

A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF JAINA TAMIL LITERATURE

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India is well known for its most ancient literature in different languages. Tamil is one of the languages of India having the claim for its ancient literature of great humanistic value. Scholars have proposed three phases in the Tamil Literature :

1. Literature prior to *Sangam* Age;
2. Literature of *Sangam* Age; and
3. Later Literature

Scholars are of the opinion that most of the literature belonging to the phase of prior to *Sangam* Age is lost. But, fortunately, we should say one work by name *Tolkāppiyam*, belonging to this age is surviving and it throws a flood of light not only on the grammatical structure of Tamil language, but also on the culture and the way of life of our Indian People in more particular about the Tamil people.

In addition to this, the *Siddha* literature "*Siddhar Pādalgal*", it appears has its own claim to be included in this first phase of Tamil Literature.

I. (1) Tolkāppiyam : This authoritative work on Tamil Grammar is supposed

to be written by a Jaina Scholar. This grammatical treatise consists of **three great chapters** - *Eluthu*, *Sol* and *Porul* i.e. letters, words and meaning respectively. Each chapter consists of nine *Iyals* or Sections. On the whole, it contains 1612 *Sūtras*. This forms the foundation of the later grammatical works in the Tamil Language. It is said that there are five commentaries on this treatise written by *Ilampuranār*, *Perāsiriyār*, *Senavaraiyār*, *Naccinarkkiniyār* and *Kallādār*.

(2) Kural : This ethical work is the most important work in Tamil Literature, composed in the form of couplets known as *Kural Venbā*. This work is considered so important by the Tamil people that they use various names to designate this great work, such as "*Uttara Veda*", "*Tamil Veda*", "Divine Scripture", "The great truth", "Non-denominational *Veda*" and so on. The work is claimed by almost all the religious sects of the Tamil land.

This book contains **three great topics** *aram*, *porul*, *inbam* i.e. *Dharma*, *Artha*

and *Kāma*. These three topics are interpreted and expounded as to be in thorough conformity with the basic doctrine of *Ahimsa*. This great ethical work, which contains the essence of Tamil Wisdom, consists of three parts and of 133 chapters. Each chapter contains 10 verses. Thus, we have 1330 verses in the form of couplets. There are commentaries which are written by *Ilampooranār*, *Kālingar* and many others. Of these, one is by the great commentator *Naccinarkkiniyār*, whose creation is unfortunately lost to the world. We can see the influence of this magnanimous work on such great literary pieces as :- *Neelakesi*, *Jeevaka Cintāmani*, *Cūdamani*, *Arungalacheppu* and many others.

- (3) **Nāladiyār** : *Nāladiyār* derives its name from the nature of the metre i.e. a Quatrain or 4 lines in *Venbā* metre. The work consists of 400 quatrains and is also called the "*Velālar - Vedam*", the *Bible* of the cultivators. It is not the work of a single author. Tradition supposes that each verse is composed by different Jaina monks and put together to form a single work.

The 400 isolated stanzas are arranged according to a certain plan after the model of the *Kural*. Each chapter consists of 10 stanzas. The first part on *aram* i.e. *Dharma* consists of 13 chapters and 130 quatrains. The second section on *porul* i.e. *Artha*, contains 26 chapters

and 260 quatrains. The third chapter on *inbam* i.e. *Kāma*, contains 10 quatrains. Thus 400 quatrains are arranged into 3 sections. This arrangement is attributed by one tradition to the *Pandya* King *Ugraperuvaludi* and by another tradition to the Jaina Scholar named *Padumanār*. There are 18 didactic works in Tamil language among which *Kural* and *Nāladiyār* are considered to be the most ancient and the important work.

- (4) **Aranericcāram** : "The essence of the way of virtue", is composed by a Jaina author by name *Thirumanaippadiyār*. He is said to have flourished in the last *Sangam* period. He describes in this great work, five moral principles, associated with Jainism. These principles go by the name of "*Pañca Vratās*", the five rules of conduct governing the house holder as well as ascetic. These are *Ahimsā*, *Satya*, *Asteya*, *Brahmacarya* and *Parimita - Parigraha*.
- (5) **Palamoli** : The author of *Palamoli* (means proverbs) is a Jain by name *Munruraiaraiyanār*. It consists of variable old sayings containing not merely principles of conduct, but also a good deal of worldly wisdom.
- (6) **Tinaimalai - Nutraimbadu** : The author's name is *Kanimoliyār*, who is also said to be one of the *Sangam* poets. This work treats of the principles of love and war and quoted freely by the great

commentator like *Naccinarkkiniyār* and others. Of the same author, the other book is called '*Elādi*'.

