CHAPTER - V

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The process of Sanskritisation took place throughout the course of history. The process is not a successful one because of various reasons. The Sanskritisation is not received much support by the folk masses because of its indispensable features. The Sanskritisation of the folk deities and their followers were not integrated fully, because, there is no change in the Varna order. Vedic religion remains in advocating the superiority of Vedic people and priests. They are not ready to accept the cultural identity of the Folk people.

5.1. Facades of Sanskritisation

The Sanskritisation process in folk deities is not resulted positive impact instead, it made negative impact. As explained by Ram Puniyani, “the Sanskritisation process made them ape the upper caste and ignore and forget the material plight of their deprived brethren. They brought traditional Brahminical values in a modern garb laced in syrup of spirituality.” As defined by M. N. Srinivas Sanskritisation is generally accompanied by and often results in upward mobility for the caste in question; but mobility may also occur without Sanskritisation and vice versa. However, the mobility associated with Sanskritisation results only in positional changes in

1 Personal observation.
the system and does not lead to any structural change.\textsuperscript{3} That is, a caste moves up above its neighbours and another comes down, but all this takes place in an essentially stable, hierarchical and the system itself does not change.

An analysis of the process of ‘Sanskritisation’ would reveal the following facts:

1) Sanskritisation denotes the process in which the lower castes try to imitate the life-styles of upper castes in their attempt to raise their social status. The process seems to be associated with the role of local ‘dominant caste’. Though for some time, the lower castes imitated Brahmins they soon shifted it towards the local dominant caste which in most cases a non-Brahmin dominant caste.\textsuperscript{4}

2) Sanskritisation denotes the process of upward mobility. In this process, a caste is trying to increase its position in the hierarchy not at once, but over a period of time. It would take, sometimes, a period of one or two generations.\textsuperscript{5}

3) Mobility that is involved in the process of Sanskritisation results only in ‘positional changes’ for particular castes or sections of castes, and need not necessarily lead to a ‘structural change’. It means, while individual castes move up or down, the structure as such remains the same.\textsuperscript{6}

\textsuperscript{4} \textit{ibid}, p. 310.
\textsuperscript{5} \textit{idem}.
\textsuperscript{6} \textit{idem}.
4) Sanskritisation is not a new phenomenon as such M.N. Srinivas writes: ‘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 periods that at others and some parts of India are more Sanskritised than others; but there is no doubt that the process has been universal.\textsuperscript{7}

5) The castes which enjoyed higher economic and political power but rated relatively low in ritual ranking went after Sanskritisation for they felt that their claim to a higher position was not fully effective. The three main aspects of power in the caste system are the ritual, the economic and the political ones. The possession of power in any one sphere usually leads to the acquisition of power in the other two. But Srinivas opines that inconsistencies do occur.\textsuperscript{8}

6) Economic betterment is not a necessary pre-condition to Sanskritisation, nor economic development must necessarily lead to Sanskritisation. However, sometimes a group (caste, tribe) may start by acquiring, political power and this may lead to economic development and Sanskritisation. Economic betterment, the acquisition of political power, education, leadership and a desire to move up in the hierarchy, are all relevant factors in Sanskritisation and each case of Sanskritisation may show all or some of these factors mixed up in different measures.\textsuperscript{9}

\textsuperscript{7} M. N. Srinivas, \textit{Social Change in India}, Orient Longmann, New Delhi, 2005, p. 23.
\textsuperscript{8} \textit{ibid}, p. 23.
\textsuperscript{9} C. N. Sankar Rao, \textit{op. cit}, p. 355.
5.2. *Centres of Sanskritisation*

The process of Sanskritisation exists because of the centres and various organisation. The caste Hindus and other non-Brahmin people are made to change their attitudes and behaviours partly because of the efforts taken by these centres. Aided by various communal factors, they give wide popularity to the Sanskrit culture and behavioural patterns.\(^{10}\) They used the entire cultural medium to find favour towards the Vedic culture and tradition. In the twentieth century, they realised the influence of various technological innovations and mediums, started their propagation in using all these mediums. Radio, television, internet and other communication medium give wide opportunity to create influence and impact on the Tamil society to accept the cultural practices of Vedic community.\(^{11}\)

Centres of pilgrimage and monasteries were also the sources of Sanskritisation. Each pilgrimage centre had its own hinterland, the most famous of them attracting pilgrims from all over India, while the smallest relied on a few neighbouring villages. Even when a pilgrim centre had an all-India following, it probably attracted more pilgrims from one or a few areas than uniformly from every part of India. In the case of centres drawing from a small region, however, there were perhaps more pilgrims from particular castes or villages than from others. In spite of such limiting factors, a pilgrim centre as well as monastery managed to influence the way of life of

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\(^{10}\) Personal observation.

