Ōrampōgiyār: On 'dutas' *106*
Ōrēruḻavan *233*
Ōri *62, 292*
Ornaments *322* ff
Oṛṛar *97, 108* ff
Oṛṛu *108* ff
Ōviyam : painting *355*

Paḍagu : boat *253*
Paḍai *74, 130, 148* ff., *156*
Paḍaikkalakkoṭṭil *160*
Padai maḍam *167*
Paḍaittalaivar *98, 99, 101, 150*
Paḍai Vīḍu *168*
Paḍaiyilar *223*
Padakku *228*
Paḍam *153*
Pādāṇ *164*
Padineṇkiḻkkaṇakku 34
Padiṛṛuppattu 12, 22, 32, 47, 48, 50, 62, 76, 220, 228, 281, 332, 349, 351.
Pahṛi : boat *253*
Paitiram *47*
Pākkam *121, 162*
Pākku *98*
Pakkuḍukkai Nankaṇiyār *279*
Pāḻ : Zero *227*
Palace *71, 121, 190*
Palace establishment *70* ff
Palaesimundus *233*
Palahai : Shield *159*
Pālai *137, 305*
Pālai Gautamanār *63, 281*
Paḻaiyan *92, 175, 180, 183*
Palam *229*
Paḻamoḻi 22, 196, 199
Pāḻi *180*
Paḻikkarai *125*
Palkunṛakkōṭṭam *200, 236*
Pallam *227*
Paḷḷar *262*
Pallavās *30, 42*
Paḷḷi *121*
Paḷḷi Eḻuchchi Muraśam *83*

Palyāgaśālai Mudukuḍumi
Peruvaḻudi *4, 17, 58, 175, 281, 288, 372*
Palyānai Selkeḻu Kuṭṭuvan *50, 58, 63, 68, 112, 281*
Paṇ *360*
Paṇam : a coin *18*
Panambāranār *3, 9, 31*
Pāṇar *54, 65, 73, 118, 263, 273, 283, 285, 320, 361*
Paṇayam *234*
Pañcha mahā prādhānis *97*
Pañchamāvargha *97*
Pañcha pradāna *98*
Pañchavar : the Pāṇḍyas *43*
Paṇḍaiya *20, 40, 48, 302*
Pāṇḍaraṇgam *415*
Pāṇḍu : Of the Mahābhārata, a people in Madhya dēsa *43, 44*
Pāṇḍya kavāṭa *22, 40, 248*
Pāṇḍyam *44*
Pāṇḍya maṇḍalam *120*
Pāṇḍya Maṇḍilam *120*
Pāṇḍyan embassies : to Augustus *20*
Paṇikkaḻari : workshop *241*
Pan kou *14, 21*
Pāṇini *413*
Panniruṇaḍalam 161, 350
Paradakumarar *294*
Paradavar *133, 151, 253, 263, 293*
Paṛai *82*
Paṛaiyar *262, 263, 273*
Parambu *61, 147, 185, 186, 232, 284*
Paraṇar *29, 54, 63, 71, 179, 181, 211, 343*
Paraṇi *137*
Parāntaka Neḍuñjadayan *17*
Paraśurāma *23*
Pāri *17, 54, 61, 147, 185, 186, 232, 284, 292*
Parimēlaḻagar *23, 38, 104, 105, 152, 205, 211, 215, 274, 353, 354*
Paripādal 12, 22, 23, 350 ff, *377*,
Pārppān Kauṇiyan Viṇṭāyan *287, 377*
Pārppār *73, 273, 275* ff, *288* their duties *275, 276, 280*
Pārval *170*
Pāśaṛai *168*
Pastimes *328* ff
Pāṭaliputra *121*
Patañjali *413*
Pāṭṭaṅkāl *234*
Paṭṭimaṇḍapam *10*
Paṭṭinam *121*
Paṭṭinappālai 22, 62, 122, 124, 223, 226, 254
Pattuppāṭṭu 4, 12, 27, 33, 345, 349, 375
Pēhan *62, 71, 292*
Pērāśiriyar *7, 11, 33, 271*, fn, *353*
Percussion instruments *361*
Perfumery *327*
Peria Purāṇam 94, 297
Periplus, the 14, 20, 26, 38, 72, 239, 249, 250, 253, 255, 322, 374
Personal attendants 114 ff