Elādi : "Cardamom and others" refers to the mixture of the perfumes of *Ela* (cardamom), *Karpuram* (Camphor), *Erikarasu* (the oderous wood), *Candanam* (Sandal), and *Tên* (honey). The name is given to this work because each quatrain is supposed to contain 5 or 6 such fragrant topics.

- (7) **Nānmanikkadigai** : "The Solver of the four gems" by the Jaina author by name "*Vilanbināthar*". This is also in the Venbā metre, well known in the other works. Each stanza deals with 4 important moral principles like jewels.

So far we have spoken of Jaina Ethical Poetries and next the *Kāvyas* shall be dealt with.

II. *Kāvyas* are classified into 2 main heads :-

- (a) **Mahā kāvyas** :- *Silappadikāram*, *Jeevaka Cintamani* and *Valaiyāpathi*.
- (b) **Laghu Kāvyas** :- *Yaśodhara Kāvyam*, *Cūdamani*, *Perum kathai*, *Nāga Kumāra-Kāvyam* and *Nilakesi*.

1. **Silappadikāram** : The author of this great work is a *Chera* prince, who became a Jaina ascetic by name "*Elango Adigal*". It is considered to be composed by about 2nd century A.D. and hence it

is having its place among the ancient Tamil Literature. Its impact of Tamil Society is vast and wide. From top most scholars to a man of lowest, it is known to all. '*Kannagi*' happens to be centre figure of this great work and happens to be "*Sita*" of Dravidian culture. She is deitified and worshipped.

The sentiment of pathas is well known throughout the work. In addition to this *Sambhoga Shringāra*, *Vipralambha Shringāra* and also the other *Rasas* are well brought up in the extraordinary prose *Kāvyā*. Not only this much, it potentially depicts what exactly is the *Grhastha Dharma*, but also presents a valuable material on all arts such as *vastu*, music, dance, folk dance music, global trade and economics. In fact, it is a store house of every thing that human life requires.

The work is having its own message and the same can be brought in three important valuable truths :-

- (1) If a king deviates from the path of righteousness even to a slight extent, he will go down and his kingdom meets with catastrophe. In this context, the couplet in *Tirukkural* is worth noting.

"*Seiyāmai Setrārkum innādha seidhapiṇ Viyā Vijuman tharum.*" 313

"Even in the case of a person, who causes injury without any provocation, retaliation by doing evil for evil is sure

to cause innumerable inescapable woes".

- (2) A woman walking on the path of chastity deserves adoration and worship not only by human beings, but also by *devas*.
- (3) The working of *Karma* is such that there is an inevitable fatality from which no one can escape, and the fruits of one's previous *Karma* must necessarily be experienced in later period.

This is an epic in other words "*Ārsa Mahā Kāvya*", just as *Rāmāyana* and *Mahābhārata* in Sanskrit. It consists of three great divisions and 30 chapters on the whole. The great work has a very valuable commentary by *Adiyarkkunallār*,

2. **Jeevaka Cintāmani** : Scholars consider this work as the best of the *Mahā Kāvyas*. This great romantic epic, which is at once the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* of the Tamil language is said to have been composed in the early youth of the poet named "*Tiruttakkadeva*". As the result of the challenge from his friendly poet of *Madurai Sangam*, the *Cintamani* was composed by *Tiruttakkadeva* to prove that a Jaina Monk can also produce a work containing '*Śringāra-rasa*. It was admitted on all sides that he had succeeded wonderfully well.

The work is divided into *Ilambakas*

or chapters. The first beginning with the birth and education of the hero, "*Jeevaka*", and the last ending with his *Nirvāṇa*.

The names of Ilambakas are :-

- (1) *Nāmagal Ilambagam*;
- (2) *Govindaiyār Ilambagam*;
- (3) *Gāndharvadattaiyār Ilambagam*;
- (4) *Guṇamālaiyār Ilambagam*;
- (5) *Padumaiyār Ilambagam*;
- (6) *Kemāsariyār Ilambagam*;
- (7) *Kanakamālaiyār Ilambagam*;
- (8) *Vimalaiyār Ilambagam*;
- (9) *Suramanjari Ilambagam*;
- (10) *Manmagal Ilambagam*;
- (11) *Pumagal Ilambagam*;
- (12) *Ilakkaṇaiyār Ilambagam*; and
- (13) *Mukti Ilambagam*.

This classic contains 3145 stanzas. An excellent edition containing a fine commentary by *Naccinarkkiniyār* is now available.

