Chapter : 7

Conclusion

The foregoing chapters embody the following truths:

Puraṇās and Veda

Puranas form the foundation of Indian ethos along with Sruti and Smriti. Its antiquity is next only to that of Vedas. They enjoy a high place in Indian tradition and Indian religious literature, similar to that of the Vedas.

There are many traditions of Hinduism. The most talked about one is the Vedic religion, which has the oldest recorded scripture, Vedas. The other traditions that coexisted, though not in recorded form but in oral form, with that of Vedic religion from pre-vedic times, on a large scale were idol worship (puja) and tapas

The Itiḥāsās, Rāmāyaṇā and Mahābhārata contain ample references to Puja, (idol worship) and temple worship. They also contain references to the tradition of bathing in holy rivers and visiting places of religious significance i.e Tirtha Yatra.

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1 A press report in the columns of Thuglak issue dated 4-7-07, in page 31 states that the World Heritage Committee of U.N.E.S.C.O has included 30 manuscripts of Rig Veda in its list of heritage to be protected on the ground that the Rig Veda is 3500 years old.
Origin of Purāṇas

The process of recording the various oral traditions started at the close of Vedic age and this resulted in the emergence of Puranas. This happened between 500 B.C and 600 A.D and this long period can be called the Age of Puranas and Dharmasastras. "This is the age when the two great Epics and the principal Smritis and Puranas were composed and no works of this class, written after this period, received that sanctity as authoritative treatise on Hindu laws, customs, and religious practices, which was accorded to them. As a matter of fact, it was tacitly accepted by all concerned that the age of authentic or sacred Dharmasastras was closed, and the energies of the succeeding age were confined to commentaries and expositions."  

The most outstanding feature of the succeeding age is that the human authors of this age were denied the divine or semi-divine rank which was now accorded to the Rishis of the old age who were supposed to have composed the Smritis, Puranas, Epics and other religious texts. Thus, the 6th century A.D. may be roughly regarded as the lower limit of the age of authority and composition of sacred texts which formed the theoretical basis of Hindu society for all time to come. It was the accepted boundary line between the age of new creation and blind acceptance, and marked once for all the period after which, theoretically at least, nothing new could be authoritatively added to the frame work of Hindu society."  

"this period begins with a ferment of new religious ideas and bold philosophical speculations which ultimately find expression in the growth of heterodox sects like Buddhist and Jain, and theistic systems like Saivism and Vaishnavism. The religious

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2 MAJUMDAR, R.C: Indian Culture – A historical review:p7
3 MAJUMDAR, R.C: Indian Culture – A historical review:p7
concepts of the Vedic period slowly but steadily lose ground till they are all but ousted by the new beliefs.”

“The two great theistic religions, viz. Vaishnavism and Saivism were soon absorbed in the fold of Brahmanical religion and radically changed its character. In course of time Saivism came to be the leading religious sect of the Hindus.”

**Vedas, Yagña and the Oral Tradition**

Besides the Brahmanical religion guided by Sruti (Veda) and Smiriti (Law books) there were various popular systems which arose in different parts of the country. Some of the systems like Buddhism, Jainism etc were openly antagonistic to the Brahminical ideas, some like Brahmas, Pancharatra vaishnavam, Bhagavata vaishnavam. Pasupata Saivam had their principal deities identified from very early times with those of the Vedas, and some like Saktam and Ganapatyam, though originally non-vedic, were traced into Vedas in later times.

When non-vedic creeds especially Buddhism gained an accession of political power, this power was employed to promote actively the non-vedic creeds at the expense of vedic creeds. This resulted in the Vedic religion losing its hold over the Hindu society. A large section of population was crossing over to the non-vedic creeds like Buddhism.

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4 ibid:p8
5 ibid: p 9
6 GNAANASAMBANDAN.A.S: Periya Puranam Or Ayvu: p176,247

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The evolution of Purāṇas

To arrest this trend, corrective action came from the other popular systems, which were not totally opposed to Vedas. They moved up to fill the space vacated by Vedic religion. Now, the need to record the traditions belonging to these systems arose. This resulted in the birth of various Puranas. As the oral traditions were varied and voluminous, Puranas were also varied and many. Though the Puranas, were different from Vedas in their content, Philosophy and religious practice, they did not adopt an antagonistic posture to Vedas. They sought to project themselves as continuation or extension of Vedas.

The Puranas were written in the language of the people of that time, what we call modern Sanskrit. Therefore it can be deduced that they were then meant, not for scholars but for the ordinary people.

Contents of Purāṇas

Puranas contain extensive glorification of one or more of the deities, Brahma, Vishnu, Siva and on that basis, they are classified as Saiva Purana or Vaishnava Purana and so on. The traditions conducive to the central theme of glorification of the particular deity, the stories and anecdotes connected to the deity concerned have been compiled in the Purana.

The main function of Puranas is presenting the spiritual truths contained in Vedas to common man in an endearing manner in a friendly way, explaining, amplifying, illustrating and enforcing them, many times in the form of stories. Puranas lay more emphasis on Tapas and Puja.
Puranas have recorded only those traditions which aim at the good and wellbeing of humanity at large, helping the mankind in its spiritual attainment, guiding them in the pursuit of higher ideals of Dharmic living and teach them adherence to highest ideals.

**Purāṇa Lakṣaṇam**

*Amarakosa* lays down that Puranas should have five characteristics, namely *sarga* (primary creation), *pratisarga* (dissolution), *vamsa* (genealogies of gods, Kings and sages), *manvantaras* (The periods of different Manus) and *vamsanucarita*.

*Bhāgavata* exhibits two lists enumerating ten characteristics of Puranas.

In 2.10.1 the characteristics listed are Sarga, Visarga, sthana, posana, Manvantara, uti, isanukatha, nirodha, mukti and apasraya.

In 12.7.9 the characteristics listed are Sarga, Visarga, vṛtti, raksā, Manvantara, vamsa, vamsanucarita, samstha, hetu and apasraya.

*The Brahmavaivarta* (4.131/133.6-9) explicitly assigns Pancalakshana to upapuranas and assigns Dasa lakshanās or ten characteristics to Mahapuranas.\(^7\)

Sanskrit Puranas have three classification i.e. Mahapuranas numbering 18, Upa puranas numbering 18, and Ati puranas numbering 18.

\(^7\) L.ROCHER The Puranas :p27
Purānas and Mahātmyams

Some of the Puranas have a number of Mahatmyams, forming parts thereof. While Puranas are the recorded oral traditions of a broad nature, the traditions pertaining to certain places, temples etc were recorded in what is known as Mahatmyams, which are composed with the specific purpose of proclaiming the "greatness" of a place.

The mahatmyams are considered to be original works which only secondarily have been attached to one of the major puranas. Conversely a number of books that go under the name purana, are in fact mahatmyams. There are also instances where some Puranas were originally written in other languages. Tiruttondar Puranam also known as Periya Puranam written in Tamil is a shining example of this category. Tiruvilaiyadal Puranam is also an original Tamil work but has to be treated as a Talapurana.

