CHAPTER IV

METHODS TO SANSKRITISE

FOLK DEITIES
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Sanskritisation has been a major process of cultural change in Indian History and it has occurred in every part of the Indian subcontinent. It may have been more active at some period than at others, and some parts of India are more Sanskritisation than others; but there is no doubt that the process has been universal.¹

Even the people of folk tradition began to use some customs and habits of higher castes in order to elevate their social status. Karma, dharma, papa, maya, samsara and moksha are the examples of some of the most common Sanskrit theological ideas, and when the people become sanskritised these words occur frequently in their talk.²

The Vedic priests adopted different means to sanskritise the deities of folk tradition. Even though there are diversified characteristics between the Vedic and folk tradition, they wanted to induct these deities in Vedic scriptures. For this they created various sthalapuranas, puranas which emphasise the relation between these gods and goddesses with any one of the gods and goddess of Vedic religious tradition.

¹ M. N. Srinivas, Social Change in Modern India, Orient Longmann, New Delhi, 2005, pp. 21 – 22.
² ibid, p. 48.
4.1. Sanskritisation

The term Sanskritisation was introduced into Indian Sociology by M. N. Srinivas. The term refers to a process whereby people of lower castes collectively try to adopt upper caste practices and beliefs, as a preliminary step to acquire higher status. Thus it indicates a process of cultural mobility that is taking place in the traditional social system of India.

M.N. Srinivas in his study of 'The Coorg in Karnataka', found that lower castes, in order to raise their position in the caste hierarchy, adopted some customs and practices of the Brahmins and gave up some of their own which were considered to be 'impure' by the higher castes. For example, they gave up meat eating, drinking liquor and animal sacrifice to their deities. They imitated Brahmins in matters of dress, food and rituals. By doing this, within a generation or so they could claim higher positions in the hierarchy of castes. In the beginning M. N. Srinivas used the term 'Brahmanisation' in his book 'Religion and Society Among the Coorgs' (1971) to denote this process. Later on, he replaced it by 'Sanskritisation'.

Sanskritisation is the process by which a 'low' Hindu caste, or tribal or other group, changes its customs, ritual, ideology and way of life in the direction of a high, and frequently, twice-born caste. Generally such changes are followed by a claim to a higher position.

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3 C. N. Sankar Rao, Sociology - Principles of Sociology with an Introduction to Social Thought, S. Chand & Company Limited, New Delhi, 2005, p. 309.
in the caste hierarchy than that traditionally conceded to the claimant caste by the local community. The claim is usually made over a period of time, in fact, a generation or two, before the arrival conceded. Occasionally a caste claims a position which its neighbours are not willing to concede. This type of disagreement between claimed and conceded status may be not only in the realm of opinion but also in the important realm of institutionalised practice.⁴

Of the Sanskritisation and Westernisation process to which the concepts refer, Sanskritisation seems to have occurred throughout Indian history and still continues to occur.⁵ Sanskritisation became the influential concept of Varna successfully obscured the dynamic features of caste during the traditional or pre-British period as opined by M.N. Srinivas.⁶

Caste is undoubtedly made an all-India phenomenon in the sense that there are everywhere hereditary, endogamous groups which form a hierarchy, and that each of these groups has a traditional association with one or two occupations.

4.2. The process of Sanskritisation

The development of Vedic religion can be interpreted as a constant interaction between the religion of the upper social groups, represented by the Vedic priest, and the religion of other groups.

⁴ M. N. Srinivas, op. cit, p. 6.
⁵ ibid, p. 1.
⁶ ibid, p. 2.
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From the time of Aryan invasion (c. 1500 BC) the indigenous inhabitants of the subcontinent have tended to adapt their religious and social life to Vedic norms. This has developed from the desire of lower-class groups to rise on the social ladder by adopting the ways and beliefs of the higher castes. This process, sometimes called 'Sanskritisation', began in Vedic times when non-Aryan chieftains accepted the ministrations of Vedic people and thus achieved social status for themselves and their subjects. It was probably the principal method by which Vedic religion spread through the subcontinent and into Southeast Asia. Sanskritisation still continues in the form of the conversion of tribal groups, and it is reflected by the persistent tendency of low-caste Hindus to try to raise their status by adopting high-caste customs, such as wearing the sacred cord and becoming vegetarians.

If Sanskritisation has been the main means of spreading Hinduism throughout the subcontinent, its converse process, which has no convenient label, has been one of the means whereby Hinduism has changed and developed over the centuries. The Aryan conquerors lived side by side with the indigenous inhabitants of the subcontinent, and many features of Hinduism, as distinct from Vedic religion, may have been adapted from the religions of the non-Aryan peoples of India. One such is Dravidian Folk religious tradition.

8 M. N. Srinivas, op. cit, p. 3.
The phallic emblem of the Lord Siva arose from a combination of the phallic aspects of the Vedic god Indra and a non-Vedic icon of early popular fertility cults. Many features of Hindu mythology and several of the lesser gods – such as Ganesha, an elephant-headed god, and Hanuman, the monkey god – were incorporated into Hinduism and assimilated into the appropriate Vedic gods by this means. Similarly, the worship of many goddesses who are now regarded as the consorts of the male Vedic gods, as well as the worship of the one great goddess herself, may have originally incorporated the worship of non-Aryan local goddesses. Unorthodox circles on the fringes of Vedic culture (probably in southern India) were one of the important sources of the system of ecstatic devotional religion known as bhakti.

Thus, the history of Hinduism can be interpreted as the imposition of orthodox custom upon wider and wider ranges of people and, complementarily, as the survival of features of non-Aryan religions that gained strength steadily until they were adapted by the Vedic priests.

4.3. Indigenous prehistoric religion

The prehistoric culture of the Indus Valley arose in the latter centuries of the third millennium BC from the village cultures of the region who used metals. There is considerable evidence of the

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9 'Brahmanical Deities and their role to Suppress the Liberal Thoughts of Humanity', Research article presented by S. Xavier, in the X Session of TNHC at AVVM Sri Pushpam College, Poondi on 12th October 2003.

religious life of the Indus people, but until their writing is deciphered its interpretation is speculative.\textsuperscript{11} Enough evidence exists, however, to show that several features of later parts of Hinduism had prehistoric origins.