Perumbāṇar 361
Perumbāṇāṟṟuppaḍai 22, 122, 246, 285
Perumchadukkattu Bhūtam : equated withGaṇèśa 375,376, 415
Perunāḷ 52, 57
Peru Nāḷirukkai 52
Perunchittiranār 62
Perunchōṟṟu Udiyan Chēral Ādan 379
Peruṅgadai 23, 72, 94, 95
Peruṅgaṇi : Astrologer 51,54, 69, 93, 113
Peruñjāttan 64
Peruñjēral Ādan 66, 178
Peruñjēral Irumporai 50,58,63, 90, 180, 181, 282, 350
Peruñjikkal 293
Peruṅkôppeṇḍu 53, 301, 312, 315
Peruṅkuṇṟūr kiḷār 63,71
Peruntalai Śāttanār 195
Peruntiṇai 305
Pērūr 121
Peutingerian tables 20,186,251
Pharaohs 268
Piḍavūr 293
Piḷḷaiyāṭṭu 50
Piṅgala Nikaṇḍu 95, 99
Piśir Āndaiyār 73, 210, 333
Pliny 14,20,26 233,248,255
Podiyil : rural meeting place 71, 118 ff., 175, 177, 366; hill 62
Poduca 250
Poduviyal 318
Political philosophy; Of the Śaṅgam Tamils 385 ff
Political state : its attributes 396
Pollution 336, 409
Pon : Hun 18, 226, 228
Pondicherry : 'Roman factory' at 18
Ponmuḍiyār 134
Poṟaiyar : the Chēras 41
Pōrppuṟam 183
Porunan 181
Porunar 73
Porunarāṟṟuppaḍai 22, 239, 351
Pōr(a)vaikkōpperunarkiḷḷi 183, 184, 330
Poygai Āḻvār 32, 33
Poygaiyār 32, 33, 137; different from Poygai Āḻvār 32,33, 376
Praetorian guard 152
Prison 206 ff
Prod 75
Proto-Gods : Of the Śaṅgam age 413 ff
Ptolemy 20, 26, 249
Pū 98
Public opinion 396, 397
Pudavu 125
Puhaḻ 45
Puhār 19, 72, 86, 122, 123, 156, 208, 220, 223, 233, 244, 245, 250, 251, 253, 292, 300, 321, 327, 367, 372, 373; 378, temples in 373
Pulavar 73
Pūḻi 175

Pūḻi Nāḍu *41*
Puli uṟai *160*
Pūḻiyār : the Chēras *41*
Pullāṟṟūr Eyiṟṟiyanār *46*
Puṇar kūttu : a name for the Saṅgam *4, 8*
Puṇyadiśa *67*
Puṟam : literature *342* ff
Puṟanānūṟu *4,12 22,23,32,40*
Puṟapporuḷ Veṇbāmālai *133,211*
Puṟattiṇai Iyal *108, 161*
Puravu *214*
Pūr kkō *352*
Puriśai *170*
Purohit *96,97,101,111,112, 279 303, 390*
Purōśu *112*
Putrakāmēshṭi *58, 282*
Pūvainilai *393*

Qutb-ud-din Aibek *64* fn

Rājarāja Chōḻan I *133*
Rājasūyam *57, 281*
Rājasūyam Vēṭṭa Perunaṟkiḷḷi *281*
Rājēndra I *133*
Rājēndra II *50*
Rākshasas *261*
Rāma *164, 303, 374, 413*
Rāmānuja *384*
Rāmāyaṇa *14, 21, 38, 40, 136, 261,413*
Rāvaṇa *164*
Regalia *74* ff
Regency *66* ff
Religion *363* ff
Rebulic, the *385*
Revenue : method of collection of *221* ff; sources of *209* ff
Revenue and Finance *209* ff
Rōhiṇi *307, 310*
Roman emperors *268*
Roman imperial coins *18, 225, 248*
Rome *183, 216, 248,, 249, 251, 252*; influence of Tamil art on *362*
Rousseau *385*
Royal expenditure *219* ff
Royal family *70* ff
Royal routine *52* ff
Rudrankaṇṇan *226*
Rudra Śarman *199*

Sāduvan *312, 321*
Sāgaradvaja Pāṇḍya *21*
Sālai *121*
Sāmaram *89*
Sambandar *10* fn, *12*
Samudra Gupta *87*
Śāndu: Cosmetics *98*
Śaṅgam, the Tamil *3* ff, *25,221*
the Talai *Śaṅgam* *6*
the Iḍai *Śaṅgam* *6*
the Kaḍai *Śaṅgam* *6,8,11,233*
Śaṅgaman *109*
Saṅgam anthologies *342* ff
Saṅgara *253*
Saṅgha, the Buddha *4*
Sañjayan *107*
Śaṅkara *384*

