CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

From the commencement of the 19th century Tamil Nadu, the then Madras Presidency, met with many transitions in various fields. In 1801 the British East India Company took over the administration of Madras. At the same time the aliens had to face the opposition of the natives of this region. The Vellore Mutiny of 1806 A.D. could be cited as a suitable illustration. But the British suppressed all the derogatory powers and maintained stability in the state and that compels one to have an estimate of the historical facts as pointed by Saint Ramalinga Vallalar as depicted in his Thiruvarutpa, which is compiled and edited as six Thirumurais on the basis of the twelve Saiva canonical works compiled earlier during the period of Raja Raja the Great (985 – 1014 A.D.) by Nambiyandar Nambi.

Further, Tamil, a classical language, even from the Sangam age, which lasted from the 3rd century B.C. and the 3rd century AD\(^1\) had its own developed literary merits. In the Sangam age, the Augustan age of Tamil literature, were produced the grammatical work like Tholkappiyam, the compiled works such as Pathuppattu, Ettuthogai and Pathinenkilkanakku, the twin epics Cilappathikaram a

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Jain work by Elango and *Manimegalai* a Buddhist work by Seethalai Sathanar. These major works which enhanced the status and prestige of the Tamils. After the termination of the Kalabhra interregnum i.e., after the sixth century the devotional literature attained a conspicuous place in the Tamil Literary world\(^2\). The works by the four Saiva Saints called Gnanasambandar, Appar, Sundarar and Manickavasagar occupied a significant place as Saiva canonical works in Tamil literature. The compiled works of the 12 Vaishnava Alvars *Nalayira Divyaprabandam* by Nathamuni around 823 A.D\(^3\) also broadened the prosperity of Tamil literature. *Namdhikkalambagam* on Nandhivarman by an anonymous author, *Muthollayiram* another work and *Kalingattupparani* by Jayankondar were a few other Tamil works which had historical background. Kambar’s *Kamba Ramayanam* and Kachiyappar’s *Kandapuranam* formed the basis for epic grandeur and exposed the syncretism of northern Sanskritic as well as the southern Tamil themes and forms.

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When the Vijayanagar and Nayak rulers attained a predominant position in Tamil Nadu after the 16th century different varieties of Tamil works such as Pillai Tamil, Sthalapuranams etc, came out in great numbers. St.Arunagirinathar enhanced the prestige of Muruga cult in Tamil Nadu during the 17th century by his works such as Thiruppugal, Kandaralangaram, Kandar Anubuhudi etc. Thutu and Pallu literature also came up during the contemporary periods. On that line St.Ramalingar, also known as Thiruvutarpirakasa Vallalar or Vadalur Vallalar, the renowned Tamil siddha poet emerged and produced his Thiruvutarutpa mainly to enrich Bhakti or devotion through his Samarasa Suddha Sanmarga Sangam during his life time (1823-1874 A.D). To promote Bhakti, he himself served as a model for others by his flawless austere life. Being a pragmatist and religious, tolerant, he preached the universal nature of God and condemned the normal ways of life of the common folk. He attacked and opposed the ritualistic form of worship, worship of folk and minor deities and offering blood sacrifices for achieving their ends. By gradual practices he realized that he had come into this world to offer certain messages. He himself had reiterated his personal traits, qualities and purposes of his life in his Thiruvutarutpa.

He repudiated the superstitious nature of people. He had unhesitatingly expressed his aversion to the condition of the rulers who were not generous and indulged in ingenuine acts. He had pointed out that the rule of Sanmarga alone will be a nanmarga. Being a spiritualist, he was meek, humble and simple in living for others.

His Thiruvarutpa preaches non-violence, compassion, selfless and dedicated service to all. As he was also a scholar, poet and saint of the contemporary period of Indian Renaissance, which emerged through the efforts of Dayananda Saraswathi, Kesab Chandra Sen and others, Vallalar too became a social reformer. He stood against casteism, Varnashrama Dharma etc. He was an individual, who strove hard to promote his philosophy through Sanmarga Viveka Vriddhi, a monthly journal. In the same way in 1867 itself he established a Dharmasalai at Vadalur on 23, May. Further he was keen on establishing a hospital (Vaidyasalai), Orphanage (Upakarasalai), Developmental institution (Viruddhisalai), place for medicine (Upasanasalai). Unfortunately he could not achieve anything. But he, without minding the everlasting ignorance of people, loved all equally and continued his services by his infinite compassion. Through Thiruvarutpa which comprises 5818 songs in all compiled in six Thirumurais one should know the historical facts and details available in them.

After the publications of the earlier *Thirumurais* during the period between 1851 and 1887, only in 1896 the complete volume of the six *Thirumurais* of *Thiruvarutpa* was published by Ramanatha Mudaliyar.