In most of the village cultures, small terra-cotta figurines of women, found in large quantities, have been interpreted as icons of a fertility deity whose cult was widespread in the Mediterranean area and in western Asia from Neolithic times onward. This hypothesis is strengthened by the fact that the goddess was apparently associated with the bull a feature also found in the ancient religions farther west.

4.3.1. Religion in the Indus Valley civilisation

The Harappan culture (often called Indus Valley civilisation), located in modern Pakistan, has produced much evidence of the cult of the goddess and the bull. Figurines of both occur, with the goddess being more common than the bull. The bull, however, appears more frequently on the many steatite seals. A horned deity, possibly with three faces, occurs on a few seals, and on one seal he is surrounded by animals. A few male figurines in hieratic (sacredotal) poses and one apparently in a dancing posture may represent deities.

No building has been discovered at any Harappan site that can be positively identified as a temple, but the Great Bath at

\textsuperscript{11} http://philtar.ucsm.ac.uk/encyclopedia/india/index.html accessed on 4th November 2006.
Mohenjodaro was almost certainly used for ritual purposes, as were the ghats (bathing steps on riverbanks) attached to later Hindu temples. The presence of bathrooms in most of the houses and the remarkable system of covered drains indicate a strong concern for cleanliness that may have been related to concepts of ritual purity as well as to the idea of hygiene.

Many seals show religious and legendary themes that cannot be interpreted with certainty. There is clear evidence, however, of the worship of sacred trees or of the divinities believed to reside in them. The bull is often depicted standing before a sort of altar, and the horned god has been interpreted, perhaps overconfidently, as a prototype of the Hindu god Siva. Small conical objects appear to be phallic emblems that are also connected with Siva in later Hinduism, although they may have been pieces used in board games.

4.3.2. Survival of archaic religious practices

Some elements of the religious life of current and past folk religions – notably sacred animals, sacred trees, especially the pipal (Ficus religiosa), and the use of small figurines for cult purposes – are found in all parts of India and may have been borrowed from pre-Aryan civilisations. On the other hand, these figures are also commonly encountered outside of India, and therefore they may have originated independently in Hinduism as well.

13 Personal observation.
14 K. L. Khurana, op. cit, p. 28.
4.4. The Vedic period (2nd millennium-7th century BC)

The Aryans of the early Vedic period left few material remains, but they left an important literary record called the Rigveda. Its 1,028 hymns are distributed throughout 10 books, of which the first and the last are the most recent.\(^\text{15}\) A hymn usually consists of three sections: it begins with an exhortation that is followed in the main part by praise of the deity, prayers, and imploration, with frequent references to the deity's mythology, and finishes with a specific request.\(^\text{16}\)

The Rigveda is not a unitary work, and its composition may have taken several centuries. In its form at the time of its final edition it reflects a well-developed religious system. The date commonly given for the final recension of the Rigveda is 1000 BC. During the next two or three centuries the Rigveda was supplemented by three other Vedas and, still later, by Vedic texts called the Brahmanas and the Upanishads.\(^\text{17}\)

The process of Aryanisation is affected almost in all spheres. The process is also affected in the religion. The only factor that the Aryanisation is responsible for the outbreak of the temple entry agitation of the later periods. But one thing must understand that the process of Aryanisation is not a sudden. N. Venkatta Ramanayya in his book entitled ‘An Essay on the Origin of the South Indian


\(^{16}\) K. L. Khurana, op. cit, p. 2.

\(^{17}\) ibid, p. 2.
Temple’, sums up and reflected the same view in this following passage:

“The original inhabitants of the Dravidians consist of the worship of ancestral spirits and village gods. It is considerably modified by the contact of the Dravidians with the Aryans. As a result of Aryan invasions of south India, the Dravidian religion is completely aryanised. The gods of the two races united together and formed a single hierarchy. The temples, which are connected with the primitive Dravidian religion, became the centres of the reformed religion. The Aryan gods became the principal residents of the Dravidian temples.”\(^\text{18}\)

4.5. Challenges to Vedic religion (7th-2nd century BC)

The century from about 550 BC onward was a period of great change in the religious life of India. This century saw the rise of breakaway sects of ascetics who denied the authority of the Vedas and of the Vedic people and who followed founders claiming to have discovered the secret of obtaining release from transmigration.

By far the important of these were Gautama, called the Buddha and Vardhamana, called Mahavira (Great Hero), the great teacher of Jainism. There were many other heterodox teachers who organised bands of ascetic followers, and each group followed a specific code

of conduct. They gained considerable support from ruling families and merchants. The latter were growing in wealth and influence, and many of them were searching for alternative forms of religious activity that would give them a more significant role than did orthodox Vedic religion or that would be less expensive to support.

The scriptures of the new religious movements throw some light on the popular religious life of the period. The god Prajapati was widely believed to be the highest god and the creator of the universe, with Indra, known chiefly as Sakra (the Mighty One), second to him in importance. The Vedic people were very influential, but opposition had developed to their large-scale animal sacrifices — on both philosophical and economic grounds — and their pretensions to superiority by virtue of their birth were questioned.

The doctrine of transmigration was by then generally accepted, although a group of outright materialists denied the survival of the soul after death. The ancestor cult, part of the Indo-European heritage, was retained almost universally, at least by the higher castes. Popular religious life largely centred on the worship of local fertility divinities (yaksha), snake-spirits (naga), and other minor spirits in sacred places and groves (caitya). Although these sacred places were the main centres of popular religious life, there is no

evidence of any buildings or images associated with them, and it appears that neither temples nor large icons existed at the time.

4.6. Sanskritisation and political institutions

Sanskritisation process is visible in all the political hierarchical setup. It is not a short term one, but a long term process. Especially in Tamil Nadu, it happened only at the close of Sangam age. The early Cholas, Pandyas and Pallavas helped a lot for the Sanskritisation of political institutions.  