Purānas in Tamil

Scholars are of the opinion that though originally all Puranas were written in Sanskrit, they were not written in one place. They owe their origin to different parts of the country, since the traditions recorded in them were current in different parts of the country. Subsequently these Puranas were written in different Indian languages. Later on some puranas came to be originally written in other Indian languages also
In Tamil literature we have the classification of *Perilakkiyam* and *Cittilakkiyam* from 12\(^{th}\) century onwards.*Prapantam* is one of the categories of works included in *Cirrilakkiyam*. The number of *Prapantam* types has been finally accepted as 96 and according to *Prapanta Marapiyal*, the grammar book belonging to 16\(^{th}\) century, *Puranam* is the 96\(^{th}\) category of *Prapantam*.

Talapuranam in Tamil in many cases are translations of *Mahatmyams* about the same sthala, originally written in Sanskrit.

Origin of Talapuranam in Tamil can be traced to the earliest available literary works, popularly known as Cankam literature and particularly to Pari padal and Tiru Murugarru p padai.

Tiru Murugarru p padai talks about six abodes of Murugan called Padai veedu meaning military camps. Many features that distinguish Talapuranam from normal Puranas, including glorification of Murtti, Talam, Tirttam, are present in Tiru Murugarru p padai.

**History of Temple worship in Tamil Nadu.**

Vedic sacrifice and temple worship both hold an equally important place in historic Hinduism. The rise of temples, temple worship and images of deities is most probably rooted in pre- and non –Aryan form of religion. Earliest Tamil literature reveals that Vedic religion was also fairly well known to the people of Tamilnadu. The objects that received worship from pre-Aryan peoples in India were trees and stones, which were regarded as the abode of the deities. Some of the deities worshipped by the common people had their
origin in the apotheosis of local heroes. Others arose from the cult of ancestors.

Temple worship with all its present day components was widely prevalent from the earliest time in Tamil Nadu. Cankam literature has many references to this fact. Many festivals (Vizhavu) were celebrated in temples. Not only big towns, but even small towns, villages and hamlets had temples. The temple was constructed in the central place of the town known as Manram, The people were familiar with the form of Siva as is evident from detailed description of His form available in a number of poems in various works. Siva was also worshipped in a form close to what is known in later period as Lingam, which is spoken as Kandu and Tari. In some other temples, the God’s murti was installed inside the Garbhagriha, in the form of a beautiful painting and worshipped. The Agamas and some puranas have much to say on temple architecture and iconography.

**Temple worship and Tirumurais**

Many of these oral traditions have been recorded in early literary works, but they are more marked in Tirumurai works of Campantar, Appar and Cuntarar.

Details of puja-Abhishekam, arcanai with flowers,Dhupam, Deepam, Naivedyam, Tothiram, Namaskaram, Pradakshinam, Taking bath in temple tanks etc are found in Tirumurais. In addition Campantar was aware of about 250 temples and included them in his Patikams as Vaippu t talangal.
Campantar, Appar and Cuntarar undertook pilgrimage to various places mainly to meet people of those places. Temple festivals were celebrated in many major temples.

The abundance of Sthalas—ancient holy places and ancient temples in Tamilnadu is the reason for the emergence of numerous local oral traditions around the various temples and sthalas throughout Tamilnadu.

The practice of reciting various puranas including the purana of the temple and sthala was prevalent in many of the temples. Special halls, Mantapas, were erected in the temples for that purpose.

While the oral traditions of general nature, when recorded, resulted in the emergence of Puranas of various hues, the recording of local oral traditions resulted in the emergence of the Mahatmyamms and Talapuramams.

**Talapurāṇam/ Mahatmyam—Genesi**

The local traditions connected with popular temples were collected and recorded to serve the needs of pilgrims. They were originally recorded in Sanskrit and were called Mahatmyams. They were then translated into Tamil and called as Talapuramams. Both were in verses. Three components of temple worship are considered major ones in Tamilnadu and they are Murtti,Talam,Tirttam. Their importance had developed over the ages. Campantar, Appar and Cuntarar in the seven

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8 Gnaṇasampantam.Prof.A.S: Periya Puranam Or Ayvu:: p175
Tirumurai works have eulogized the Murtti, Talam, Tirttam of the places visited by them and patikam, composed on them.

One more aspect of the temple worship is the concept of the sacred tree of the Talam or “Sthala vriksham”. Of the four concepts, Talam is the most important one and the other three attain their importance only due to their relationship with the Talam.

**The Temple as an institution**

Initially, during and before the cankam age, the temple in Tamilnadu was a simple place of worship, like in any other part of the country. But it became *a multi-faceted and multi-functional institution* in the course of time. However, it was Rajaraja who converted the temple from a mere place of worship into the hub of social life and activities.

**Role of temples in Tamil Society**

From the time of Rajaraja the temple assumed the following roles:

1. The temple was the biggest Landholder.
2. The temple was an employer.
3. The temple was the biggest consumer of goods and services.
4. The temples functioned as local bank and lent money.
5. Temples were also functioning as educational institutions.
6. Temples acted as custodians of art.
7. Temples acted as Libraries, hospitals and dispensaries.
8. Temples served as local theatre where the dance and musical programmes were conducted.
9. The temples are also a repository of historical records. The temples in Tamilnadu contain a number of inscriptions on its stone walls. These inscriptions give us a total picture of life in Tamilnadu from 8th century AD.
10. The temples were major patron of arts
11. Some of the temples were constructed in such a way that they were intended to be used for defence purposes in times of war.

The history and fate of royalty and religion have been interdependent in Tamilnadu from the beginning. All the rulers of Tamilnadu were involved in building new temples, maintaining them and reconstructing, renovating or adding new structures to existing temple structures.

All sections of the society, from the common individual, through the rich merchant to the king patronized the temple commensurate with their ability. The kings not only gave liberal endowments to the temples but ensured proper functioning of the temples by effective supervision and control over them.

*Talapurānam/ Māhātmyam confined to temples in Tamilnadu*

We also find that almost all the Talapuranams pertain to Talams in Tamilnadu for the reasons

\[9\text{ PONNU SAMY.S: Sri Thiyagaraja Temple Thiruvarur:p47}\]
A) Tamilnadu alone had a number of Talams with rich traditions.

B) Temples in Tamilnadu enjoyed supreme position in the society as the hub of all socioeconomic and religious activities of the local population.
C) They were very rich possessing huge movable and immovable assets.

D) There were many people who depended very much on the temples for their livelihood.
E) After the decline of powerful kingdoms whose kings were patron of poets and other learned persons, the poets looked up to the affluent local landlords for patronage. These people engaged the poets to compose Talapuram/Mahatmyam on the temple in their village/town in return of the patronage received by them. This was done by them as one form of service to God, Sivadharmam.

**Reliability of Talapurāṇams:**

The stories in Talapuranas being corroborated by earlier literary evidences in the poems of Campantar, Appar and Cuntarar, whose credibility can not be doubted lend a high degree of authenticity to Talapuranas.\(^{10}\)

Likewise some Talapuranas are interconnected as there is a logical follow up of incidents/stories in them.

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\(^{10}\) Ganapati, Ra. Deivathin Kural Part-II(Speeches of H H Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswathi:Pp730-734
In the case of Mahatmyams, legitimization was sought to be achieved by tracing their root to one or more of the Mahapuranas,

In the case of Talapuranas, legitimization is sought to be achieved by declaring that to be aTamil re-creation of a Mahatmya originally written in Sanskrit.

*Talapurāṇam/ Māhātmyam – their social relevance*

Talapuranas and Mahatmyams are highly useful to know many historical facts, local culture and local customs. In offering elucidation on various aspects of Dharma also, Talapuranas and Mahatmyams do not lag behind Puranas and Upapuranas.