Five Laghu Kāvyas were composed by Jaina authors :-

1. **Yasodhara Kāvya** : Jainism advocates the observance of any vow by *Trikarana* - i.e. mind, speech and body. If any one of these is lacking, then it will not fulfil the observance of *vrata*. For Jains, *Ahimsā* is the fundamental *vrata*. This

means one should abstain from killing animals or in other words to avoid injury to any living beings. So, in this regard the *Ahimsā* is looked upon mainly in two forms :-

- (a) *Dravya Himṣā*
- (b) *Bhāva Himṣā*

Even though a person does not kill actually an animal, in other words, does not commit *dravya himṣā* and in his mind, out of *Rāga* or *Dvesa* thinks of killing, then there is *Bhāva Himṣā*. For the fulfilment of *Ahimsā Vrata*, both *Dravya Himṣā* and *Bhāva Himṣā* should be avoided. Even with *Bhāva Himṣā*, one commits as much of sin as with *Dravya Himṣā*.

In earlier days in *yāga* and *yagnās* there were offering of animals as *bali*. But, later on because of the influence of Jainism, a modification in offering animal sacrifice came up. As a result, animals made of flours were offered in the *yāga* and *yagnās*. But Jainism did not accept this as *Ahimsā*, as there was *Bhāva Himṣā* in it.

This *Yasodhara Kāvya* is centres around this thought and presents in a picturesque way, the sin how shall fractifies even with the *Bhāva Himṣā*.

2. **Cūlāmaṇi** : It is composed by the Jaina author and poet *Tholamolithevar*. *Cūlāmaṇi* resembles *Cintāmaṇi* in

poetic excellence. It contains 12 *sargas* and 2131 stanzas on the whole. According to Sri Damodaran Pillai, it must be earlier than some of the major *Kāvyas*.

3. **Perunkathai** : This work was named after the *Brhat Kathā* of *Guṇādhyā* written in what is known as *paisācabhāṣā*, a *prākṛit* dialect. The author is known as *Konguvelira* prince of the *Kongudesa*. The portions relating to the life of Prince *Udayana*, has taken by the author.

The story consists of 6 main chapters :

- (1) *Unjaik Kāṇḍam*;
- (2) *Lavanak Kāṇḍam*;
- (3) *Magadak Kāṇḍam*;
- (4) *Vattavak Kāṇḍam*;
- (5) *Naravahana Kāṇḍam*; and
- (6) *Turuvuk Kāṇḍam*, all relating to the rich life of *Udayana*.

4. **Nilakesi** : It is a controversial work dealing with the systems of Indian philosophy and it has an excellent commentary called, "*Samaya divākara*" by *Vāmana Muni*. *Nilakesi* which is one of the five *laghu kāvyas* in Tamil, is evidently an answer to *Kundalakesi*, the Buddhistic work.

It contains 10 chapters namely :

- (1) *Dharma-Urai Carukkam*;
- (2) *Kuṇḍalakesi Vāda Carukkam*;

- (3) *Arhacandra Vāda Carukkam;*
- (4) *Mokkala Vāda Carukkam;*
- (5) *Buddha Vāda Carukkam;*
- (6) *Ājīvaka Vāda Carukkam;*
- (7) *Sāṅkhya Vāda Carukkam;*
- (8) *Vaiśeṣika Vāda Carukkam;*
- (9) *Veda Vada Carukkam;*
- (10) *Bhūta Vāda Carukkam.*

It must be latter than the age of Kural and Kuṇḍalakesi.

III. Purāṇa Kāvyaś : *There are many purāṇa kāvyas among which two are very popular.*

1. **Meru Mandira Purāṇam :** It resembles in excellence of literary diction, the best of *kāvya* literature in Tamil. It is based upon a *purāṇic* story relating to *Meru* and *Mandira*. The author is *Vāmana Muni*, who lived in 14th century. It contains of 30 chapters of 1405 stanzas on the whole.
2. **Śrī Purāṇa :** It is written in an enchanting prose style in *Maṇipravāḷa*-mixed Tamil and Sanskrit. It is based on *Jinesena's* and *Guṇabhadra's Mahāpurāṇa* and is also further called *Trisaṣṭhisalākāpurusa carita* dealing with 63 prominent personalities - 24 *Tirthankaras*; 12 *Cakravartins*; 9 *Bala Bhadrās*; 9 *Vāsudevas*; 9 *Prativāsudevas* of the present *Avasarpinī* era. In Tamil, there is another work by name *Periyapurāṇam*

by *Sekkizar* which presents the stories of 63 *Nayanmārs*. The frame of which appears to be worked out on the model of *Mahāpurāṇa* or *Triṣaṣṭhi Śālāka puruṣa carita* of Jains.