\(^{11}\) M. N. Srinivas, *op. cit*, p. 21.
everyone in its hinterland. When a section of a dominant caste came under the influence of a centre or monastery, Sanskritisation spread vertically to nondominant castes in the area and horizontally to members living elsewhere. Such spreading has been greatly facilitated in recent years by a variety of forces, technological, institutional and ideological. In the meanwhile, when it reaches the folk people received a negative impact. The centres and medium of Sanskritisation, which are used by the Vedic people, are not given significance. The Sanskrit culture and behavioural patterns of Vedic life were criticised by the folk masses. To counter the activities of Vedic people, social activists started to use the same communication medium to bring out the significance of folk culture and way of life. They began to give wide focus on the folk art and culture. In an extreme level, they began to show Vedic people as more cunning and sometimes a comedian. Their style of living, wearing of sacred thread, *kudumi* was all used as the medium of wit. In Tamil Nadu many films were taken in nurturing these ideas. By which, folk people register their reaction to this mode of Sanskritisation.

5.3. Economic control

Economically, the Vedic people are well enough. From the pastoral life they had gained economic resources. Imposing the Varnashramadharma theory, they occupied the first position in the caste stratification. Slowly they got power preference and powerful

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12 *ibid*, pp. 21–22.
13 Personal observation.
advisory position, which gave them influence over daily politics. In Tamil Nadu, during the Imperial Cholas and Pallavas regime they had granted with various assistance and welfare programmes. Under the feudal Cholas, group of Vedic people were provided villages for their livelihood. This practice gave rise to the restriction of landownership to the Vedic community in such brahmadeya villages to the exclusion of other castes.\textsuperscript{14} The ritual ban on Vedic people tilling the land,\textsuperscript{15} springing from the historical disdain of a privileged section of society for manual labour, encouraged the growth of multi-caste villages, where Vedic people held land and the other castes were placed in a social and economic hierarchy of self sustaining rights and services.\textsuperscript{16} They were made as the members of Ur and Sabha. They were given gold, silver donations. They were also given donations in the form of devadhana, brahmadhana, urkkizh iraiyili and chathurvedhi mangalam. These lands were also exempted from the payment of taxes.

When the power was transferred from native rulers to British imperialists, the Vedic people changed their position and learn English language which gave them employment opportunities in offices, schools, colleges and other firms.\textsuperscript{17} These were all helped them to occupy a highest position in the social ladder. Having seen

\textsuperscript{14} Raman (Ed.), \textit{Land Grants and Agrarian Reactions in Chola and Pandiya Times}, Madras University, Archaeological Series, No. 6.1, p. 55. (State Archives, Chennai)
\textsuperscript{16} Thirumalai, \textit{Land Grants and Agrarian Reactions in Chola and Pandiya Times}, Madras University, Madras, 1987, p. 56. (State Archives, Chennai)
\textsuperscript{17} M. N. Srinivas, \textit{op. cit}, pp. 48 – 49.
all these, the folk people and Tamil subalterns resist their moves and challenged their economic prosperity. In spite of their patronage at the hands of Tamil kings, folk people questioned the Vedic people on many occasion. In those days they were feudal lords, tormented the labourer class by putting heavy taxation. People refused to pay the tax amount which resulted problematic situation.\textsuperscript{18} Mass social exclusion was a frequent affair. Many were lost their lives by suicides. History is revealing all above mentioned facts. Through these, they reacted against Vedic people and their superiority nature.

5.4. Political control

Politically, the Vedic people still exercise a vast power. In ancient times, they were acted as rajaguru, purohit and advisor to king gained political prestige.\textsuperscript{19} They were appointed as the presidents and members of the village assemblies.\textsuperscript{20} In the feudal society, they were provided with land grants. The possession of land was considered the symbol of power.