*Mahātmyams*

Some of the Mahatmyams were taken up for elaborate analysis. First, it was Chidambara Mahatmyam, as it is the earliest available Mahatmyam. It has become an ideal prototype of a Mahatmyam, which was adopted by authors of subsequent Mahatmyams.

*Discussion on Chidambara Mahātmyam*

Chidambara Mahatmyam is the earliest work of the Mahatmyams.” It was originally found in palm leaves and written in grantha characters.
The fact of the Mahatmyam containing three separate chapters on the
greatness of Talam, Murtti and Tirttam of Chidambaram proves that the
place of origin of the Mahatmyam is not outside Tamilnadu and the author is
a staunch follower of the Tamil tradition of Murtti, Talam, Tirttam.

One noteworthy feature of this Mahatmyam is that it does not claim to be
part of any other Purana. The structure of the Mahatmya is less complicated
in comparison to later date Mahatmyams.

The simple structure of this work is a proof of its antiquity. It however has
some components of Mahatmyams, which became a model to and essentials
for the later Mahatmyams.

The three traditions of Hinduism, namely devotion (*Bhakti*) Rituals and
Asceticism (*Tapas*) are represented by the three episodes of Patancali,
Vyaaghrapada and *Deva daru* forest.

This Mahatmyam is unique as it narrates the festivals celebrated in the
temple. It is observed that most of the festivals as listed out in the
Mahatmyam are celebrated even today, which means uninterrupted
observation of the temple traditions in Chidambaram, at least for the past
800 years, if not more.

*Trisahasra muni*

Another uniqueness of the Mahatmyam is that it discusses elaborately about
the priests of the temple, known as Trisahasra muni. It looks as if the author
of the Mahatmyam believes that the greatness of the priests of Chidambaram is as significant as those of the Murtti, Talam, Tirttam of this place. The special treatment these priests have received in this Mahatmyam and its Tamil version 'Koyil Puranam', has been necessitated by their being named first in the list of 63 devotees, popularly known as Nayanmar, in Tiru tonta tokai and Periya Puranam as Tillai Val Antanar, earlier.

Discussion on Sri Arunāchala Mahātmyam

Some of the typical Mahatmyams were considered for our study, first of all Arunachala Mahatmyam. The claim that this Mahatmyam contains excerpts from five puranas seems to be authentic and the anecdotes are more or less similar. All contain anecdotes of Lingodbhava, Ardha nariswara and Parvati's penance. They are repetitive in nature, but the presentation is different. This contains all the typical components of a Mahatmyam.

Discussion on Srivānchya Kshetra Mahatmyam

This Mahatmyam also contains all the typical components of a Mahatmyam. It lays maximum emphasis on taking bath in the sacred Tirthas on various Punyakalas, like Magha month, the month of Kartika etc.

Discussion on Sri Dakshiṇa Kutidvīpa Kshetra Mahatmyam

This Mahatmyam contains full details of Seven Mantras, with Dhyana slokas, Rishi, Chandas etc, in various chapters.
It contains sixteen stotras, contains description of the eight forms of Rudra, and the description of the eight forms of Bhairavas, Adhyaya 28, named Pancakshara mantramaka Parameswara Deha Varnanam contains description of 120(5x24) variations of Pancakshara each being related to 120 points in the body of Siva. Adhyaya 29, named Parameswara murtibheda tattaddhyana sloka nirupanam lists 26 forms of Siva and gives Dhyana sloka for each form. Adhyaya 30, named Pancakshara Yantra bheda nirupanam contains description of 24 yantras of Pancakshara, each yantra containing 5 variations of Pancakshara, Prayoga, Bijakshara and yantraswarupam-vruttam, Trikonam, Shatkonam etc are also elaborated. This also lists out the 26 forms of siva once again stating the benefit given by the worship of each form.

Discussion on Hāḷāsyā Mahātmyam

This mahatmyam describes the 64 leelas (tiruvilaiyatal) of Lord Somasundara alias Sundareswara alias Cokkanatha of Madurai. Any person going through these 64 acts will necessarily come to the conclusion that the Grace of God flows towards, not only human beings but to all beings, without any kind of discrimination. His Grace does not wait for a formal request or prayer but flows instantaneously depending on the longing or desire and based on the need of the recipient. It is Grace without an excuse-avvaja karuna. These are unique stories of Godhead coming down to earth and living with the human beings not as an avatar but as God only.
The 32 Anga lakshanas of men (male) are discussed in the 15th Adhyaya titled Ugrajanam.

The anga lakshanas of women are discussed in the 16th Adhyaya titled Valayadyayudhatraya pradanam.

The Mahatmyam contains detailed instructions for observing Soma vara vratam.

Adhyaya 23 titled Ratna vikrayah deals at length on the science of nine gems, their physical qualities, their astrological significance, their effect on the users, the traditions about these nine gems etc. The discussion is masterly, exhaustive and bears mark of expertise.

Adhyaya 65 titled Mayasva vikrayah contains exhaustive discussion on Aswa lakshanam giving an account of different categories of horses and discussing their special features. This is an expert’s work who is well versed in the subject.

Talapurāṇam

Some of the Talapurāṇams were taken up for our study. Talapurāṇams are structured as a distinctly different genre of literature in Tamil, retaining the basic format of ‘Purana’ and at the same time incorporating certain features of a ‘Kappiyam’ like,” Payiram” “Nattu p patalam” “Nakara p patalam”, which provide ample scope for the poet to disply his poetic genius.
Then there are chapters called Patalams narrating anecdotes related to the major deities and major Tirttams in the temple. They also narrate the miracles that have taken place in that temple.

**Discussion on Kōyil Purāṇam**

Kōyil Puranam of Umapati Civaçariyar, the earliest work of the genre of Talapuranas, was discussed. This pioneering work is authored by Umapati Civaçariyar, the fourth and the last of the Santanacaryars of Puraccantanam or Bhuta paramparai of the Saiva siddhanta tradition. Umapati belongs to late 13th century and early 14th century.¹¹ He lived between 1290 and 1340 A.D. Koyil Puranam is based on Citampara mahatmyam, the first Sthala Mahatmyam.

Umapati Civa, the author of Koyil Puranam, adapts the Chidambara Mahatmyam faithfully in his work. He maintains the same sequence of narration. But, he has added two new chapters, Nataraca c carukkam and Tiruvila c carukkam. In Nataraca c carukkam, Umapati describes the Ananda Tandava of the Lord, beautifully and in Tiruvila c carukkam, he gives details of the various festivals celebrated in the temple throughout the year. It is an accurate reflection of the present day festival worship. The description of festivals in Koyil Puranam corresponds very closely to the celebrations of festivals today, even after a lapse of 600 years. Umapati tried his hands on a new form of literature, Talapuranam, with a definite two-fold objective. Koyil Puranam is the first Talapuranam. 1) Umapati uses every opportunity to explain the basic tenets, nuances and conclusions of Saiva

¹¹ SIDDA LINGAIAH.T.B; Saiva Siddhanta in historical perspective; p118
Siddhanta. 2) The temple traditions are emphasized and explained in the light of the tenets of Saiva Siddhanta.