From being a mere wanderer and shepherds, Aryans slowly emerged into politics. The Sabha, as mentioned in the Rig Veda was constituted mainly of the Vedic people. The King had to maintain a council of ministers, which included a prahiti. On all religious matters the king was to consult the prahiti, who accompanied the king on the eve of battle. They had the power and knowledge of the tactics to rise and fall of empire.

With regard to the south India, in the sixth century AD or during the Pallava period, the Vedic people played an important role. They were often considered the powerful castes in certain north Indian villages. Even in those south Indian regions where Vedic people now predominate. They were minorities largely migrated into Tamil Nadu from the North. As the head of the administration,

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21 P. Maniyarasan, op. cit, pp. 10 - 11.
22 V. K. Agni Hotri, Indian History, Delhi, 2000, pp. 56 -57A.
they controlled the majority society. They were respected by providing *Brahmadeya* land gifts.⁴ These *Brahmadeya* settlements existed in various parts of the Pallava kingdom. When the activities of the government and temples increased, more Vedic priests were invited from northern India. As a result, the settlements of the Vedic people increased. ²⁵ They were appointed as officials in the government departments and priests in the temples.

During the Chola period, from ninth century to thirteenth century CE, the position of Vedic people highly increased. ²⁶ The Chola rulers patronised Vedic religion. They followed the tradition of the Pallavas and enforced the Varnashramadharma in their country. To enforce this, they constructed Vedic temples through out their empire. ²⁷ Almost all the rulers, since Vijayalaya considered the construction of the temples as part of their administration and donated wealth in the form of money or land. The rulers spent the major portion of state income for the construction of temples. The Vedic people were respected and honoured. They fully involved themselves in religious activities and interpreted Vedas, Puranas and Upanishads. They acted as Rajaguru to the kings. Chola kings appointed them as juries in the court. The enforcement of Varnashramadharma confirmed the domination and status of Vedic

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people in religion and society. They precede their life from the gifts from Tamil kings and the people. They secluded their life from other caste people and they considered all the Tamilians as Sudras. The same situation was also prevailed during the Pandya period and succeeding years.

The situation was worst in the Chola period. The entire temple administration was in the hands of the Vedic people. All the members in Moolapparudayar committees were belonged to Vedic community. They formulated rules for the kings and king also recognised their occupation. In an inscription in the Rajarajeswara temple at Thanjavur the king Rajaraja, in his name temple was named, and it made a daily allowance for the support of the reciters or singers of the Tiruppadigam or the Padigams of Thirugnanasambandha, before the twenty-ninth year of his reign. There are many more benefits were given and these are all recorded by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI).

During the British period also, the officers and government servants were appointed from Vedic community. The chief political duty of them was to save their high caste position.

28 A. Dhakshina Murthy, op. cit, p. 520.
29 ibid, p. 520.
30 ibid, p. 521.
31 Ramakrishna Gopala Bhandarkar, Vaisnavism, Saivism and Minor religious systems, New Delhi, 1983, p. 201.
32 Archaeological Report on Epigraphy (ARE) 91 of 1892 and ARE 510 of 1905.
4.7. Sanskritisation and the media

The process of Sanskritisation is being successfully made in recent days only because of media. Without the support of media, the process cannot be a successful one. The media is projecting the process of Sanskritisation as a popular and widely accepted one. In order to the popularity and fascination towards Vedic customs, people are trying to imitate all these which result the loss of grip over their folk culture. And also in many occasion the funds allotted by the government are being misused by the fundamentalists' organisation. It is proved by the inquiry committee appointed by the Human Resource Development Ministry. In its report recommended the immediate freeze of grants to the Friends of Tribal Society (FTS), which has links with the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, as it was embezzling these funds, using the grants for creating disharmony amongst religious groups, and creating a political cadre.  

4.8. Sanskritisation of religion

Sanskritisation will be completed one, only when they changed the religious concepts of all. In order to bring homogeneity among the heterogeneous religious system in India, the Vedic people are trying to Sanskritise the religion. And also, they come to know the process of Sanskritisation will be a completed one, only when they

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Sanskritised religious setup. However it is not a day or month or a year long process, but a process of century old.\textsuperscript{34}

The following flow diagram No. 4 pictures the early and later forms of Sanskritisation methods. As it has already pointed out that the Sanskritisation is not a new phenomenon, in early days, the Sanskritisation process strengthened by means of avatars of Siva and Vishnu and the incorporation of Indra, Varuna with other deities of folk traditions. The Vedic deities were swallowed by Vedic people. The later form of Sanskritisation has resulted in the change of attitude of both male and female deities. Even in this, not all the folk deities are Sanskritised. Only the popular male and female deities such as Aiyarar, Madurai Viran, Mariamman and Ankallamman are Sanskritised.

\textbf{Diagram No. 4}

\begin{center}
\includegraphics{diagram.png}
\end{center}

\textsuperscript{34} Personal observation.
4.9. Agents of Sanskritisation

The Sanskritisation of folk deities is through the different methods as explained in the following diagram No. 5. The researcher has identified 12 methods for the Sanskritisation process.

**Diagram No. 5**

**Methods for Sanskritisation**

- **Conversion of folk deities into Vedic deities**
- **Installation of Vedic deities in the temples of folk tradition**
- **Creation and restructuring of sthalapuranas**
- **Extensive temple building activities**
- **Assimilation or amalgamation**
- **Creation and aversion over the blood sacrifices**
- **Sanskritised marriage**
- **Popularity of agamic forms of worship**
- **Rituals, pujas performed by the Vedic priests in folk temples**
- **Attempts at giving a benign look to ferocious look**
- **Increasing influence of agamas in constructing temples of folk tradition**
- **Incorporation of Vedic stories and deities with folk deities**
The methods are not identical and these differed from place to place. Vedic people and revivalists have resorted to these methods. The folk people do not possess knowledge over these methods for Sanskritisation. This cannot be restricted with in a medium or two, because it depends on the interpretation of Vedic priests. They simply interpreted whatever they have seen and trying to convert all these as agents of Sanskritisation. Communication services such as television, newspapers, internet and other printed mediums, the day to day activities of people, customs and ceremonies are all projecting the culture of Vedic people as splendid one and make them to accept by the folk people.