When a way of life is transformed into religion with rituals and priesthood, the dominant groups within religion take hold of religion and exercise authority.\textsuperscript{21} This is exactly what has happened to Vedic religious tradition. The Hindu fundamentalists forces are attempting to institutionalise Vedic religion for the sake of political

\textsuperscript{18} ARE 80 of 1906.
\textsuperscript{20} \textit{ibid}, p. 42.
\textsuperscript{21} \textit{idem}.
power. But Tamil always resist their attempts at the time of their political ascendancy. They have started various political parties, which gave an alternative political status. In fact, Justice Party was the first political party which got membership from non-Brahmins. Due to the caste Hindus mobilisation other political parties based on caste were also started. The growing consciousness on the footsteps of Ambedkar is a success to the Tamil subalterns and Folk people.

5.5. Social control

The Tamil society ever since effected with a strong social control. The Vedic priest enjoyed royal patronage with economic assistance and other endowments gained momentum. When the kingship transformed into colonial rule, the landholder class i.e. Vedic priests became the landlords. They possessed vast agricultural land helped the Vedic people to exercise their authority. The society also accorded with huge respect and accepts their domination for mere sustenance. But later the same group of people started to question the domination of Vedic people in the social realm. Reactionary measures were taken in order to empower the Tamil subalterns by the then DMK regime. The concept of reservation also helped them to get employment opportunities in the government services. So the hold of Vedic people on Tamil society is slowly crumbling.

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5.6. Cultural and linguistic control

The control of Vedic people over culture is also making the process of Sanskritisation as indispensable. The indigenous culture is forced to become outdated and invalid instead the Vedic culture is made popular. The word culture is quite accommodative of various concepts such as food, dress, amusements and what not. One can sensitise the domination of Vedic culture in food, dress and amusements. In the food items, still there are some named as Brahmanal or Iyer food. In dressing sense, they are identical and wanted to prove their individuality. Not only this, they are all wanted to keep their identity. In the language they follow separate consonants such as aaval, aatthu instead of avar, veedu respectively. The popularity is given to such language by various medium make a strong impact on the people to accept these things involuntarily.

5.7. Residential seclusion

The Residential seclusion of present Indian as well as Tamil society is a greatest cause for the existence of Sanskritisation process and customs. The stratified society is the major reason for the existence of vast gap between the Vedic and non-Brahmin people. The residential quarters of Vedic priests are called as agraharam where as the other areas are termed as cheris and kudiyiruppu. Once the non-Brahmins were not allowed to enter into

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23 Personal observation.
24 Personal observation.
the agraharam and if it is happened immediately, they conducted punaskaram and other ceremonies to rejuvenate its lost glory. Even today, they are residing at separate residential quarters. The thing drastically changed in urban areas, where as in rural areas the above said structure is in vogue without any change.

From the ancient times onwards they were given with brahmadeyam and chathurvedhi mangalam to make their residents amidst well fertile land. Brahmin settlements and their concentration were more in the fertile regions than that of other.\textsuperscript{25} Even today, they enjoyed the benefits of these lands which boosted them to adopt the living condition as based on the residential seclusion which make the process of Sanskritisation as an indispensable one. However, a changing economic scenario challenged their residential seclusion. Forcible entry into their residential places became a frequent affair. The propagation on the concept of living together gains momentum.

5.8. Exclusiveness of Vedic peoples’ worship

The folk people give the way for the entry of Vedic priest to the temples of folk tradition not complimented by the Vedic people. Still the Vedic people keep on the exclusiveness of worship in the temples dedicated to the Vedic deities.\textsuperscript{26} Still they maintained it as their traditional right and they are enforcing various orders and restrictions which make the folk people do not get entry into the


temples of Vedic tradition. But in course of time Tamil leaders questioned the exclusiveness of Vedic people's worship. Series of legislations were passed which permitted Tamil subalterns to take part in worship.

