Conclusion
CONCLUSION

The content of folk religion may look rather simple. The gods play different role – they bless and also punish. They administer diseases and also rains. They protect or withhold blessings. And they give reasons for doing right or wrong. They do not seem to liberate people but neither do they stand in the way of liberation. For a precise understanding of folk religion more research would be needed than was possible in the present study. People do not confine themselves to their *kuladevata* or their *ishtadevata*. They may worship the god in a certain form but their understanding of god also transcends to inanimate form. People may use magic in order to attain protection and a feeling of security but their attitude towards their god is not simply a *do ut des* (bargaining). They may approach the god with certain intentions but finally they do not believe that they can manipulate the god. Manipulation of evil spirits and adverse forces is however, believed to be possible.

The presence of God is very much experienced as the presence of energy in nature, in things and in people. Ayrookuzhiel, describes harvesting and sowing are rituals observed to perceive the presence of the goddess in the bundle of paddy and in the cooked rice. These things represent the energy of the goddess.¹

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Conclusion

The need of the Dravidian religious identity is becoming bone of contention between Vedic and subaltern classes. Now-a-days people are more cautious about their religious identity. One group of non-Brahmins is trying to free from the clutches of Vedic rituals. Another group of people observed Vedic rituals and customs. The former thought that a separate religious identity for the non-Brahmins is a must. But the later Sanskritised their religious rituals, customs and ceremonies.

The conception and characterisation of the folk deities is the outward sign of religious liberation of the folk people. They are closely related to the subaltern peoples’ custom, beliefs and characters. Sanskritisation or Brahmanisation is the foundation of all sorts of disparities. The process of Sanskritisation in society with regard to south India came into effect only after the Pallava’s rule and then it continued during Cholas, Pandyas and the rule of chieftains. They gave preference to the Vedic community, and influenced all the spheres such as social, economic, political and cultural life. They slowly influenced religion too and emerged as a priestly class to the non-Brahmin temples. The thing to be remembered is that they never allowed lower castes and subalterns to become a temple priest in traditional temples.

There was an ideological struggle between folk deities and Vedic deities in cultural level. In which, Vedic deities cannot compete with them, which resulted the personification and incarnation of Vedic deities. The deity Muruga is worshipped in
broader level was previously a folk deity. He demanded blood sacrifices from his devotees. Valli was his wife. He was first assimilated with Vedic religion. He got names such as Shanmuga, Karthikeyan, Subramaniyan and also was made as the son of Lord Siva. Deivayanai, the daughter of Indra was made the wife of Muruga and his first wife belonged to the Kuravar community was made as his second wife. Now, Lord Muruga has been represented as god of Saiva tradition. Hence, Muruga, is the first victim in the cultural battle between Vedic and Folk people. The process is also called as Sanskritisation.

The Sanskritised worshippers when they improved their economic status regarded the blood sacrifices and parai music as polluted one. They invited the Vedic priests and conducted the Kumbhabishekam ritual and in due course they got rid of the blood sacrifices. Through this method many deities were also Sanskritised. But they are all less in number compared to the galaxy of Folk deities.

The popular deity Mariamman is now made as the avatar of Renukadevi. Renukadevi was the mother of Parasuraman. Based on the puranas, Parasuraman was one of the incarnations of Lord Vishnu. At the behest of his father Sage Brighu, he had cut down the head of Renukadevi and later fitted her head with a Paraiyar woman. This type of story is being popularised throughout Tamil Nadu with various means. Only the head of Renukadevi is worshipped in most
part of Tamil Nadu. Hence the full body of Mariamman is not worshipped in some places.

With this means many deities were either incorporated with Vedic religion or annihilated. Kotravai, Kali and Durga were all made as the wives of Siva and are all converted the different personifications of goddess Parvathi. Mayon, a deity of ancient Tamils was fused with Vishnu, a Vedic deity. Indra, Chandra, Baladevan, Surya were once the deities of ancient Tamils and in due course were eliminated. Eventually Vinayaka deity was introduced. Sudalai Madan and Aiyanar, popular deities of folk people are made as the avatars of Siva and Vishnu respectively. Thus the Dravidian religion and Vedic religion fused together and has given the birth of concept of neo-Hinduism. The concept of neo-Hinduism is mixed with Hindutva ideology.

The evolution of Vedic religion can be associated with cultural dominance of Vedic people. The Census of 1881 pointed out the worshippers of folk deities as Hindu and it got constitutional guarantee in 1950. Though, Indian constitution recognises them as Hindu but rarely find entry into the sanctum sanctorum of Saiva and Vaishnavite temples. This is paradoxical. In order to gain political support they are termed as Hindus for securing vote bank.