4.10. Sanskritisation of Folk Deities

Sanskritisation of folk deities as the researcher said in the beginning is not a result of a day or week but a long process. The method of Sanskritisation can be seen easily because the folk deities which are Sanskritised in one area is not influenced by the same Vedic people in another area, by which one can understand this concept easily.\textsuperscript{35}

The Folk people especially the worshippers experience the domination of Vedic people and rituals in following manner. The following bar chart No. 12 represents the ways in which the domination of Vedic religious tradition in the temples of folk tradition is carried out. Many respondents have sensed the domination of Vedic religion by means of influence of Vedic priest.

\textsuperscript{35} Personal observation.
Good number of respondents referred to the means of influence of Vedic customs and rituals. It is notable here that the Folk people aware on the creation of literature and installation of Vedic deities. Even though folk worshippers are aware of the domination of Vedic people still they are unable to counter the influence.

**Chart No. 12**

**Domination of Vedic people in the temples of folk tradition**

In order to Sanskritise the deities of folk tradition the Vedic people have adopted various methods. They have created and restructured the *sthalapuranas* to give entry to their Vedic deities in the temples of folk tradition. If one carefully analyses all the stories one can easily understand these are all introduced later.36 They have installed the Vedic deities in the temples of folk tradition. In due course the folk people accept the thing and try to give away the practice of blood sacrifices completely.

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The Sanskritisation of folk deities is happening by two processes viz, assimilation and amalgamation. Either assimilation or amalgamation of the folk deities is made as the deities of Vedic tradition. Nowadays the rituals, pujas are performed by the Vedic priests in the temples of folk tradition one can witness the increasing influence of agamas in constructing temples of folk tradition. To facilitate this, they are attempting at giving benign look to the ferocious folk deities.

It is to begin with a brief consideration of the diversity in the varna system. In the first place, some elements of the local culture would be common to all the castes living in a region, from the highest to the lowest. Thus the Vedic people and untouchables of a region would speak the same language, observe some common festivals and share certain folk deities and beliefs. M. N. Srinivas has called this as ‘vertical mobility’ and its contrasts with ‘horizontal solidarity’ which members of a single caste or varna.

Eschmann’s essay on ‘Hinduisation of Tribal deities in Orissa: the Sakta and Saiva Typology’ calls Hinduisation, matured level of Sanskritisation a process which occurs between two opposite poles, namely the tribal religion and what she names high religion. From the beginning, she says, aboriginal (tribal) cults were incorporated into Hinduism; however, it was particularly in medieval times that
the Hinduisation process was intensified. She gives two reasons for this:

“1. the rising Bhakti cults brought a new religious impetus which, emphasising the omnipresence of the divine, was universalistic in its outlook, and

2. the new temples (resulting from this) received royal patronage and became agents of Hinduisation.”

Eschmann writes further, Hinduisation may be defined as a continuum operating in both ways between the two poles of tribal religion and codified or ‘high’ Hinduism. The character of a continuum is as important as the fact that the process of Hinduisation acts in both ways: it does not only mean that tribal elements are incorporated into Hinduism, but also implies that features from Hinduism are integrated into tribal cults. Strictly speaking, only the ends or poles of that continuum can be defined: Tribal religion is found in the cults of entirely or almost entirely tribal communities. ‘High’ Hinduism is represented in those great temples where worship is performed according to the rules codified in the scriptures, and which are generally recognised by all Hindus. This polarity suggests an application of the complementary concepts of ‘Vedic’ and ‘Folk’ tradition. But these two realms are usually not directly confronted to each other; they are combined through several

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40 Eveline Meyer, Methodology in Folk Religion, Seminar Papers on Naatuppuraviyal Aaivu Muraigal held at Sociology Department, Tamil University, Thanjavur, 1986, p. 2. (FRRC)
intermediary stages within one special regional tradition. One can say then that folk religion lies within this Hinduisation process. What characterises the two opposing poles? For a start it may be useful to have a look at Eschmann’s definitions. In ‘high’ Hinduism the image of the deity, especially the anthropomorphic image, plays an important role. The deity is present in the image, and the devotee, by approaching the image, can have darshana of the deity.

4.10.1. Installation of Vedic deities in the temples of folk tradition

Vedic deities are installed in the temples of folk tradition. This is systematically planned. But they do not install the popular Vedic deities instead secondary Vedic deities such as Hanuman. They also installed other Vedic deities such as Vinayaka, Murugan and host of deities. They just relate them with the Vedic deities by various means and trying to establish Hindu identity. If one analyses this process many such installations happened only in recent days. In which Vinayaka and Hanuman are frequently found place in the folk temples. The following are the few examples:

4.10.1.1. Image of Madan in Shasta’s temple

One important temple is dedicated to Shasta, who is locally classified as a deva in southern districts of Tamil Nadu, a great god.

41 ibid, p. 2.
In mythology, Shasta is the son of Siva and Vishnu in latter’s female form as Mohini. Shasta’s principal function is to protect the territory of and he particularly guards its boundary, for his temple is actually outside the village. Shasta is also a clan deity and thus protects the kin groups settled in the village, although any particular person’s clan deity is always the Shasta enshrined in the ancestral village. Owing to his close links with other folk deities, Shasta – despite being a great god – is often viewed as a prototypical village deity like Aiyanar, his near equivalent farther north in Tamil Nadu. At Shasta’s temple in Mel Ceval, there is an image of the folk deity Madan who guards the site, as Karuppan does at Aiyanar temples.
Superior Shasta and Aiyanar are said to be rule over the subordinate guardian deities and the relationship between these two categories of deities is an important one in popular Hinduism.\textsuperscript{44}