5.9. Life style on the basis of Varnasramadharma

In spite of vast opposition to the adherence of Varna theory, still the practice continues to survive in various forms. Especially the Vedic people like to impose the life structure and pattern in the light of varna social order. The Varna social order is on the base of caste system. The caste system result the dominance of one caste over another and caused many more problems. In order to counter it Ambedkar has put forwarded the slogan 'annihilation of caste'. While he forwarded the theory another theory i.e. caste supremacy also forwarded. It is nothing but, the consolidation of lower castes claiming divine birth into a powerful group of people. It is again resulted unwanted problems, such as reigning supremacy of dominant caste over lower caste people. Vedic religion continuously supports this kind of unjust system. The seclusion of Vedic household and their identity and other features are the living examples for the strict adherence of Varnashrama theory.

5.10. Sanskritisation and repression of the Tamils

The Tamils were not silent at the time of Sanskritisation. They register their protest against the process of Sanskritisation through

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27 Ram Puniyani, *op. cit*, p. 211.
various movements. Among them the followings were popular and the activities of movements are explained. Kalabhras were the pioneers in this movement. Thereafter Vaikunda Swamigal, Ayothidasar, Bharathidasan, E.V. Ramasamy and Vanamamalai struggled to regain the lost power and prestige. They made extensive research on the influence of Sanskrit and the introduction of Vedic religion in Tamil society.

5.10.1. Anti-brahmanical attitude of Kalabhras

Kalabhra period was called as 'dark age' because of their anti-brahmanical attitude. They ruled from middle of the 3rd century AD to 6th century AD. This period was deadly against Brahmanical domination. The concession and support rendered to the Brahmins were stopped. They had withdrawn the copperplate, which the source for the donation of Velvikkudi to Korkai Kilan Tharkorran, was a Brahmin by Pandiyan Muthukudimi Peruvazhudhi. They neglected agraharams and ignored Vedic and puranic principles. The Kalabhras during their administration revolutionised the social and religious set up in Tamil Nadu. In 467 AD Vajirananthi founded the 'Dravida Sangam' at Madurai for the development of Tamil literature. It led to the decline of Sanskrit language. During the reign of Kalabhras the Brahmin domination in Tamil Nadu was to some extent prevented.

5.10.2. Vaikunda Swamigal

Vaikunda Swamigal (1808 – 1851) who has heralded the beginning of a massive socio-economic upsurge since, he himself fell a victim to all the disabilities and restrictions. Amidst the
hardships, he led the life of an ascetic and advocated for reforms. Hailing from the lower strata of society Vaikunda Swamigal best understood the disabilities of the lower class and rendered tireless service to their uplift. Against the opposition of the dominant upper castes, they waged a relentless war for getting the basic rights of the lower caste people. The Nadar, the parental community of Vaikunda Swamigal was considered a depressed community during his period. The cultivation of the palmyra tree and toddy tapping formed their whole employment and means of subsistence.

The Ammankovil was the centre of the religious activities of the Nadar settlement. Their temples consisted of small huts inside which were placed rude stones which represented their deities. Closely related to the worship of Bhadrakali, they also worshipped mother goddess in various names viz, Mariamman, Mutharamman and Utchimakaliamman.

They felt misery at the hands of Nambudhiris and Nair. Hence, he declared an uncompromising struggle against the untouchability, slavery, superstition, idolatry, animal sacrifice and demonolatry by the Vedic people. The teachings of Vaikunda Swamigal infused the feeling of self confidence in the minds of downtrodden. In order to inculcate the spirit of self-respect he

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32 *ibid*, pp. 13 – 14.
33 *ibid*, p. 6.
directed the people to wear head-turban which was expected to dispel their fear of the upper caste people.\textsuperscript{34} He starved to liberate the lower caste people from the clutches of feudalism, age-old superstitions, irrational and cruel customs, caste oppression and religious disregard. The socio-religious reform movement organised by Vaigunda Swamigel produced far-reaching changes among the downtrodden people.