By presenting the Citamparam tradition and the Saiva Siddhanta faith to the public in the same text, Umapati was demonstrating how temple practice and the newly formulated faith might be combined to form the basis of a renewed culture.\(^\text{12}\) His formula appears to have had considerable success, as both temple practice and Saiva Siddhanta continued to serve as complementary dimensions. The philosophical thoughts of Saiva Siddhanta and religious practices of its followers were supplementary in nature and the healthy relationship continues till date.\(^\text{13}\) In Koyil Puranam Umapati presents the prototype of Talapuranam and the same has been faithfully followed and the norms laid down by him have been followed by authors of Talapuranams in succeeding centuries. Then follows the study of some of the typical Talapuranams for an in-depth understanding.

**Discussion on Arunācala Purāṇam**

Next, we will take up Arunacala Puranam authored by a well known scholar Saiva Ellappa Navalar. This Talapuranam is of high quality poetry. In this Talam, Circumbulating the mountain (Girivalam) is given utmost importance and is considered as the most important form of worshiping Arunacaleswara, as the mountain is seen as Arunacaleswara himself. It is considered as the Lingam.

\(^{12}\) YOUNGER, PAUL, The Home of Dancing Civan: p185
\(^{13}\) Ibid
Discussion on - Kamalālaya Cirappu enum Tiruvārur p purāṇam –

The Chapter, Gokanna Carukkam contains description of various types of hells (Naraka) and the category of souls (Jivas) consigned to respective hell. In all 21 hells are listed.

Discussion on Kānci p purāṇam

Kanci p puranam is one of the major Talapuranams authored by a great saivaite scholar and poet Civagnana Swamigal. The difference between Kanci p puranam and other Talapuranams is that all other Talapuranams are temple specific, narrating anecdotes pertaining to only one temple in the place, but Kanci p puranam is unique that it narrates anecdotes relating to 58 Civa temples and Varadaraja temple in Kancipuram starting with Tiruneri k karaik kaadu in the eastern direction and other temples in a clock-wise manner.

Discussion on Tanikai p purāṇam

Tanikai p puranam is another major Talapuranam authored by Kacciappa Munivar, a great Saivaite scholar and great poet and worthy disciple of Civagnana Swamigal, author of Kanci p puranam.

Nanti Upateca p patalam contains a masterly exposition of the essence of Saiva Siddhanta, in 63 stanzas.
In Kalavu p Patalam, all the components of ‘Aka p porul Ilakkanam’ (அகா ப் பொறு இலக்கனம்) are explained with 580 explanatory verses. This by itself can be treated as an independent “Kovai” composition. Likewise, while describing battle scenes between Muruga and Sura padman in “Siparipurana Nama p patalam” the verses have been composed in accordance with the various Turaivas mentioned in "Pura p porul Ilakkanam".

**Discussion on Tirunāgai k korōna p purānam**

Tirunāgai k korōna p purānam is one of the major works of Mahavidwan Minakshisundaram Pillai (19th century). Sri.Pillai is the author of 22 Talapurānamams. 6 Minor Kavyas and 45 Prabandham works.

Sri. Pillai was an ardent admirer of Civajnana Munivar, the author of Kanci p puranam and considered him as his role model. In Kanci p puranam, the author Civajnana Munivar has composed 16 citra Kavis- (poetic compositions of special nature in pictorial form) in Kara suresa p Patalam. Likewise, Sri. Pillai has also composed 18 Citra-k-kavi in Nandi natha p Patalam.

The author has incorporated three new Patalams in this work. They are Nana Campanta- p- Patalam, containing a brief account of the life of Tirunana Campantar, Vakica-p – Patalam containing a brief account of the life of Appar, and Cuntara –p- Patalam containing a brief account of the life of Cuntarar.

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14 MADHAVAN. V.R; Tamilil Talapurānankal -I:p278
15 Ibid

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Campantar has composed two decades (Patikam1.84; 2.116), Appar has composed three decades (Patikam4.71, 103; 5.83; 6.22) and Cuntarar one decad (Patikam 7.46) on Tirunakai k karonam. In all the three patalams Sri. Pillai mentions about the saints visiting and composing Patikams on Tiru Nakai k karonam. In Vakica p patalam, stanzas 15-17, he lists out the names of talam mentioned in each of the ten stanzas of Patikam6.22. In Cuntara p patalam, the author gives paraphrase of each and every stanza of Cuntarar’s Patikam 7.46 in stanzas 13 to 23, beginning his stanzas with the initial phrase of Cuntarar’s stanzas. This reminds us of similar practice of Cekkilar, using the Tirumurai phrases in his verses at the appropriate places.

He has also included Atipatta p Patalam, on the story of Atipatta Nayanar, one of the 63 devotees of Civa mentioned in Tiru t tonda t tokai and Periya Puranam. and who hails from Naga p pattinam.

**Discussion on Tiruvilaiyadal Puranam**

There are many Tamil works on the 64 Tiruvilaiyadal (leela in Sanskrit) of Lord Somasundara also known as Cokkanathar. Of these, two works are known as Tiruvilaiyadal Puranam. The earliest work is Tiruvalavayutaiyar Tiruvilaiyadal Puranam written by Cellinagar p Peruparra p puliyur Nampi. This is a translation of Sara samuccayam forming part of Uttara Mahapurannam in Sanskrit. This contains 1753 stanzas. This is also known as Vempatturar Tiruvilaiyadal. This has been composed in the 13th century.

The Tiruvilaiyadal Puranam, which is the most popular one, is composed by Parancoti Munivar (17th Century) in 3363 stanzas. This is purported to have been translated from the Sanskrit work Halasya Mahatmyam. This work is also known as Tiruvalavay Manmiyam.
The order in which the 64 Tiruvilaiyadal of Lord Somasundara is discussed in Parancoti’s Tiruvilaiyatal Puranam and Halasya Mahatmyam are similar.

32 Anga lakshanas of men (male) are discussed in the Patalam 11 titled Ukkirapantiyan Tiruvavatarap patalam.

The anga lakshanas of women are discussed in the Patalam 12 titled Ukkirapantiyanukku veļ valai centu kotutta patalam.

Detailed instructions are given for observing Soma vara vratam in Patalam 14 titled Intiran muti mel valai yerinta patalam.

Patalam 16 titled Vedattukcup porul aruli c ceyta patalam describes the cosmic science of creation, the origin of Pranava, the structure and intent of the Vedas.

Patalam 17 titled Manikkam Virra Patalam deals at length on the science of nine gems, their physical qualities, their astrological significance, their effect on the users, the traditions about these nine gems etc. The discussion is masterly, exhaustive and bears mark of expertise.

Patalam 33 titled Atta masitti upatesitta patalam contains elaborate discussion on the eight siddhis popularly known as Ashtama siddhi.

Patalam 40 titled Varakunanukku c civalokam kattiya Patalam contains a graphic description of Civalokam.
Patalam 41 titled Viraku Virra patalam contains masterly discussion on music and a description of the impact of Civa’s singing.

Patalam 59 titled Nari Pariyakkiya patalam contains exhaustive discussion on Aswa lakshanam giving an account of different categories of horses, their countries of origin and discussing their special features import of “Culi” in different parts of horses. This is an expert’s work who is well versed in the subject.

All these descriptions inter alia fit with the same described in Halasya Mahatmyam.