4.10.1.2. Folk deities made as the sister of Parvathi

Renukadevi another name for Mariamman is venerated as one of the avatars of Parvathi Devi.\textsuperscript{45} A little temple at the northern boundary of Mel Ceval, just beyond the area of habitation, is dedicated to the single goddess Chelliyamman. Linked to the foundation of the village itself, she is also its main tutelary goddess, protecting all the villagers living in the locality and the social order that embraces them. She is also said to be the elder sister of other local goddesses. Particularly important is her relationship with two goddesses within the settlement area. The first is Saundari, Siva’s consort in his temple, and the second is Muppidariyamman, a single goddess whose little temple lies south of Siva’s. Chelliyamman is frequently present in southern Tamil villages and towns, guarding them (and their Siva temples) on the northern boundary.\textsuperscript{46} She is then a subordinate guardian of Siva and his wife, represented as the latter’s sister or as an inferior consort of Siva himself. Chelliyamman in Mel Ceval is explicitly described as celibate; she is also superior to her partner or double Muppidariyamman who, unlike Chelliyamman, is offered animal sacrifices.

\textsuperscript{44} C. J. Fuller, \textit{The Camphor Flame – Popular Hinduism and Society in India}, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1992, p. 53. (FRRC)


\textsuperscript{46} C. J. Fuller, \textit{op. cit}, p. 54.
4.10.1.3. Conversion of Sudalaimadan into Siva

Popular male folk deity Sudalaimadan samy regarded as the son of Lord Siva. In the ancient times, Dravidian people did not possess the idea of making statues, began the worship of stones which was erected on the land directly. This stone may be converted into Sivalingam later, according to S. Shanmugasundaram. An eminent historian K.K. Pillay refers about the emergence of Sudalaimadan worship thus “Even though none of the ancient literature refers about Sudalaimadan, the Siva worship may emerge out of it”. It is interesting to note that in Manimekalai there is a reference about ‘Sudukattukkottam’ and the worshippers called as ‘Sudalai Nonbigal’. Later this particular Dravidian deity converted into Lord Siva.

According to an erudite Tamil scholar K. P. Aravanan, it is to be noted that the name Siva related with destruction became confluence with Sudalaimadan identified as ‘Sudalai Aandi’. The name ‘Madan’ may illustrate ‘Man’. Due to the impact of Aryans, Sudalaimadan made as the deity of folk tradition. Aryans belonged to the male dominated society preferred to place male in the topper layer of the religion. A popular female deity Kotravai was made as another form of Sakthi goddess and Murugan was made as her son. In due course, Murugan was also made the son of Lord Siva by

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47 S. Shanmugasundaram, *op. cit*, p. 42.  
48 *ibid*, p. 43.
which Kotravai is associated with Siva.\textsuperscript{49} Another instance, the war between Siva and Takkan can be taken as the war between Aryans and Dravidians. Both the Sudalaimadan and Siva were termed as gods of southern depressed classes.\textsuperscript{50}

Most of the Dravidians were illiterate. Hence, they did not focus much attention on the historical background of all their deities and the philosophy behind in it. They just inscribed on their memories. It is the major reason why others incorporated all these deities into Hindu fold.\textsuperscript{51}

In the ascendancy of Chola imperialism, Siva worship became popular. Later the Nayak rule diminished the ascendance of Siva worship. In the 15\textsuperscript{th} century AD the Siva worship again made popular. Due to the similarities in a great extent between Siva and Sudalaimadan worship contributed much for the development as well as synthesis between Siva traditions.\textsuperscript{52}

4.10.2. Creation and restructuring of Sthalapuranas

The process of Sanskritisation is made by creation and change of the stories. The following are a few literature created to give link with Vedic deities. R. Vasudevan’s \textit{Thiruthalangalin Theiviga Kurippugal},\textsuperscript{53} Valmiki’s \textit{Arul Manakkum Krama Thevathaigalin}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{49} ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{50} ibid, p. 44.
  \item \textsuperscript{51} ibid, p. 43.
  \item \textsuperscript{52} ibid, p. 44.
  \item \textsuperscript{53} R. Vasudevan, \textit{Thiruthalangalin Theiviga Kurippugal}, Dhinamalar, Tiruchirappalli, 2004.
\end{itemize}
Vazhipadugal, D. G. Ramaiah’s Mariamman Thalattu, S. S. Ragavacharyar’s Aathiparasakthi Mariammankal Varalaru are a few examples. (See: Pictures of some recent books) By this means the folk deities are related with Vedic deities. There are many instances and one such instance is related with Ankalamman. The Sthalapurana of Ankalamman is restructured with the following story. A Paraiyar passed himself off as a Vedic priest in a foreign village and was given the daughter of a blind karnam as his wife. The Vedic priests’ wife discovered by chance that her husband was an outcaste, so she burned herself alive by setting fire to her house. After her death she appeared as a goddess to the villagers and instructed them to behead her husband, put one of his legs in his mouth, the fat of his stomach on his head, and lighted lamp on top. After being sacrificed in this way, the husband was reborn as buffalo, and therefore a buffalo is sacrificed to the village goddess at ceremonies in which the descendants of the couple play a part. When one carefully analyses the story, it can be identified easily that there is no connection between the story and Ankalamman. One way or other the Vedic people need the incorporation of Vedic woman in the form of Ankalamman.

Chapter IV

Photo 29 - Recently created Sthalapuranas
4.10.3. Growing aversion over blood sacrifices

Nowadays the folk people are asked to give away the practice of blood sacrifices in the temple premises of folk tradition. Slowly the aversion over blood sacrifices is happened and then the temple is completely sanskritised and result the entry of Vedic priests there. When the researcher administered questionnaire to the devotees of folk deities all over Tamil Nadu responded the need of blood sacrifices. Out of 500 respondents 238 supported the need of blood sacrifices. 118 expressed its need on occasional basis. 144 responded no to blood sacrifices.