\textbf{5.10.3. Ayothidasar}

Ayothidasar (1845 – 1914) was born from a Dalit family at Nilgiris. Following to his family tradition, he had faith in Vaishnava religion and later he converted himself to Buddhist faith.\textsuperscript{35} He has well versed in Siddha medicine and Tamil literature. He was known for his modernisation in Tamil prose. During the times of Ayothidasar, many people were struggled for Swadeshi and social reforms. In which Ayothidasar deviated and made extensive research on the evils of Vedic religion. He has compared and seen the enmity between Dalits and Vedic people with Buddhism and Vedic religion. He found similar features between the struggles of Vedic people with Paraiyar with the modern struggle.\textsuperscript{36} He has identified the Paraiyar people as indigenous Buddhists.\textsuperscript{37} They were all claimed them as the people belonged to kshatriyas and other caste Hindus. Meanwhile, Ayothidasar found the umbilical relations of Paraiyar

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textit{ibid}, p. 87.
\item \textit{ibid}, p. 45.
\item \textit{ibid}, pp. 15 – 16.
\item http://kalachuvadu.com/issue-79/melum-july06.htm accessed on 19th November 2006.
\end{enumerate}
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with Buddhists. With these findings, he has started ‘Sakhya Sangam’ and ‘Tamilan’ magazine to popularise his thoughts and findings. Unfortunately his activities became popular only in Chennai, Royappettah, Mayilapore, Tiruppattur, Kollar Goldmine and few other urban areas. There were no body to continue his research and activities. He has identified folk people as pure. He has admitted the dominance of Madurai Viran, Muni and Mariamman on the day to day lives of folk people. But at the same time he has criticised vehemently the pseudo-folk worshippers who are indulging ill social activities. But at the same time his contribution to rejuvenating Tamil literature and glories of Dravidian people are remembered by the social activists and reformers.

5.10.4. Formation of South India Liberal Federation

It was pioneered by C. Natesa Mudaliyar started an organisation called ‘Madras Dravidian Association’ in 1912. He also started hostel in 1919 known to be ‘Dravidian Society Hostel’ for the benefit of non-Brahmins students. This organisation resolved to publish three dailies ‘Dravidan’ in Tamil, ‘Andhrapradesika’ in Telugu and ‘Justice’ in English. This organisation was renamed as Justice Party in subsequent years. Justice Party worked hard and demanded for the freedom, equal justice and opportunities for all the non-Brahmins.

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39 Rajgowthaman, op. cit, p. 16.
40 http://kalachuvadu.com/issue-79/melum-july06.htm accessed on 19th November 2006.
42 ibid, p. 14.
5.10.5. Bharathidasan

Kanaka Suppurathinam (1891-1964), a native of Pondicherry was an ardent follower of Subramaniya Bharathiyar's literary style and social policies. His high devotion to Bharathiyar prompted him even to change his name to Bharathidasan, follower of Bharathi to reflect his adoration. Because of his revolutionary ideas regarding the eradication of religious superstitions and social discriminations and the use of pure Tamil, he was referred to as Puratchik Kavignan. He has written many songs in different dimension to bring out the realities of Tamils.\(^{43}\)

Bharathidasan considered service to Tamil as his mission in life; save the purity of his mother tongue; lead a virtuous life; change the idiosyncrasies arising from old traditions; and use new formats to convey revolutionary ideas. He has written songs for the temple entry movements\(^{44}\) and opposition to the Vedic priestly
class. He has critcised the Vedic people in his *Dravidar Olukkam* as beggars and their physical appearance did not attract him. He also questioned the credibility of a group of people, who are always supporting them. Like so many other social reformers, Bharathidasan desired that his society did not lag behind others in the march of progress. With this in mind he suggested that other aspects should be considered in the formulation of new literary policies.

5.10.6. E.V. Ramasamy

It was E.V. Ramasamy's firm conviction that universal enjoyment of human rights will become a reality only when the *Varna-Jaathi* (caste) system was eradicated. Until the social reconstruction took place, he wanted communal representation as a measure of affirmative action to, uphold social justice. So he tried, every year from 1919, to make the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee to accept the policy of reservation to different social groups and communities. But his efforts bore no fruit in this regard. Finally he left Congress in November 1925 at the Kancheepuram Conference. He had to part in the company with Gandhi because the later was not
prepared to put an end to the Brahmin domination and to fight against caste system.

In 1922, E.V. Ramasamy moved a resolution in the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee when it met at Tiruppur. The resolution required people of all castes to be allowed to enter and worship in all the temples, as a measure to end birth-based discrimination. Citing the authority of Vedas and other Hindu scriptures, the Brahmin members of the Committee opposed the resolution and stalled its passage. This reactionary stand of the members of upper Varna provoked E.V. Ramasamy to declare that he would burn Manudharma Sastra and Ramayana to show his disapproval to accept such scriptures to govern the social, religious and cultural aspects of the people.