The motto of Sangh Parivar is to create Hindu Rashtra. For this they are organising the worshippers of folk deities into Hindu fold. Sanskritisation is used as their method. For this both offensive and submissive methods are applied. The concept of liberalism in the
folk deities is contrary to Saiva, Vaishnava and Vedic ideologies. These qualities are considered hindrance to the Hindutva elements. In spite of all above elements, Sangh Parivar continues its efforts to succeed in it.

Neither Sanskritisation, nor Brahmanisation or Hinduisation is conducive to folk people. It created a pseudo religious mobility and never benefited the folk people to get religious or political or social equity. The process of Sanskritisation is applied for political consolidation rather vertical mobility. In reality it does not benefit the folk people to improve their status in social, economical, political and cultural level. In contrast it further deteriorated the position of folk people as pawns in the political chess board.

Brahmanism is not a physical force, but it is an ideological force. The characteristics and features of Brahmanism are slowly filtered in the minds of people through religious ideologies and cultural ethos. However, the process of Sanskritisation never allowed the rural folk or downtrodden to shine in the political front. Under the guise of religion a stage of political inactivity was expected from the folk. They were always to remain as the stepping stones of the higher castes.

In due course of time, folk people identify them as ‘Hindus’, is the strength of Hindutva forces. With this strength they bring a lingam or Vinayaka or Anjaneya idol and installed in the temples of Kali amman, Mariamman and Sudalai. Then they have conducted Kumbhabishekam and Vedic priests were appointed to perform pujas
and ceremonies. Slowly, the deity Sudalai transformed into Siva and Kaliamman, Mariamman into the avatars of Parvathi Devi.

In order to bring the mass in Hindutva ideology, a new weapon in the form of Sanskritisation of folk deities is started. While, Sanskritising the folk deities, there are people accepting Sanskritisation as a means for vertical mobility. Another group of people criticised the worship of folk deities. At this juncture to tackle the problems of Hindutva forces, the Dalit intellectuals questioned the resurging popularity of Vedic deities. Yet, the fundamentalists and Hindutva forces resort all sorts of methods in order to bring complete Sanskritisation.

It is to be admitted that the caste is a dominant factor in the worship of the deities of folk tradition. The struggle between lower caste people and the higher caste goes on in the cultural realm. In India, it has resulted in the religious conversion, religious amity and religious hatredness. Hence, there is a greatest task before the social activists. First they must accept folk deities as their natural allies in the struggle against Hindutva forces. Sangh Parivar and fundamentalists forces can interfere only with the popular folk deities and country wide known deities. They cannot interfere with the family deity kulatheivam and other form of folk worship still today. Kumbhabishekam ritual is not administered to all the folk deities. There are so many temples even today, which Vedic people have not entered.
Finally, it is quite necessary to analyse whether Hindu revivalism is possible or not? The development of communication carried Sanskritisation and Hinduism to areas previously inaccessible one, and the spread of literacy carried it to groups in the low caste hierarchy. Western technology – railways, press, radio and other forms of communication – have aided the spread of Sanskritisation\(^2\). Indian films are popularising stories and incidents borrowed from the epics, \textit{puranas}, and other religious and semi-religious books. The Vedic people are ready to Sanskritise all walks of life, but they not at all ready to loose their status as twice – born. They assimilate all forms of worship, gods and goddesses and philosophy into one but keep them below their Vedic deities.

S.L. Kalia has described the process of ‘tribalisation’ occurring in Jaunsar-Bawar in Uttar Pradesh and in the Bastar region of Madhya Pradesh, according to which high-caste Hindus temporarily reside among tribal people and follow the latter’s mores, rituals and beliefs, which are in many respects antithetical to their own. Each caste in the village knows the rules it has to obey and the punishment that follows violation. The elders of the concerned or dominant caste punish violation with fine, infliction of physical pain, or outcasting. Thus small number of Vedic priests or other high castes may gradually assimilate elements from the culture of a locally dominant caste. This is likely to happen when communications are poor, and there is no regular contact with towns,

centres of pilgrimage and monasteries. The representatives of the Vedic tradition who reside in tribal villages slowly and steadily transform the tribal into their ethos.

To conclude the non-Brahmins in the name of Hindu revivalism is brought to the fold of Brahmin ideology. Though Hindu revivalism has already happened in different spheres, now it enters into the revival of the Folk deities. The insular characteristics of Folk deities are subjected to the cultural ideological invasion. Accordingly, one has to find dualism in the characteristics of Folk deities. Positively constructed, they present a pluralistic character. This pluralistic character is considered as revivalism. Hence, the revivalism is not a willfully accepted norm of the folk tradition.