The concept of blood sacrifices nowadays advocated as the awful one and people are also advocated to give away the practice. Recently the Government of Tamil Nadu also enforced the act which banned the blood sacrifices in the folk temples. Due to the opposition it became void. The aversion over blood sacrifices is also based on political interference. In 1996 there was a conference held at Erode in which Jayalalitha, former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu participated and insisted on the need for proper training to the village priests. These are all the precursors of the influence of Vedic rituals and Vedic people as evidenced by Ponneelan.

59 Based on questionnaire detail and field study.
60 Tamil Nadu Animals and Birds Sacrifices Prohibition (Repeal) Ordinance 2004.
4.10.4. Extensive temple building activities

It is also a historic process. The temple building activities started even before the IV century AD. Before the IV century AD temples were few or none in the Tamil country. In the VI century AD, one can learn that Kanchi, Vengadam, Sri Rangam and Madurai temples had become famous. From the VII century onwards, the hymnists sang in praise of numerous temples in the Pallava, Chola, Pandya, Chera and Maratha provinces. For instance, the Vazhangaiman Mariamman temple once was the unpopular deity without having modern big gopuras and temple complexes, when folk masses worshipped this deity resulted popularity throughout the provinces. Maratha ruler Serfoji, constructed a huge temple Heard of the popularity of the deity. Therefore all these, which are renowned for their holiness ever since the hymnists sang of them and where puja is still being a daily affair. Even today the temple building or renovation activities are going on to pave the way for establishing widespread Hindu identity and network.

The structure of village temple as shown in the following flow diagram No. 6 is divided into two divisions viz, roofless and roofed temples. The roofed temple is made up of thatched or tiled or stone or sheet or concrete. The roofless temple is again divided into four divisions such as temples for principal divinities, secondary village deity, graveyards, and temples on village borders. These are again divided into many divisions according to its nature.

63 Shanmugasundaram, op. cit, p. 27.
Diagram No. 6

Structure of Village Temples

Roofless

Temple for principal divinities

Secondary village deity

Graveyards and Hero stones

Male deity

Female deity

Temples protecting village borders

Female Village deity

Temple without statues

Male Village deity

Temple with statues

Metal

Wooden

Totems

Totemless

Sheet

Stone

Thatched roof

Tiled roof

Concrete
4.10.5. Assimilation or amalgamation

The term synonymous with acculturation, used to describe the process by which an outsider, immigrant, or subordinate group becomes indistinguishably integrated into the dominant host society. For example a popular Vedic god, Narayana, was associated with Vishnu and connected with the pastoral and warrior god Krishna, who played a prominent part in the still evolving Mahabharata epic as it moved to its final form during the fifth century AD. During these centuries as well, Vishnu was otherwise elaborated by the assimilation of a range of god-figures, including a boar, whose primitive worship was popular in western India, and at the other extreme, Rama, the perfect king of the Ramayana. The boar – the divine Varaha – and the Rama joined other assimilated deities as avatars, the manifestations in which Vishnu came among mankind to save it from demons. The entire panoply then constituted a pantheon of gods whose worship was equivalent to devotion to Vishnu.

Siva is thought to have risen from the status of minor fertility god – perhaps dating from Harappan times – through the Vedic god Rudra, eventually to be worshipped in the form of a phallus (lingam). In the course of time, Siva too came to be associated with other gods: the elephant-faced Ganesha and the popular warrior god

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65 Burton Stein (Ed.), *Essays on South India*, New Delhi, 1976, p. 84.
66 *ibid*, p. 84.
Skanda. Two further developments also contributed to the evolution of Hinduism: the creation of new sacred ideas that were preserved in a variety of textual traditions and the founding of institutions, especially that of the temple, by which Hinduism was to be maintained as the central, evolving religion of the majority of people of the subcontinent.  

New religious formulations displaced the centrality of the textual traditions of later Vedic times – the Brahmanas and Upanishads – though this earlier knowledge was not forgotten; generation after generation of Vedic priests continued to commit these complex older texts to memory and to teach them to other Vedic priests deemed appropriate by virtue of their birth. But they had become minor traditions, completely overtaken by the scriptures called purana and dharmashastra, and by various poetic works, including the Mahabharata and Ramayana. Puranas, or ancient stories, consisted of legends and religious instruction. The legends included genealogies of gods, royal dynasties and ancient Kshatriya clans, while the instructions pertained to the proper conduct of worship. Eighteen of the puranas are considered ‘major’, but even they cannot be dated before the advent of the Gupta era in the fourth century AD.

Asoka’s dhamma (Prakrit for Dharma, rule of conduct) remained important for Buddhists, but by the turn of the present era,

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67 idem.
69 *ibid*, p. 85.
around 100 BC, other dharma texts began to appear, beginning with that of the sage Manu. The dharmastraas are called ‘law books’, but are really more like codes of the conduct considered appropriate for each of the four varnas and for the stages of life through which human beings must pass. They shed much light on Indian societies of that time, in terms of both eternal codes of conducts, where Manu’s injunctions were repeated, and variant codes, based on approved local customs. While extolling the varieties of kinds and the protectors of dharma, these texts spoke of other ways in which people were bound together in addition to their roles as subjects of dharmic kings.

One such affiliational principle was that of blood, and hence connections with kinsmen; associations formed by blood ties were called kula. Caste was one kind of blood connection, clan another.

With the rise to popularity of Siva and Vishnu, the old Tamil Gods were either amalgamated with the newer ones or otherwise assimilated with them or practically died out. Thus Mayon easily became Krishna specifically as in the Malabar country or Vishnu generally in other places. Seyon coalesced with Subrahmanya; the sky-god and the sea-god practically disappeared, for it is in the rich valleys or the richer seaports that Siva and Vishnu have triumphed. The three-gods have become one with Siva, and animal totems like the kite, the ape, the elephant, the bull, the rat, the peacock and the

\[70\] idem.
\[71\] idem.
serpent have become vehicles or ornaments or parts of the bodies of major gods. Sakthi, whose worship became popular late even in northern India and that as the rival of the Buddha worship of Tara, became generally in south India, Lakshmi, wife of Vishnu or Parvathi, wife of Siva, who shine in the reflected glory of their husbands, where they are given a place in temples. The boundary and other petty spirits still claim the allegiance of the less advanced people and proved too insignificant to be absorbed.\textsuperscript{72}

4.10.6. Increasing influence of Agamas in constructing temples of folk tradition

In most occasions, there are no temples but the deities are placed in an open air, whereas agamas are playing a vital role in the construction of temples of folk tradition. The temples are constructed with various features such as sanctum sanctorum, gopurams, \textit{palipeedam}, \textit{thiruchchuttru madhil} and mandapas. But these are happened only in popular temples of folk tradition, whereas in other temples these features cannot be seen. By which one can notice the emerging trend of Sanskritisation. But, folk temples are traditionally irregular and constructed with locally available materials mostly of perishable such as palm leaves, thatched roofs and mud.