Śāṅṟōr *152*
Sāntikūthu *356*
Śaptāṅga theory *402*
Śarasvati *282*
Śastras *262*
Sati *302, 311* ff
Satiyaputras: the Kōśars *16.38*
Saṭṭai: *Vide* Kanjugam *55, 107, 241*
Śāttan, Śēnadhipati Ēnādi Āyina *94*
Śāttanār *28, 70, 327*
Śāttandai *184*
Sceptre *77* ff
Script: Ancient Tamil *416*
Sculpture *355*
Sea *75*
Secret Service *108* ff
Śeigunṟu *125*
Seḻiyar: the Pāṇḍyas *43*
Selvakkaḍuṅgō Vāḻiyādan *50, 63, 65, 288*
Sembiyan: the Chōḻa *42*
Semmai *192*
Śēnādhipati *93*
Sēnāpatiyar *97*
Śēnāvaraiyar *353*
Seṅgaṇān *33, 66*
Seṅguṭṭuvan *28, 29, 38, 45, 48, 57, 63, 65, 70, 73, 77, 92, 101, 107, 116, 133, 156, 166, 175, 176, 180, 183, 186, 208, 211, 220, 222, 233, 282, 288, 314, 351, 374, 376*
Śeṅkōl *77, 78, 198*
Seṅkōnmai *198*
Śenni: the Chōḻa *42*
Śeru: the prince *42*
Śēyōn: Murugan *366, 370*
Shāṇār *262*
Śibi *42*
Siddhas *280*
Śilappaḍikāram *4, 6, 12, 22, 23, 26*ff, *54, 58, 69, 73, 80, 93, 95, 97, 98, 108, 113, 120, 122, 138, 144, 151, 156, 166, 191, 202, 217, 222, 244, 264, 273, 275, 286, 292, 294, 297, 300, 313, 317, 332, 341, 344, 346, 350, 357, 359, 361, 367, 369, 371, 377, 382, 383, 389*
uraiperukaṭṭurai *21*
Simhavishṇu *13, 30*
Sinam: Silk fabric *239*
Sinnamanūr plates *17*
Śiṟai *207, 240*
Śiṟaikkoṭṭam *207*
Śiṟanda Śirṭṭi Mannu Maṇgalam *51*
Śirūr: hamlet *121, 122*
Śiṟupāṇāṟṟuppaḍai *22*
Śiṟupanchamūlam *22*
Śitā *136*
Śittalai Śāttanār *242, 351*
Siva *5, 157, 202, 281, 310, 359, 365, 366, 368, 370, 371, 375, 376*; attributes of *372*
Slavery *296* ff
Smārtas *289*
Smithy *294*

Social life of the *Saṅgam* Tamils *259* ff
Society, *Saṅgam* Tamil *259* ff
Solomon *247*
Sōma: Kubhera *371*
Sopatma: Sadras *250*
Sources of Tamil history *14* ff
Spartan Polity *265*
Spear: One of the regalia *75*
Spenglar, Oswald *126*
Spies *108* ff, *202*
Srāddha *333, 364*
Sravaṇa Belgoḷa *380*
Sri Pūjyapada *11*
Srīraṅgam *123*
Stala Vriksha: the 'local tree' *366*
Strabo *14, 20, 26, 38, 249, 324, 327*
Succession: to the throne *45* ff
Sūdras *268* ff
Sumatra *133*
Sun: Worship of *368*
Sundaramūrthy Nāyanār *202, 297*
Suṅgam *209, 215*
Sun God *44*
Surgery *353*
Śūrara Mahaḷir *367, 373*
Suṟṟam *101*
Suruṅgai Vīdi *124*
Sūtar *114*
Sword: One of the regalia *74, 83*

Taḍādagai Pirāṭṭiyār *48, 302*
Taḍāri *264*
Taḍuttāṭkoṇḍa Purāṇam 202
Tagaḍūr *62, 146, 180, 225*
Tagaḍūr yāttirai 12, 22, 181
Tahaḷi: a lamp *255*
Talaikkīdu: turban *107*
Talai Variśai *65*
Talaiyālaṅkānam *129, 166, 181*
Talaiyālaṅkānattu Neduñjeḷiyan *4, 17, 54, 87, 129, 130, 172, 176, 181, 208, 219, 289*
Talaiyaḷi *51*
Tāli *308, 310, 327* ; Aimpaḍai *310, 325*
Taḷḷā Viḷaiyuḷ *237*
Tāmappalkaṇṇan *329*
Tāmarai: a large number *227*
Tamil: the language *343*
Tāmraparṇi, Taprobane, Ceylon *16*
Tāṇḍavam *415*
Tandira Vinaiñar *114, 150*
Taṅgāl *65*
Tānaittalaivar: army chiefs *54, 150*
Taniśu *234*
Taṇmai *192*
Tabrobane: Ceylon *233*
Tār *154*
Tari *71*
Tāyam : dāyam 46
Tāyaṅkaṇṇanār *315*
Tax-remission *213*
Temple *371, 377, 381*
Tenna(va)r : the Pāṇḍyas *43*
Teru *121*
Tēvāram *5, 9, 12, 23, 30*