**Special Features**

A study of the Talapuranams listed above shows that the authors were very much familiar with the special and unique features of the temple on which the Talapuranams were being composed by them and accordingly highlighted them in their works. While the unique features were incorporated in the Talapuranams, they in turn obtained structural uniqueness.

A comparison of Kanci p puranam of Civagnana Swamigal and Kamalalaya Cirappu enum Tiruvarur p puranam of Maraignana Sambandar can help us understand the point made here. Both these works discuss about various Devas, Rishis and kings worshiping in these temples and getting their desires fulfilled. But the treatment of these worships in the two works is different.
Where as Civagnana Swamigal devotes 60 Chapters (Patalam) to discuss 60 such cases, as the 60 deities are housed in different temples outside the main temple of Ekamranathar Koil in Kancipuram

Maraignana Sambandar discusses 103 such cases in only one chapter (Carukkam) named Civalinka t tapana Carukkam, because all the one hundred deities adorn the available space in the form of separate Civalingams under the same roof in the main temple, without individual temples or stories.

Authors of Talapuranas are aware that the basic structure and contents of Talapuranas make them similar and look-a-likes. They have found a novel way of building uniqueness in their compositions. They incorporate, in their compositions, elaborate and scholarly discussions on either of or all of, philosophy in general or Saiva siddhanta in particular, discussion on manual of good/religious behaviour/conduct, rules for performing Civa Puja, Rules for worshiping in temples etc. This might be done at the appropriate place in any of the chapters or as separate chapters.

Kanci p puranam of Civagnana Swamigal contains two separate Patalams at the end of the Talapuranam, titled ‘Ozhukka p Patalam’ and ‘Civa Punniya p Patalam’. The Ozhukka p Patalam’ contains 61 stanzas discussing the code of conduct for men and women in general and in the four Asramas- Brahmaarya, Grihastha, Vanaprastha and Sanyasa and also the conducts to be avoided. ‘Civa Punniya p Patalam contains, discussion on the benefits of installing Civalingam, detailed discussion on twenty five forms of Civa like
Somaskanda, Rishbharuda, Chandrasekhara etc., the benefits of constructing new temples and renovating old temples of Civa, details of deities associated with different flowers, which service done on which day will please which deity, all these details are given in this chapter.

In Tirunagai k karona p puranam the rules for performing Civa Puja is discussed in detail in Pundarika Munivar Irandam Katchi Uraitha Patalam (Stanza 11-22)

**Comparative analysis of Mahātmyam and Talapurāṇam**

**A. Common features**

The common features in Mahatmyam and Talapuranam are many. The first is the content. Many times they are translations of each other. They explain to the worshippers three things. Why the temple came to be located in that place, what are the unique features of the deity or the deities of the temple and who are the model saints or devotees associated with that temple. Both deal with the greatness of the temple concerned. They contain anecdotes of persons who had bathed in the Tīrttam and worshipped the deity and got their desires fulfilled, ailments cured and got relieved of their sins. The category of persons who had worshipped in the temple consists of Gods other than the presiding deities, Devas, Asuras, Kings, common people and some times animals too.

Though they are named after a place like Chidambara Mahatmyam, Tiruvarur p puranam, Dakshina Kuti dwipa Mahatmyam, the contents of the
Mahatmyam/Talapuranam are temple specific in that particular place. Even though there may be many other temples in that place, the Mahatmyam/Talapuranam will not even make any mention of them, but speak of only one temple it discusses about. The Kanci Puranam is an exception in this regard.

Whereas the Mahatmyam claims to be an extracted from one section of a Mahapurana or Upapurana, the Talapuranam declares that it is an adaptation of a Mahatmyam written on that Talam.

Though the works are called Talapuranam or Sthala Mahatmyam they discuss the greatness of the Murtti, Talam and Tirttam as per the Tamil tradition. Therefore, we can conclude that Mahatmyams appear to have originated from Tamilnadu and follow Tamil traditions.

The development of Talapuranams and Mahatmyams was parallel with reciprocal contributions. Together, they contributed substantially to both Tamil and Sanskrit literature, establishing healthy relationship between them, culminating in the evolution of similar forms of literature like Kavyas, Dramas, and philosophical works in both the languages.

B. Chidambaramahatmyam and Koyil Puranam – a specific analysis

As we have seen earlier in our separate discussions on Chidambara Mahatmyam and Koyil Puranam, these works, being the first of sorts in their respective genre have firmly established the prototype of Mahatmyam and Talapuranam respectively and laid down various norms in composing such
works. These were adopted by authors of similar works in successive centuries.

Umapati Civam, the author of Koyil Puranam, adapts the Chidambara Mahatmyam faithfully in his work. He maintains the same sequence of narration. But, he has added two new chapters, Nataraca c carukkam and Tiruvila c carukkam.

Umapati, being one of the four Santanacaryas of Saiva siddhanta school of philosophy incorporates the salient features of Saiva siddhanta and uses the terminology in the Koyil Puranam. This set the trend for authors of other Talapuranams like Kanci p puranam, Tanikai p puranam, Kalatti p puranam, Tiruvilaiyatal puranam and Mahavidwan Minakshi Sundaram Pillai, author of about a score of Talapuranams to emulate.

The Chidambara Mahatmyam is clearly a pilgrim guidebook written for the use of North Indian pilgrims to Cidambaram, in Sanskrit, the language of all-Indian religious discourse.\(^\text{16}\) It has given the basic prototype which was adopted by authors of other Mahatmyams on Kshetras in the following centuries.

The tradition of Citampara Rahasyam is a popular one. There is a reference to a mystic yantra installed in the “Cirrampalam” of Citamparam in the second chapter of the fourth Tantiram of Tirumular’s Tirumantiram, titled “Tiruvampala Cakkaram” containing description of many Yantras. It is to be noted that all the yantras contain different combinations of Pancakshara,

\(^{16}\text{YOUnger Paul; The Home of Dandri Sivan: p 166}\)
the five lettered mantra of Civa. It is reported that it was Tirumular, who installed Tiruvampala Cakram in the sanctum sanctorium, on the right side of Nataraja, decorating it with Vilva leaves made of gold, which came to be known as "Citampara Rahasiyam."\(^{17}\) Tirumular is believed to belong to 3rd Century\(^{18}\). The possibility of the presence of a large dark chamber under the shrine and the porch and the association of Patancali, the founder of a well known Yoga school, Cittars and yogis like Tirumular, Manikkavacakar, indicate a well established Yoga cult being part of the Citamparam tradition.

The Nandan tradition is noteworthy for its uniqueness. His yearning to visit Citamparam and have darsan of Nataraja, his ultimate visit and merger in the jyoti of Nataraja on his entry into Citsabha are the highlights of the tradition.

The Manikkavacakar tradition pertains to the later part of his life, when he settled down in Citamparam. His two great works *Tirukkovaiyar* and *Tiruvacakam* were composed here. It is believed that Nataraja wrote down these two works in palm leaf in his own hand, affixed his seal at the end with the citation” written by the resident of Cirrampalm “Alakiya Cirrampalamutaiyar Elutiyatu”\(^{17}\) and left the manuscript at the Pañcātcar steps of Cirrampalam.” When Manikkavacakar was asked by others to give an authoritative exposition of the meaning of the whole, he proceeded to the Golden hall and pointed to the image of God, adding *The Lord of the Assembly himself (Sabhapathi) is the meaning* and then disappeared melting into the image of his Master.”\(^{19}\)

\(^{17}\) VAIDYANATHAN.K.Tirumuraiikalil Caiva cittantam:pp356-357

\(^{18}\) Ibid ; p 88

\(^{19}\) AIYER V.G.RAMAKRISHNA; The economy of a South Indian Temple:pp46-47
The other traditions associated with Citamparam are those of Tiru Nilakantar, Kurrurvar and Kanampullar.