Recently the maiden run of the gold-coated car of Sri Mathura Kaliamman Temple in Siruvachur was held on 13\textsuperscript{th} May 2005. The

\textsuperscript{72} P. T. Srinivasa Aiyangar, \textit{History of the Tamils from the earliest Times to 600 AD}, AES, New Delhi, 1982, p. 612.
maiden run was preceded by special pujas and homams to mark the occasion. The *vasthu puja* and other rituals were performed. The golden car puja was performed at the end of which the processional deity of the temple Sri Mathura Kaliamman was brought to the car. An exclusive golden car ‘prahara’ had been constructed with a donation of an estimated Rupees one crore on the temple premises.

According to A. Ananda Dikshitar and R. Kanagasabesa Dikshitar, special pujas were performed by nine Vedic pandits. This proves the increasing influence of agamas and Vedic rituals in the temples of folk tradition. The following chart No. 13 will give another dimension of the changes which are noticed in the deities of folk tradition.

**Chart No. 13**

Changes noticed in the deities of Folk tradition

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<th>West</th>
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<td>14</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td></td>
<td>28</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>20</td>
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The respondents were examined about the types of changes which are noticed on the deities of Folk tradition. About 80 percent of the respondents reacted on the introduction of agamas on the

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deities of folk tradition. About 20 percent of them reported the change of statues as a pleasant one. Other changes are also noticed by the devotees.

4.10.7. Popularity of agamic forms of worship in folk temples

The worship of folk deities is based on the memory as well as the economic condition of the village people. Nowadays the agamas are playing a vital role in the worship of folk deities. In the popular temples of folk tradition worship is conducted in five times. For example, in Samayapuram and Vazhangaian only after 1950’s the agamic form of worship were started. Before, it no such worship was conducted. Another, interesting feature which can be noticeable in the temples of popular folk tradition is temporal priesthood of Vedic people. In normal days, priests from lower caste perform the pujas, whereas at the festive occasion, these pujaris invited Vedic priests to perform pujas and ceremonies. The reason for this, they think that the arrival of Vedic priests as a symbol of social status. The materials used for the worship are also quite expensive. These are all made the folk people to tend to improve their status by all means.

4.10.8. Rituals, pujas performed by the Vedic priests in the temples of folk tradition

Ritual is the means, through which persons relate to the sacred, it is religion, made overt. Not only is ritual the means by

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\textsuperscript{74} Shanmugasundaram, \textit{op. cit}, pp. 28 – 29.
\textsuperscript{75} \textit{ibid}, p. 29.
which the social bonds of a group are reinforced and tensions relieved, it is also one way that many important events are celebrated. It is widely seen that the Vedic priests are not discharging their duties in the temples of folk tradition because of various reasons. But now a day, they are ready to render their duty as priest in the folk temples merely for economic prosperity. They selected the temples of folk tradition only which are rich in economic condition.

The village priest (pujari) is chosen from any caste, but traditionally from very backward communities. Generally one family would be chosen and they continued down generations. Recently an organisation in Tamil Nadu trained such priests to recite some simple mantras in Tamil and to perform the basic rituals of lighting a lamp, reciting some prayers, doing an offering; taking a karpoora aarti etc. they are trying to incorporate Vedic deities in the prayers of village deities. One such is Amman Azhaippu (invitation to

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76 William A. Haviland, Anthropology, University of Vermont, Printed in the United States of America, 1974, p. 505.
77 Interview with Saptarishi on 27th May 2005 at Lalgudi.
78 Personal observation.
80 வில்லியம் எம். ஹவில்லாங், இன்போனோக்லுபோர்சியல், பியாலியூக், 1974, ப. 505.
Amman). In which first priority goes to Vedic deities involuntarily and then prayer is offered to Amman. This hymn is being made popular in all the Amman temples.\textsuperscript{81}

4.10.9. Attempts at giving a benign look to ferocious deities

Quite naturally, the deities of folk tradition give a ferocious look. In order to give way for the worship of Vedic priests it is given a benign look. A living example for this is Kaligambal shrine in Chennai region. The Maratha ruler Shivaji is said to have visited the shrine in Chennai during his tour of the southern region of the Indian subcontinent. At first a fierce \textit{ugra} form of the goddess was held in worship earlier, and that this form was replaced with the \textit{Shanta Swaroopa} form of Kamakshi as the direction given by Shivaji.\textsuperscript{82}

Decades ago, travelling by road, one could come across Aiyanars made of sand, lime and stones. Although they looked weather beaten, they still were awe-inspiring. Considering they were hand made, one always wondered how the villagers managed to design and shape such huge figures. The dimensions were perfect.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{81} Shanmugasundaram, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 29.
\item\textsuperscript{82} \url{http://www.pariharam.com/TempleKaligambal.aspx?TempleID=TMPL082} accessed on 4th November 2006
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
The concept and their execution spoke volumes about the artisans' imagination.