Throne 75, 81 ff
Tiberious 18
Tiger : Choḻa emblem 131
Time-Keeper 113
Timil : fishing boat 253
Tiṇaimālai Nūṟṟaimpadu 22
Tiṇaimoḻi Aimpadu 22
Tippāidal : Śati 312
Tirikaḍugam 22
Tiru 355
Tirucheṅgunṟu 123
Tirukkōvaiyār 342, 343
Tirukkōvalūr : inscription at 17
Tirumahaḷ 358, 359
Tirumāl 65 90, 296, 358 ff
Tirumandiram 275
Tirumurugāṟṟuppaḍai 22, 118, 351, 367, 369, 370
Tirunāvukkavaśu Nāyanār : also Appar 5, 12
Tiruppuhaḻ 344
Tiruttoṇḍar Purāṇam 297
Tiruttāṇḍaham 11
Tiruviḻaiyāḍal Purāṇam 48
Tiruvāymoḻi 30
Titiyan 181
Titles and honours 92 ff
Tittan 183
Toḍas 259
Toḍi : a weight 229, 238
Tōḍu 114
Togai : Śaṅgam-Kūḍal 10
Tolkāppiyam 3, 9, 12, 22, 27, 31, 33, 34 40, 45, 51-53, 74, 88, 89, 100, 104, 108, 143, 148, 157, 161, 162, 164, 267, 271, 273, 277, 298, 302, 304, 305, 306, 308, 311, 312, 346, 347
Tolkāppiyar 3, 75, 161, 271, 272, 304, 366
Tolls 209, 215
Tolstoy 127
Toṇḍaham : a bugle 370
Toṇḍaimān 106, 146, 160, 180
Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam 38, 120, 121
Toṇḍaimān Iḷandiraiyan 122, 283
Toṇḍaināḍu 120, 121
Toṇḍi 176, 233
Tortoise : a royal emblem 75
Totemic garlands 40
Towns and the Countryside 117 ff
Toynbee, Arnold 126
Trade, 242 ff; foreign 246 ff; inland 242 ff
Treasury 221 ff
Trial by Ordeal 198
Tśien han chou 21
Tuḍiar *263*, 273
Tuhil 255
Tulākkōl 228
Tulām 57, 228
Tuḷu : Nāḍu 46; warriors 152
Tumbai 162, 163, 164
Tuṇaṅgai 358
Tūṅgukaṭṭil 81
Tuṇi : textile cut-piece 240
Tūṇi 228
Tunna-gārar : tailors 241
Tupper, M.F. 349

Tuṟakkam : The Valhalla of the Tamils 135,136,153,31 ,383
Turaṅga Vēḷvi 58
Turutti : blow pipe 241
Tutelary tree 92
Tyāga muraṡu 83
Tyndis : Toṇḍi 250, 251

Ugrapperuvaḻudi 12, 182, 352
Ūḻ : fate 383, 398
Uḻai irundār 101, 112
Uḻakku 227
Uḻattiyan 237
Uḻavar 237, 264
Uḻavu 238
Ulgu 209, 216, 226
Ulguḍaipperuvaḻi 123
Ulguporuḷ 215
Uḻiñai : a flower and a military situation 163, 164
Umai 371
Umaṇar 244, 294
Umbarkkāḍu 62, 211
Umbrella 74 ff, 79 ff, 130, 160
Upanayanam 282
Upanishads 384
Ūr 118, 121
Urai : arguments in a Court of law 191
Uraimuḍivu : Judgment 191
Uṟaiyūr 52, 72, 121, 123, 183, 192, 219, 233, 239, 255, 295
Uṟaiyūr Maruttuvan Dāmōdara nār 273
Uṟandai 1 2
Urimai 46
Urimai magaḷir 71
Urimai Suṟṟam 114, 297, 302
Ūr Kāvalar 124
Uṟu Poruḷ 215
Utopia 385, 401
Uttaragamana 67