The *Chidambara Mahatmyam* and Umapati Civam’s *Koyil Puranam* do not contain any mention of the traditions of “Chidambara Rahasyam” Manikkavacakar, Nandan, Tirunilakantar, Kañampullar or Kurrurvar.

Umapati Civam’s reverence for Manikkavacakar is established by the fact that he has included a verse in praise of Manikkavacakar in the Payiram of Koyil Puranam.

Similarly, Cuntarar traditions are very powerful and inseparable part of traditions of Thyagaraja temple of Tiruvarur. Cuntarar treated the deity as an endearing companion, and the mystical import of his devotion moved the Lord to take an active interest in the delight and tribulation of the devotee and making his life a pleasant one in all respects. The deity took initiative to have Cuntarar married to Paravai an accomplished dancing girl at Tiruvarur and also to Cankili at Tiruvorriyur. He also admits that, as a friend, Aruran, even abetted some of his misdeeds.²⁰

The most important tradition of Cuntarar, associated with Tiruvarur is his composing *Tiruttonta t tokai*, where he enlists the name of 63 *Nayanmars*, which lends the basis and plot for Cēkkilār’s monumental work *Periya Purāṇam*.²¹

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²⁰ CUNTARAR: tevaram:VII.10
²¹ PONNUSAMY.S: Sri Thyagaraja Temple Tiruvarur:pp15-16
The traditions of *Eyar kon Kalikkāmar and Viranmintar* are connected with Cuntarar as well as Tiruvarur. *Viranmintar* tradition is connected with the *Tiruttōntā t tokai* tradition.

Similarly, the traditions of *Seruttunai, Kalar ciṅkar, Dandiyatikal Naminanti and Somasimarar* are also closely associated with Tiruvarur.

Marai nana campantar’s *Kamalalaya c cirappu ennum Tiruvarur p puranam* does not contain traditions of Cuntarar, Eyar kon Kalikkamar and Viranmintar. It makes a passing reference to the traditions of Eyar kon Kalikkamar Viranmintar Naminanti and Tyagaraja acting as Cuntarar’s emissary to Paravai, Cuntarar curing a hunchback of his disability and Cuntarar restoring vision to a blind devotee in just one stanza each in Tiruvarur cirappu c carukkam. We find in the Payiram of *Kamalalaya c cirappu ennum Tiruvarur p puranam* verse in praise of Cuntarar. But when we go through the works, we are shocked to find no mention of these traditions of Cuntarar, Eyar kon Kalikkamar Viranmintar and Naminanti.

Manikkavacakar is reported to have stayed in Tiruvannamalai and composed his Tiruvempavai. Caiva ellappa Navalar also has included a verse in praise of Manikka vacakar in the Payiram of Arunacala Puranam, but has excluded the description of the tradition in the work.

Similarly, the traditions relating to the 63 Nayanmars including the quartet, Campantar, Appar, Cuntarar and Manikka vacakar do not find a mention in the Mahatmyams and Talapuranams, the exceptions being The Tiruvilaiyatal puranam and Talapuranams composed by Mahavidvan Meenakshisundaram Pillai.
When we probe into the probable cause of this peculiar feature, we observe the following.

After the compilation of various oral traditions into various puranas was completed it was found that the puranas had become extremely popular among people, becoming an inseparable part of their socio religious life. Then the task of compiling popular local traditions into various Mahatmyams and Talapuranas, was undertaken. (P29-Ch3 this thesis)

We observe that the authors of Mahatmyams and Talapuranas were selective in assimilating the local traditions into their works. We would like to illustrate our point in more detail.

We are aware that the traditions about the 63 Saiva saints popularly known as "Nayanmars" was quite popular throughout Tamilnadu for quite a long time. Of the 63, 17 devotees belong to pre- Campantar/ Appar times as is evident because they find a mention in Campantar/ Appar’s songs. 11 devotees are contemporaries of Campantar/Appar as mentioned in Periya puranam; 22 devotees belong to the period between Campantar/Appar and Cuntarar’s time; While 13 have been mentioned as contemporaries of Cuntarar. 22 We also find that the images of Nayanmars were installed and worshipped in temples even before the rise of Cola power, during the Pallava period; People were named using the Nayanmars’ names. This became more marked during the Cola reign. 23 These traditions have been recorded accurately in Periya Puranam in 12 th Century.

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22 RAJAMANIHKKANAR.Dr.Ma.Periya Purana Araycci:p.81
23 ibid.; pp 85,95,101

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“Out of the sixty three devotees mentioned by Cunntarar in Tīru t ṭōtā ṭōtai,Eighteen people attained that exalted position only on account of their steadfast adherence to some facet of temple maintenance/temple worship and their anecdotes are connected with the respective temples.

The traditions of Kannappar, Karaikal Ammaiyar, Ciruttontar, Apputi, Campantar, Appar,Cunntarar, Manikkavacakar, Nandan, have been exerting powerful influence on the psyche of devout Hindus in this part. Sankaracarya in his Sivananda Lahari narrates the salient features of Kannappar tradition In the verse ” Mārgāvartita pāduka.....” to emphasize the power of true devotion. He concludes saying” Bhakti h kim na karōtyahō Vanacarō Bhaktā va tamsāyāte”

All these traditions belong to a period much earlier to the time when Mahatmyams and Talapuranaams were written. Whereas the traditions of Manikkavacakar and Cunntarar may be of 8th Century A D, the traditions of Karaikkal Ammaiyar and Kannappar might be placed before 5th century A.D. The earliest Mahatmyam, Chidambara Mahatmyam can be placed in 12th century whereas the first Talapuranaam” Koyil Puranam” was composed in 13th Century. It is evident that the above mentioned traditions were well established and popular well before these Talapuranaams/Mahatmyams were composed. Therefore, we are quite puzzled and perplexed to find that these traditions have not been recognized or recorded in them.

It is an accepted fact that the Talapuranaam/Mahatmyam were composed by persons who were themselves convinced of the greatness of the Murtti, Talam and Tīrttam of that place and were great devotees of the presiding
deity. They meticulously collected all the oral traditions connected with the kshetra from elderly residents. While passing on the oral traditions, they narrated certain traditions which were of comparatively later origin.

Certain ancient traditions of very early days were narrated and claimed to have been included in some puranas. These were accepted to be true, without any question, as the bona fides of persons narrating the traditions was unassailable. Further, most of the Puranas had more than one version and were mostly in oral form only. The veracity of any statement or anecdote attributed to any Purana has to be ascertained only by reference to Pundits/scholars who were credited with mastery over the Purana. Therefore, the author of Mahatmyam had gone ahead with recording the oral traditions subject to certain accepted positions.

1. The Mahatmyam( Oral traditions being recorded) form part of and extracted from a certain Mahapurana or Upapurana.

2. The Mahapurana or Upapurana and therefore the Mahatmyam extracted from them, are of antique origin, the antiquity equaling that of Vedas/ Upanishads/ Itihasas. Therefore the authors had no difficulty in recording those traditions prevalent from very early period and incorporating them in the Mahatmyam.