Another version came up in 1924 due to the services of T.N. Muthiah Chettiyar. In 1972, the *Uran Adigal* edition came up. By adopting the method of using devotional songs called *Thiruvarutpa*, Vallalar had exposed the social, political, economic and religious conditions along with his autobiographic touches. As such, it will be apt and appropriate to have an analysis of that devotional work in a historical perspective. As he had given greater veneration for the spiritual attainments of Appar, Sundaramurthy, Manickavasagar and Thirumoolar’s *Thirumandiram* he had exhibited such devotions in different places in his *Thiruvarutpa*. Thus, he had evidenced his knowledge of Hindu philosophy in a simple way. His prose works such as *Manumurai Kanda Vasagam*, *Jivakarunya Olukkam*, *Olivilodukka Payira Vriddhi*, *Tondamandala Satagam*, *Meimolipporul Vilakkam*, *Muligai Guna Attavanai*, *Preachings*, *Invitations*, (*Alaippugal*) Appeals (*Vinnappams*) etc. corroborate his multifaceted personality and versatile genius. Through his writings he had thrown greater light on the various historical facts of the contemporary period.
It will be beneficial to the world of history in estimating the pursuits of a devotional personality and his contributions to the contemporary society through his works. The different facts pertaining to Thiruvarutpa in its historical setting were analysed in eight chapters which also include the introductory and concluding chapters. All the facts are brought out with a critical analysis of the entire six Thirumurais of Thiruvarutpa in a historical perspective. Analytical, comparative and interpretative historical research methodology were employed in the succeeding pages for having a net result of the research work. Importance was also assigned to the comparative analysis. The whole study is the outcome of the investigation of the primary work Thiruvarutpa. So both primary and secondary sources are made use of. The sources utilized are acknowledged and find their place in the genuine footnotes in each page. At the end a bibliography is appended, which also will reveals the various sources employed.

On par with the satisfaction of the normal condition of the historical research, the different aspects such as the objectives of the study, the chapters allotted and the primary as well as secondary sources employed will be described in the introductory chapter. This chapter will explicate the methodology as well as the introductory remarks of the subject matter.
The second chapter St. Ramalingar highlights the life sketch of the saint who was the author of Thiruvarutpa. The coverage of the significant events in his life time are explained in a chronological order. Simultaneously, his ever-growing spiritual bent of mind is also discussed. His stay at different places and his enrichment of the spiritual virtues by his own individual traits also find their place in this chapter. He had expressed his powers of Siddhi in various places in his works. The controversies for his marutpa, his personal interests towards the earlier Tamil devotional scriptures are also specified. For promoting his various ideas and Samarasa Sanmarga Sangham he had employed different tactics and techniques. The importance assigned to universal brotherhood and integrated approach by the establishment of many institutions are also be highlighted. Various publications of the works of Vallalar came up after his demise. Such details too find their place in this chapter. The contents of all the six Thirumurais of Thiruvarutpa are given in order to have an estimate of the concept of Vallalar.
The manifold prose works of Vallalar will be given with a comprehensive note for enabling the readers to notice the versatility of the scholar. The third chapter entitled The Contemporary Tamil Society is included to have an estimate of the condition of the then Tamil country of his age. It will be beneficial to have an analysis of the then social setup as shown by St. Ramalingar. The ways of the life of the Tamils are explained in detail. In this regard the importance assigned to non-violence or Jivakarunya or compassion by Vallalar in the form of preaching is highlighted. The social customs such as burial, the importance assigned to the individual qualities, the relationship which prevailed between the father and the son, the stress offered to trade and commerce etc., are explained in detail as depicted in Thiruvarutpa. The social disparities which existed then in the society and the importance assigned to education also are disclosed.

The fourth chapter is a discussion on the Social Philosophy of Vallalar. The period of St. Ramalingar was one of a critical nature. Though he had not talked anything about the great outbreak of 1857 and the Transfer of Power from the hands of the East India Company to the British crown, one cannot deny that the Tamils were also facing the consequences of the far-sighted awakening at all India level.
In addition the social transformations that took place in those days Vallalar also propamded his concepts such as Anmaneya Orumaippadu (Spiritual oneness), Jivakarunya Olukkam (Compassion for all living beings), Suddha Sanmargam (Pure righteous path) and Maranamillaperuvalvu (embodied immortality). Being a mystical poet and saint he was particular in serving as a medium between man and God. Hence his concepts were the orders of God to elevate the normal human beings to a higher plane. Further, as he was a pragmatist he had given his concepts to people. But he lamented a lot when people were unable to understand the realities as well as the natural ways of living. He had criticized life as attachment (Maiyal Valkkai). His works such as Tiruppalli Eluchchi, Arutperumjothi Ahaval, Arutpirakasamalai, Arramai, Pirappavam Poradu Pedurai etc. attest to his social philosophy. As they are all the outcomes of his direct communion with the society of his age such facts will be dealt with separately. That, in turn, will form a part and parcel of the social history of the Tamils of the period.

As the period of Vallalar was one of political storm and stresses, one should be much fascinated in estimating the political ideas of the saint. In this regard it will be apt to know his views about the existence and consequences of the alien rule.
He had never talked anything about political parties, but had informed that a democratic rule without any disparity among men should be put into practice. He had shown an affirmative approach to divine right theory of kingship. He never approved of the merciless rule, and demanded a rule by people of grace and righteous path. He had shown his aversion to wars which were employed for expansion and consolidation. He stood for the rule of God. As these facts form the part and parcel of the political history of the period it is a must to have an idea about his **Political ideas** in a separate chapter.