IV. Prosody and Grammatical Literature :

1. **Yāpparungalakkārikai :** This work on Tamil prosody is by *Amṛtasāgara*. There is a commentary on this work by *Guna Sāgara*. It is considered as an authority on metres and poetic composition, and that it is used as such by latter writers are evident from the references to it found in Tamil Literature.
2. **Yāpparungala-Vrutti :** This is a commentary on *Yāpparungalakkārikai* written by the same author, *Amṛta Sāgara*. There is an excellent edition of this *Yāpparungala Vrutti* by the late S. Bhavanandan Pillai.
3. **Neminatham :** A work on Tamil Grammar by *Guṇavīra Pandita*. He was a disciple of *Vaccananda Muni* of *Karandai*. The object of this work is to give a short and concise account of Tamil Grammar, because the earlier Tamil works were huge and elaborate. It must be placed in the early centuries of the Christian era.

It consists of 2 main chapters :-

- (1) *Eluttadikāram*
- (2) *Solladikāram.*

It is composed in the well known *venbā* metre.

4. **Nannual** : *Nannul* means "The good book" and is the most popular grammar in Tamil Language. It is held only next to the *Tolkāppiyam* in esteem. It is by *Bavanandimuni*, who wrote this grammar at the request of a subordinate king called *Siya Ganga*. It consists of two parts, *Eluttadikāram* and *Solladikāram* which are sub divided into five minor chapters. *Mailainathar* has written a fine commentary on this work.

5. **Agapporulvilakkam** : It is written by *Nārkavirāja Nambi*. His proper name is *Nambi Nainār*, he was expert in 4 different kinds of poetic composition, he was given the title of *Nārkavirāya*. It is based upon the chapter on *Porul Ilakkanam* in *Tolkāppiyam*. It is an exposition of the psychological emotion of love and allied experiences.

V. Three important works on Tamil Lexicography : The three nighantus are

- (1) *The Divākara nighaṇṭu*;
- (2) *Pingala nighaṇṭu*;
- (3) *Cûḍāmaṇi nighaṇṭu*

1. **Divākara Nighaṇṭu** : This is written by *Divākara Muni*. At present it is not available.
2. **Pingala Nighaṇṭu** : This is written by *Pingala Muni*.
3. **Cûḍāmaṇi Nighaṇṭu** : This is written by *Mandalapurusa*.

The author refers to *Gunabhadraçārya*, a disciple of *Jinasenāçārya*, author of *Uttara Purāṇa* which is the continuation volume to Jainasena's *Ādipurāṇa*. It is written in *Viruttam* metre and contains 12 chapters. The **first** section deals with the names of Devas, the **second** with the names of human beings, the **third** with lower animals, the **fourth** with the names of trees and plants, the **fifth** with place names, the **sixth** dealing with the names of several objects, the **seventh** deals with the several artificial objects made by man out of natural objects such as metals and timber, the **eighth** chapter deals with names relating to attributes of things in general, the **ninth** deals with names relating the sounds articulate and inarticulate, the **eleventh** section deals with words which are rhyming with one another and hence relating to a certain aspect of prosody; the **twelfth** section is a miscellaneous section dealing with the groups of related words.

An old commentary by the late *Ārumukha Nāvalar* of Jaffna is a useful edition.

VI. Two miscellaneous works :-

1. **Tirunarrantādi** by *Avirodhi Ālvār*.
 2. **Tirukkalamagam** by *Udicidera*.
1. **Tirunarrantādi** : *Antādi* is a peculiar form of composition where the last word in the previous stanza becomes the first and the leading word in the next stanza. *Antādi* literally means "the end and the beginning". This constitutes a

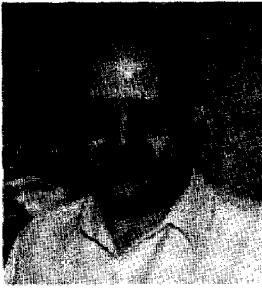
string of verses connected with one another by a catch word which is the last in the previous stanza and the first in the succeeding stanza. It is such a composition containing 100 verses. It is a devotional work addressed to god *Neminātha* of Mylapore. The author *Avirodhi Ālvār* was a convert to the Jaina faith.

2. **Tirukkalambagam** : *Kalambagam* implies a sort of poetic mixture where the verses are composed in diverse

metres. This besides, being devotional is also philosophical in which the author tries to discuss the doctrines of the rival faiths such as Buddhism.

Conclusion

Jainas contribution to Tamil Literature does not limit itself to *Kāvya*s, Grammar or prodody. It extends to *Sāstra* works such as Mathematics, *Jyotisa*, *Vaidhya*, Metallurgic and such other branches. This contribution has gained appreciation by one and all.



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