Therefore, when they analysed certain oral traditions which could not be claimed to be ancient by accepted norms, they had an unpleasant task to do. Even though they were very devout and were having great regard for the devotees whose lives and miracles were being considered, they did not include them in the Mahatmyam, which are claimed to be part of puranas, which are of ancient origin, and whose antiquity was treated to be
equal to that of the Itihasas, Vedas and Upanishads. Inclusion of those traditions in the Mahatmyams would amount to interpolation.

We have already mentioned in the beginning of this chapter that the period between 500B.C and 600 A.D is considered as the age of Puranas and Dharmasastras and the 6th century A.D. may be roughly regarded as the lower limit of the age of authority and composition of sacred texts which formed the theoretical basis of Hindu society for all time to come. It was the accepted boundary line between the age of new creation and blind acceptance, and marked once for all the period after which, theoretically atleast, nothing new could be authoritatively added to the frame work of Hindu society. Therefore, the traditions which can be placed within the boundary line of 6th century A.D were included in the Mahatmyam and the rest were discarded. Similar hard decisions were taken and precedence has been established by authors of Puranas who did not admit traditions about later kings in the Puranas because they belonged to later times.\textsuperscript{24}

The authors of Talapuranas had no dilemma whatsoever. Having declared that their work is based on a Sanskrit Mahatmyam, they did not want to add any new material that would not have found place in the Sanskrit Mahatmyam. Thus the omission of traditions relating to the 63 devotees from the Mahatmyam/Talapuranam is based on sound reasoning and conscious decision. This norm was firmly laid down by the author of Chidambara Mahatmyam and Umapati Civam, the author of Koyil Puranam, to be followed by authors of Mahatmyams and Talapuranams in the following centuries.

\textsuperscript{24} PARGITER,F.E.:Ancient Indian Historical Tradition:p22

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The Tiruvilaiyatalpuranam is unique in this respect also as it has included traditions connected with six out of the 63 devotees, Ninra Cir Netumaran, Kula c cirai, Mankaiyar k karaci, Manikka vacakar, Campantar and Murttiyar(Only in Nampi Tiruvilaiyatal ). The reason being, Tiruvilaiyatalpuranam obviously was originally written in Tamil only and subsequently translated into Sanskrit as Halasya Mahatmyam.

C. Forms of Worship

In Tamilnadu, people were practicing many forms of worship from very old days. Worship of deity in the Murtti form, Linga form and also in the formless state, Sunya were prevalent from early days. This was discussed earlier.

"The people were familiar with the form of Siva as is evident from detailed description of His form available in a number of poems in various works. Siva was also worshipped in a form close to what is known in later period as Lingam, which is spoken as Kandu and Tari. The Kandu had a wide base and sharp upper portion" "In some other temples, the God’s murti was installed inside the Garbhagraha, in the form of a beautiful painting and worshipped."

Kannappar episode where he transplants his eyes in the place of the bleeding eyes of the Lord confirms that it was Siva’s murtti that was worshipped in the temple at Kalahasti and not the Linga form..

25 GNANASAMBANDAM.A.S. Periya Puranam Or Ayvu pp65-67
Tamils were familiar with worshipping Siva in three states, Aruvam, Uruvam and Aruvuruvam, the Sanskrit parallel for these bring, Sarupa, Arupa (Sunya or Pāl VOID as mentioned by Tirumular) and Ruparupa, respectively. Saktam or worship of Sakti, Worship of Muruga, Worship of Panca vrishnis were also practiced here from pre – sangham days.

The uniqueness of Chidambaram is that Siva is worshipped here in the Linga (Aruvuruvam) form as Tirumulattana Nathar, in the murtta form (Uruvam) as Nataraja and in Aruvam, Sunya or Void or Akasa form in the Chidambara Rahasyam. All these exist side by side without any contradiction.

Similarly in Tiruvarur also Siva is worshipped in all the three forms simultaneously, as Tirumulattanar in the linga form, as Tyagaraja or Somaskanda in the murtta form and as Hatakeca in Hatakeswaram, a separate temple within Thyagaraja temple complex in a formless state.

Manikkavacakar, who is associated with the tradition of Worshipping Siva in a formless state (worshipped as Avutaiyar in Tirupperunturai, without a lingam, as Rahasyam in Chidambaram) sings about Cemperuman of Atakeswaram.26

The speciality of these two temples is that the murtta form of Nataraja and Thyagaraja are given utmost importance. In the course of development of Siva temples in Tamilnadu the establishment of separate places (Sannadhis) for Nataraja and Somaskanda (Thyagaraja) is a major step in giving a place of importance to worship of murtta form along with linga form in the sanctum sanctorium. Likewise, the primitive trends in religious beliefs such as tree worship and Ophiolatry (worshiping snakes) were assimilated into

26 MANIHKAVACAKAR: Tiruvacakam, Tirut tacankam: I

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temple traditions in Tamilnadu, by including the concept of SthalaVriksha and worshipping anthill-Purru, as sivalingam, as done in Tiruvorriyur, Vadatirumullaivayil, Tiruvarur etc.

D.Halasiya Mahatmyam and Tiruvilaiyatal Puranam – a specific analysis

Tiruvilaiyatal Puranam narrates the leela ,Vilaiyatal or sport of Cuntaran,” the handsome” also called “Cokkan – One of Captivating beauty” Conceiving Godhead as “beauty personified” is quiet common to all parts of India and all branches of our religion from time immemorial. The discussion of Beauty of the Godhead in the Tamil devotional literature is not of physical beauty but of divine Grace, Arul. The innumerable ways of God showering His grace on the deserving souls is His sport or leela or Tiruvilaiyatal, which is performed in the state of divine bliss” or Ananda.” Thus, we find that the Tiruvilaiyatal of Somasundara or Cokkan,symbolizes divine beauty, Grace and eternal bliss.

The climax of Tiruvilaiyatal Puranam is Tiruvalavay k kantam consisting seventeen patalam. This narrates anecdotes highlighting the greatness of Tamil language. The Tiruvilaiyatals of the Lord narrated here depict his love and concern for Tamil and Tamil literature.

The obvious sin committed by Nakkirar is not blasphemy, but holding something of which he had no personal knowledge, as truth and that too to a person who had personal knowledge to the contrary. According to God, a person who has no respect for truth, has no place in the Cankam.
The episodes connected with Vatavuratikal (Manikkavacakar) are heart rendering. The Lord performs his Tiruvilaiyatal to propagate the greatness of his disciple, initiated with a new name, Manikka vacakan. It is not a single Tiruvilaiyatal, but a series of Tiruvilaiyatals.

The episode of Campantar narrates the victory scored by Caivam over Jainism. The lord through Campantar infuses into Tamil, the power of Mantra and narrates the greatness of Tamil language, Vibhuti, Pancatcara, and the chastity of Mankaiyarkkaraci.