The period of Vallalar was one of political storm and economic constrains for the Indians. The wealth of the Indians were drained by the alien rule which was executed mostly by the merchants. He never approved of social disparities. His materialistic age was one which gave greater veneration for money and that was despised by Vallalar even from his childhood days. He had touched upon the occupational economy. He had a proper estimate of the rich of the contemporary society and had expressed his opposition to the materialistic way of life. As he stood against the collection of interest, he had explained the horrors of the abnormal rate of interest. He could not bear with those people who approached him in hunger and without dress.
That too indicates that he stood against poverty and want. Especially, he felt much over the deplorable condition of the farmers who suffered much due to their borrowings. As it was a period which showed greater veneration for money and wealth he rejected such an aspect. To exhibit such aspects a separate chapter called Economic ideas will be included as the sixth chapter and that in turn will describe the importance accorded to the economic ideas based on the then existed political concepts.

The seventh chapter entitled Religious Ideas is yet another approach to have an analysis of the saint’s religious bent of mind. He had pinpointed the importance of his purpose to visit this world and that was to preach the gospel of divinity. Even at the age of nine he obtained the grace of God in 1832 A.D. As he was a preacher and propagandist of Saivism he gave much importance to Devaram hymnists. While Gnanasambandar, Appar and Sundarar gave importance to the Linga form of worship, Manickavasagar attached significance to Siva as a cosmic dancer, Vadalur Vallalar by the marga of compassion treated the worship of Jothi. His Thiruvarutpa reveals that he had faith over Samarasa Sanmarga. Through initially he worshipped Thulukkanathamman, Vadivudaya Amman and Murugan, gradually he became the worshipper of Siva and finally he became a Sanmargi.
By instituting various organizations **Samarasa Veda Sanmarga Sanga Salai** etc. he endeavored to promote his religious concepts. He himself had expressed his gradual promotion of his religious principles and philosophy. He had repudiated image-worship and rituals along with blood sacrifices.

The facts analysed in the above chapters are comprehensively described as conclusion. The facts narrated in various chapters after the analysis by a historical methodology reveal that **Thiruvarutpa** is not at all a mere religious work. It is worth to note that the work of Vadalur **Vallalar** is a historical work which contains various facts relating to social, political, economic and religious conditions of contemporary Tamil Nadu. So the research work undertaken under the title **Thiruvarutpa in its Historical Setting** will certainly add up a new chapter in the socio-cultural history of Tamil Nadu. Further, this research also explicates the historicity of the religious work called **Thiruvarutpa**.

The entire study is covered on the basis of primary as well as secondary sources. The various works written by **Vallalar**, the letters written by **Vallalar**, Gazetteers and Manuals, the stone slab inscriptions etc, are treated as primary sources. Further, facts have also been collected by personal visits to various places associated with the saint.
Such facts obtained are available from the places such as Chinnakavanam, Chennai, Ponneri, Marudur, Karunguli, Siddhivalagam,(Mettukuppam) Pannadam, Vadalur, Rameswaram, Kenikkarai, Muhavai Urani, Arrangarai, Vallanadu etc. The various authorities associated with many of the institutions of Vallalar located at different places were also met in person and facts were collected in these areas. The Secretary of the Arivoli Ashramam, Karanappattu, Guruji, who is the in charge of the grand mother’s residence at Chinnakavanam, the Gurukkal of the Tulukkanathamman temple at Chennai, the President of the Samarasa Sanmarga Araichinilayam at Vadalur etc, are the persons met and from whom the materials required were collected Various published works on Vallalar and Thiruvarutpa and other publications which contain facts relevant to the thesis are also consulted. They are both in Tamil and English. Thiruvarutpirakasa Vallalar Varalaru by Thiruvarutpirakasa Deiva Nilayam, Vallalar, the Embhodiment of Grace Light by Dayanithi, Ramalinga Adigal Varalaru, Puratchi Thuravi Vallalar, Thiruvarutpa Thirattu, etc., by Uran Adigal, Ramalingam Pillai Padal, Abasa Darppanam by P.S. Murugesu Mudaliyar, Vallalar Ramalingar Valvum Vakkum by P.S, Acharya, Vallalar Kanda Orumappadu.
By Sivagbaban M.P., Vallalar Valvum, Vakkum By Natarajan A.L., Thiruvarutpa Chinthanai by Vellai Varanar K., Ramalinga Swamigal Thiruvullam by Thiru. V. Kalyanasundaranar, Arutguru Aruljothimalar by D. Sambasivan etc., are the few Tamil works which are consulted for the making this thesis S.P. Annamalai’s Life and Teachings of St. Ramalingar, Suddhanantha Bharathiyar’s St. Ramaligam, S.R.V. Aram’s Voice of Vallalar, etc., are the few English works utilized for writing the thesis. Siddhantha Deepigai, a monthly journal, Ramalinga Panimanra Muttingal idal etc. are few other sources utilized.

Thus, the thesis Thiruvarutpa in its historical setting is one which offers the various historical facts made available in his work by Thiruvarutpirakasa Vallalar or St. Ramalingar.