E.V. Ramasamy's determination to bring about socio-cultural revolution impelled him to support even his opponents when they implemented his progressive scheme. Though a Congress leader, he supported in 1923, the Justice Party's measure to form Hindu Religious Endowment Board with a view to put an end to the age-old monopoly and exploitation of the upper castes in the managements of Hindu temples and religious endowments.

At Cheranmaadevi near Tirunelveli in southern Tamil Nadu, the Congress started a national training school as an alternative to

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those run under the control of the British Government. That school, known as Gurukulam, was funded by the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee and by other non-Brahmin philanthropists. It was managed by V.V.S. Iyer. Under his management, they showed discrimination between the Brahmin and Non-Brahmin students. Brahmin boys were treated in a better way than the others with regard to food, shelter and the curriculum. Along with his companions E.V. Ramasamy stoutly opposed the discriminatory practice and put an end to it.  

E.V. Ramasamy has started a new movement in 1925 known as self-respect movement. Previously he also started revolt against the low castes were not permitted to enter the temples by Vedic priests. In 1924, the oppressed people at Vaikom, in Kerala state, protested against the inhuman attitude of the Brahmins and launched a historic struggle to get permission to enter the temples. He also proposed the Anti-Hindi agitation.  

E.V. Ramasamy's concept of Dravidians was not based on the purity of blood related to a race, but on values and ways of life. The Brahminical upper castes who followed the discriminatory socio-cultural principles, practices and traditions of Varna-Jaathi originally enunciated in the Sanskrit scriptures like Vedas, Ithihaasas, Puranas, Dharma Sastras. Those who subscribe to the egalitarian Tamil tradition and values of humanism are Dravidians. It may be recalled here that while addressing the conference of

50 Maruthavan, op. cit, p. 11.
Backward Classes and Scheduled Castes in Kanpoor in Uttar Pradesh in December 1944, he appealed to the Non-Brahmins of North-India to give up the religious appellation of Hindu and call themselves as Dravidians.

The Periyar Self-respect Propaganda Institution was registered on 23rd September 1952. In 1953, as instructed by E.V. Ramasamy, the Buddha's Day was celebrated throughout the state urging the need to follow a rationalist way of life, and the idols of the elephant god Vinayaga (Ganesha) were broken to demonstrate symbolically the inefficacy of the innumerable deities worshipped by the educated and uneducated people.51

Ambedkar and E.V. Ramasamy had similar views on almost all the points related to socio-religious issues in India. On 1st August 1956, the Dravidar Kazhagam undertook an agitation of burning the portrait of Rama as he symbolised the preservation of Varna dharma52 E.V. Ramasamy was placed under preventive arrest on this occasion. In those days, the board ‘Brahmins Hotel’ was displayed, following the lead given by the Brahmins; to indicate that only vegetarian food was served there. Dravidar Kazhagam objected to the Varna dharma connotation and started an agitation symbolically in front of a hotel in Madras on 5th May 1957. Batches of volunteers agitated daily and 1010 of them courted arrest till 22nd March 1958 when it culminated in success.53

52 Maruthavanan, op. cit, p. 9.
‘Unmai’, a Tamil monthly (now a fortnightly) and Modern Rationalist, an English monthly, were started by Periyar in 1970 and 1971 respectively to propagate the ideals of rational humanism more extensively. The Allahabad High Court lifted proscription of the Hindi version of Periyar's book on Ramayana in 1971. In the same year the proscription of “Ravana Kavyam” proscribed by the Congress Government of the Madras State was removed. On 12th January 1971, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) Government enacted a law giving equal opportunities to qualified persons to become the Archakas (priests) of Hindu Agamic temples irrespective of their birth in any Varna or Jaathi. On 23rd January a huge ‘procession of the eradication of superstitions’ took place in Salem. The processionists carried large pictures and portraits truly depicting the events and gods described in epics and puranas. When a few intolerant orthodox onlookers threw foot wears at the procession, the marchers used the same materials to beat the portrait of Rama beheading the Shudra Sambuka in deep meditation. This action of the Periyarists was blown out of proportion by the media throughout India. They also published the pictures of gods and goddesses carried by the marchers. This event was used against DMK-Congress alliance in the general elections held in March 1971. But both the parties secured massive majority, the DMK in Tamil Nadu Assembly and the Congress in the Lokh Sabha.