*Kutar kāntam*, being the biggest of the three kantams, consisting of thirty patalams is almost the heart of Tiruvilaiyatal puranam. Civan is grace personified; both are inseparable. There is no use of Grace, Arul, if it does not flow towards the human beings. It does flow and all scriptures and religious literature bear proof of this. The grace of God does not differentiate between human beings and other creations of His. The episodes in this kantam describe the boundless love God has for His creations. The good, bad, sinner and devotee; His grace flows towards them in equal measure. His heart melts when He sees any of His creations in difficult situation. He rushes to their help without waiting for a formal call. It is *Avyaja Karuna- Grace without reason*. The wages of sins visit the sinners with equal force. The time of repentance comes for the sinner. The change of heart comes over him. He loathes not only the sin he has committed, but himself too. He repents and seeks redemption. People around him detest and discard him. He sees no hope around him and turns to God. God desires that the repentant soul should not be wasted. He is *Karuna Sagara*, full of grace. His heart goes for the repentant soul and He rushes out to help the soul in distress.

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Mapatakam Tirtta Patalam narrates the Tiruvilaiyatal, where the Lord rescues a soul repenting over the most detestable sins committed for which the Dharma Sastras are unable to prescribe any way of redemption. When the Lord Soma sundara, out of His boundless Grace, shows the way of redemption to the great sinner, Mapatkan, Uma, His consort, wants to know the reason for His extreme act of Grace. The Lord replies “Vituvakai yinri veuru kalaikanu minri iyak kavananai k kappatangro Kappenran Karunai murtti.” (Saving in true sense happens only when we save a person who finds no way of redemption anywhere else and who has no one to help) This is the pinnacle of God’s Avyaja Karuna.

If the Lord’s help is available for a great sinner, will it be denied to the deprived, helpless and unfortunate souls? His grace, Arul, flows out to all, without discrimination, when they are in distress and find themselves helpless and hopeless. God is Beauty and Grace personified, but His ways and the unwritten laws of the universe are inexplicable, which are beyond human understanding. Pali ancina patalam explains the inexplicable. His grace helps in understanding these. His ways of helping soul vary with the requirements of the souls in need.

It is the belief of a majority of Hindus that the soul, Atma, has to go through the cycle of endless births and deaths before it is born as a human being. It can attain salvation or Mukti only as a human being. But Tiruvilaiyatal Puranam differs and negates this concept. According to it, the kingdom of God has place for not only the Siddhas, kings and other human beings. It is comprised of all His creations, humans and non-humans alike. Then, how salvation, Mukti, can be denied to non-humans? Kutar Kantam establishes
firmly that the purpose of God’s creation is salvation, *Mukti*, and all His creation, both humans and non-humans alike, *be it the piglings, the black bird, or the crane*, have equal right to have it.

The first Kantam of Tiruvilaiyatal Puranam is Maturai k kantam has a speciality. Here, God himself comes to Madurai, not as an avataram, but as God himself, resides there for many years and rules that place as the king in flesh and blood. This has no parallel in any religion or in any other religious literature.

We find that the Tiruvilaiyatals are multi beneficial with a number of beneficiaries.

Thus we find that the Tiruvilaiyatal Puranam is unique in content, style and structure. We can boldly claim that it has no parallels.

After going through Halasya Mahatmyam and comparing it with Parancoti’s Tiruvilayatal Puranam, we come to the conclusion that the date of Halasya Mahatmyam is subsequent to that of Parancoti’s Tiruvilaiyatal Puranam and in all probability is its Sanskrit version.

Tiruvilaiyatal Puranam in Tamil, as we have established above, is the original work and *Halasya Mahatmyam* is a later Sanskrit translation. It is to be noted that Halasya Mahatmyam also is of high literary value as a faithful translation.
Chidambara Mahatmyam and Koyil Puranam are trend setters in their respective spheres of Mahatmyam and Talapuranam. The norms set by them for selecting local traditions for incorporating or the format, features etc have become the accepted format for the other Mahatmyams and Talapuranam.

**Literary Genre**

We observe that Mahatmyams and Talapuranams have contributed a large number of works. They have well set formats which have been accepted and followed by authors of Mahatmyams and Talapuranams for over seven or eight centuries. In content, format or literary merit, the Mahatmyam and Talapuranam do not have anything common with other literary genre in Sanskrit and Tamil respectively.

Therefore, we are of the opinion that Mahatmyam should be treated as a special and separate literary genre in Sanskrit and similarly Talapuranam also should be treated as a special and separate literary genre in Tamil.

**The Eternal Contribution**

The Bhakti movement built up by Alwars and the Saivite quartets Campantar, Appar, Cuntarar and Manikkavacakar in the 6th and 7th Century was a popular movement. It united the various religious groups into a powerful and all inclusive Hindu religion, with Saivam and Vaishnavam becoming its two major facets. This process of syncretisation was strengthened by the evolution of the temple worship movement under the
patronage of Tamil royalty in general and the Cola emperors in particular. The Cola kings irrevocably made the temples, the hub of social activity, somewhat at par with royalty. The temples slowly replaced royalty as the subject of literary creations. The Mahatmyams and Talapuranas have recorded these processes. They reflect the new social and religious ethos that had come to stay. They have further consolidated this composite socio-religious movement and put it on a firm footing. They helped consolidation of social and religious harmony even while the political authority ceased to exist.

They have recorded anecdotes which give a powerful message to humanity that God’s grace flows in abundance for its salvation. No sin is beyond redemption. It does not discriminate between Devas, rishis, kings, men women, animals, birds or any creation. All are equal before that Grace. This comforting and soothing message of Hope and light was meant to lift up the spirit of the people, whose morale was at the lowest ebb, during the time when the Talapuranas and Mahatmyams were written.

It was the time when mighty kings had left the scene. “The morale of the people of Tamilnadu was at the lowest ebb after the decline of Cola Empire. The decline of Cola empire brought to an end the era of peace, stability and prosperity. They were deprived of their basic rights, wealth and livelihood. They felt hopeless and helpless in the absence of an understanding and protective king. The task ahead was to give them confidence and energise them, make them strong, vibrant and energetic human beings. This great and noble task was successfully carried out and the goal was achieved by Mahatmyams and Talapuranas. These two convinced the depressed people
that the land they live on is no ordinary barren land; It is punya bhumi; the
tank in their neighbourhood is not an insignificant pool of water; It is where
Devas had bathed; With some efforts they too can beget happiness and
energy. By worshiping God, His grace will flow to them. Puranas and
Talapuranas gave them the much needed confidence. Convinced of the
greatness of the temples nearby, people built them bigger and the temple
became the hub of all their activities. People forgot their miseries. Life was
filled with happiness. The diseases and miseries vanished. People became
highly motivated. This is no mean achievement”27

This message is of eternal relevance and the Mahatmyams and
Talapuranams still maintain the vitality to provide succor to the human race
whenever the need arises. Thus, we find harmony and hope as the central
theme of this unique literary genre.

The uniqueness of local temples and greatness of the deity worshipped there
are derived and developed from the ancient oral traditions and now recorded
in the Talapuranams and Mahatmyams. A careful study of these genre of
literature, developed in Tamilnadu as a part of Bhakti movement reveals that
they are providing ample material for us to have a comprehensive
understanding of the cultural heritage of the country. This study reveals that
there was a constructive interaction and exchange of ideas between the
Sanskrit and Tamil litterateurs which have helped the evolution of a
homogeneous Indian literary ideals, goals and vision. These in turn helped in
propagation of a common Indian culture among all linguistic groups of this
country.

27 MEENAKSHISUNDARAN.DR.T.P: Tiruvilaiyatal purana Munnurai:pp24-25