Vaḍakkiruttal 66, 67
Vāḷ 66
Vaḍamas 289
Vaḍugar 183
Vāhai : flower, a military situtation 162, 163, 175, 307; place 179
Vaisyas 268 ff, 304, 306
Vajrakkōṭṭam : Indra's temple in Puhār 372
Vajranandi 11, 31
Valaiñar 263
Valaipparadavar 263
Vaḻaitaḍi 160
Vaḻavan : the Chōḻa 42, 43
Valayar 262, 293
Vāliyon: Balarama 368, 370, 374
Vallam 293
Vallambar 133
Vallaraṇ 237
Vaḷḷi 137
(Tiru)Vaḷḷuvar 45, 101, 103, 197, 200, 215, 231, 236, 237, 274, 275, 299, 313, 321, 329, 332, 335, 337, 347, 402, 404
Vāḻmaṇgalam 177
Vālmiki 21
Vaḻudi : the Pāṇḍya 43
Valvil Ōri 157

Vāṇan 359
Vānaras 261
Vānavar: the Chēras 41
Vānavaramban 41
Vandigar 115
Vaṇigar 92, 268
Vāṇikachchāttu: Caravan 246
Vañji: flower - a military situation 162, 163, 164; tree 237; town 54, 121, 181, 233, 375, 378
Vañjinam Kūṛal 154
Varāhan: a coin 18
Vari: tax 210
Vāri: tax 210, 211
Vāriyam 210
Vāriyar 210
Variyilār 93, 223
Varṇa 267
Varṇa-jāti complex 267
Varuṇan 366, 368, 371
Vātsāyāyana 345
Vaṭṭeḻuttu 113
Vayalūr 65
Vēḍaligar 114
Vēḍa(r)s: hunters 60, 259, 263, 264, 296
Vedas 262, 275, 282, 286, 304, 372, 404
Vedic Sacrifices 303
Vedic Samitis 100
Vedic Studies 339, 342
Vēdigai 125
Vediram: hill 134
Vēḷāḷās 93, 136, 150, 191, 237, 262, 266, 268 ff, 304
Vēlan Veṛi Āḍal 157, 367, 370
Veḷappārppār 286
Vēli: an area of land 236
Vēḷir 23, 38, 77, 136, 179, 266, 292, 293
Veḷḷaikkuḍināgaṇār 213
Veḷḷam: a measure 227
Veḷḷi: Silver 226
Veḷḷiambalattuttuñjiya Peruvaḻudi 8
Vēḷs 71, 136
Vēḻvi 379
Veḻvikkuḍi: grant of 12, 17, 94; village of 17
Vēndan: king 44, 76; Indra 366,
Vēṅgai mārban 182
Vēṅkaṭam 60, 369, 373
Veṇmaṇi 189
Venni (1) 66, 178, 179
Veṇ pon 226
Vēṛ Paḥṛaḍakkai Perunaṛkiḷḷi 157, 178
Veṛṛivērcheḻiyan 43, 70, 72
Versification : and prosody 344
Vetchy : flower — a military situation 162, 164
Vēṭṭavai 52
Vēy 108
Vibhīshaṇa 164
Vijaya 176
Villavan 101
Villavankōdai 101
Villavar : the bowmen 263; the Chēras 41, 43
Villiputtūrār 375
Viṇṇantāyan 64

Vīrakkal 137
Vīrakkaḻai 153
Viṛaliyar 264, 323
Vīra muraśu 83
Vīra Śōḻiyam 42
Viṛṛiruttal 51
Viṛṛiṛṛu Mūdeyinanār 307
Viruttam : metre 344
Vishṇugōpa 133
Viśvāmitra 23
Vyāśa 21

Wardrum 130, 160
Warehouses 254
Warfare : and military organization 126 ff; the ethics of 129 ff; Śaṅgam 235; theory and practice of; 148 the waging of; 161 the weapons of 130, 156 ff
Weights and measures 224
Wheel of royalty 75, 90
Widowhood 314
William III 70
Women, status of 297
Writing aids 340

Yāḻ : a harp 264, 303, 318, 378; varieties of 361
Yāḻôr 303
Yama 371
Yānaikkaṭ Śēy Māndaran Chēral Irumpoṛai 176, 181, 208, 352
Yānai Vīrar 98, 101
Yāpparuṅgala Virutti 55
Yavanas: Greeks and Romans 176, 183, 216, 239, 240, 251, 252, 254, 256, 295, 320, 325
Yavanachēri 251
Yavana guards 116, 168