On 14th March 1972 the Supreme Court gave a seemingly ambiguous judgment in the case against the Tamil Nadu Government's 1971 enactment that threw the job of Archakas open to
all the qualified persons irrespective of their caste. As the bureaucracy interpreted this judgement, in favour of the conservatives who defended the status quo, Periyar announced an agitation, exhorting people to work for equal human rights in all spheres including social, religious and cultural. This agitation had become necessary to remove the indignity to the people belonging to the Dravidian race because they were dubbed as Shudras and *Panchamas* (outcastes) according to Vedic and Brahminical *Sanathana Dharma* known as Hindu religion.

Periyar organised a conference in Chennai on 8th and 9th December 1973. It was known as ‘Eradication of the social indignity of the Tamils Conference’. The conference decided to fight for equal rights and opportunities for persons of all castes to enter into *Garba Graha* (Sanctum Sanctorum), known as ‘Karuvarai Nuzhaivu Porattam’ in Tamil. He undertook extensive tours to explain the need to bring to an end the Brahmin domination or privileges in priesthood and in other religious rites and ceremonies as an essential measure to reorganise the social order on the basis of equality.

E.V. Ramasamy’s radical social reform programme, his critical view of religious literature and the propagation of rationalist ideas still makes a stir. Unmindful of many opposition, he continued his onward march and gathered around him the youth and the common people in his times.

5.10.7. Vanamamalai

Vanamamalai was an independent folklorist in the Tirunelveli area. It is not surprising that Vanamamalai worked outside of
academia: it seems his approach and interests might have been too radical to be acceptable to the Indian government. He founded a research group in 1968, and a journal, *Aaraichi*, in 1971. In addition to promoting the use of Tamil language in schools and colleges, he paid special attention to the ballads that were and are performed in the Tirunelveli area. He believed that “The primary requirement for research in this field is to collect all available manuscripts, and edit them and bring them out in book form,” and he did so with numerous editions.

One innovation of Vanamamalai is the attention he pays to how folklore can change over time due to social pressures: Blackburn tells of how Vanamamalai questioned a particular Villupattu artist about why a story had been changed. The traditional story tells of a Brahmin hero who married two low-caste women and was eventually killed for doing so. In the modified version, the two sisters were changed to having been originally been born Brahmins, but had been left in the forest as infants and then raised by low-caste people. Vanamamalai discovered from the performer that his patron had pressured the performer to make this change: Vanamamalai also reports that the people had rejected this change and had demanded the ‘authentic’ version.

The message of revolt against social barriers obstructing humanism and love strikes fear in the minds of the fanatics who

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54 [http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/~emiller](http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/~emiller) / Tamil Folklore Studies: The Contemporary Scene and its Background by Eric Miller Submitted in December 2000 for the course, *History of Folklore Studies*, at the University of Pennsylvania accessed on 10th November 2006.

55 *ibid.*
desire to preserve caste structure. They attempt to change the theme of the ballads by whittling down the spirit of revolt. Thus they put into currency certain versions of the ballad of Muttuppattan in which the heroines become illegitimate children of a Brahmin woman... But these fake ballads were rejected by the folks and soon they disappeared from circulation. The true folk ballads reflecting the values of the folks still continue to be current among them.56

In recognising the role of the patron in affecting the performance, Vanamamalai took a great step in advancing folklore studies in Tamil Nadu. Vanamamalai rejected the myth of folklore as “timeless, self-contained village traditions” and instead acknowledged the “cross-cutting cultural flows of the postcolonial present”.

To conclude the process of Sanskritisation is not a recent phenomena and happened throughout the ages. If the process resulted downward mobility would have caused much appreciation from the downtrodden masses. Instead of it, is resulted only the vertical mobility. Once again, the revivalists and Vedic people wanted to establish the domination over Tamil subalterns. Hence, it receives various types of opposition. Vaikunda Swamigal, Ayothisasar, Bharathidasan, EV Ramasamy, Vanamamalai and others were against the Vedic social order. They also made extensive research on the influence of Sanskrit and the introduction of Vedic religion in Tamil society.

56 idem.