Nowadays, these figures were made up beautifully. They look very colourful and bright. Various theories abound as to who this Aiyanar is. According to some, the term Aiyanar has come from 'Kaiyanar', which means "he sprung from the hand of Vishnu". Other legends say he is Ayyappa or Sastha, the son of Hari and Hara. Like Vishnu he has a thousand names and a thousand attributes too. He is called by different names in different places such as Veeran, Karuppan, Karuppanaswami, Kathavarayan, Muneevaran, Veerabhadrain etc. When he assumes the female form he is referred as Mariyatha, Ellaiamman, Karumari, Kathayi, Bhairavi, Pechayi, Kali, Bhadrakali, Durga, Draupadhi, Chandi and many more. According to another version, Aiyanar is said to be incarnations of Siva. He was also worshipped in the form of lingam.\(^3\)

4.10.10. Incorporation of Vedic stories and deities with the folk deities

It is a historic process by which the deities of folk tradition slowly incorporated with Vedic tradition. Later they made as Vedic deities. The Vedic people found it necessary to adopt the gods of the alien races, to obtain influence over them. Siva and Kali were the popular deities of the non-Aryans, and they were first admitted into

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the Vedic pantheon. Balarama and Krishna who were the national heroes of the shepherd races were also worshipped by the Vedic people as incarnations of Vishnu. Similarly Muruga, the patron deity of the hunting tribes was adored as the son of Siva. In all the great temples served by Vedic people, in the Tamil country, images of the four gods, Siva, Krishna, Balarama and Muruga were set up. There are many examples for this kind of process. There is 16-foot-tall wooden car of the Sri Mariamman Temple at Sevvapet in the city had been the cynosure of eyes in the past for not only the devotees but also the connoisseurs of art. Thus the care has been handed over to the museum authorities on 18th June 2005 for which special arrangements were made on its premises. According to the museum sources, it has some finest wooden panels of carvings of intricate artwork depicting the incidents in the epics of 'Mahabaratham and Ramayanam.' So there was a time where the process of Sanskritisation was made wide popular throughout the region.

Kali was held to be a form of Parvathi, the consort of Siva. With a view to impress upon the minds of the people the distinctions of caste, the Vedic people introduced also the worship of four Bhootas or gigantic idols, which represented the four castes. Recently a popular deity Mariamman is related with her origin by the curse of Jamadagni Ma Rishi. Another name given to Mariamman is Renukadevi, venerated as one of the avatars of Parvathi Devi.

85 V. Kanakasabhai, *The Tamils Eighteen Hundred Years Ago*, AES, New Delhi, 1904, p. 231. (State Archives Library, Chennai)
4.10.11. Conversion of Folk deities into Vedic deities

A major difference between the worship offered to the earlier Vedic gods and that offered to Vishnu and Siva was the latter's devotional character, and poetry was an important medium through which devotion was expressed; hymns of praise were recited and such as a central part of worship. The Vedic gods had for the most part been invoked and inducted to serve mankind through the powerful rites of expert priests; in contrast, Vishnu and Siva were invoked by loving songs that begged the boons and salvation promised by the gods, according to theologians. The gods controlled and could no longer be controlled, but only beseeched.

4.10.12. Divine Marriage

The concept of the double marriage is widely applied to both Vedic Puranic deities and folk gods in the Tamil area. The goddess is divided into two, who oppose each other in several ways, the senior wife may be 'imported' from the northern, classical pantheon, while the second bride is purely local, a child of the Tamil land, born from the soil, one wife is light or golden, the second dark or black; one is orthodox, of high status, a ritually proper wife for the deity, while the second is humble, socially inferior origin.

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86 Burton Stein (Ed.), op. cit, p. 85.
87 ibid, pp. 84-85.
88 David Dean Shulman, op. cit, p. 293.
William P. Harman writes: “deified women achieve the rank of principal divinities not in the lineage into which they were born — where they are never anything more than secondary goddesses — but only in the lineage into which they have actually married, or into which they should have married, that is, into a lineage allied with their own and where, as a result, they are able to appear more or less as mothers”.

The event of marriage is for her, a more propitious opportunity to assume (or to reassume) divine qualities than its is for the male. This can be understood partly as a function of what occurs to the female at marriage. The event more radically transforms her, when she marries; her lineage and her body are believed literally to change. She becomes a member of her husband’s lineage. Louis Dumont’s observations about the conditions under which women of the Kallar castes in the Madurai area eventually attain deification are relevant here.

4.13. Beyond Sanskritisation

The historical paradigm implied in the Sanskritisation theory is essentially monistic, despite its apparent acceptance of a plurality of cultural patterns. The fourfold typology of M.N. Srinivas, is for instance, monistic because it makes the historical process essentially centred round one tradition namely the Sanskritic one. All other

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socio-cultural traditions of India are defined in terms of such a central tradition. In one sense the Sanskritisation theory resembles the western sociological theory of the great and little traditions. Just as the parallel western theory postulates two traditions merely to define one of them in terms of the other, so the Sankritisation theory postulates two traditions, the *Marga* and *Desi*, only to conceptualise the *Desi* in terms of its relationship with the *Marga*. In other words, there is ample evidence that the Sanskritisation theory has not been reflecting India's genuinely pluralistic socio-cultural reality.\(^9^1\) Hence, Sanskritisation method would result irrelevant and contradiction to Indian social condition.

It is to go over the main points of this chapter. Sanskritisation becomes a major process of cultural change and it thought to be force of elevation by the folk people. Folk people began to use some customs and manners, ceremonies and worship of Vedic people in order to raise their social status. It is happened either willingly or unwillingly.

The Vedic people adopted different means to Sanskritise the deities of folk tradition. The folk deities are converted into Vedic deities by incorporating Vedic stories, puranas and deities with folk deities. In many occasion Sanskritised marriages are conducted to provide link with male or female deities. The ferocious look of folk

deities is given benign look. Later they are either assimilated or amalgamated with Vedic deities.

In another means, the worship method and temple are Sanskritised in order to provide easy entry to the Vedic priests. To facilitate the structure of the temple is altered with various features. The installation of Vedic deities in the temples of folk tradition is in vogue. The temples of folk tradition are extensively modified. Agamic forms of worship are increased. The *sthalapuranas* are created by providing link with Vedic deities. In due course of time, folk worshippers urged to give up blood sacrifices in the folk temple premises. These are all paved the way for entry and the domination of Vedic priests in folk temples.