

Toronto TSC, May 16th, 2008-05-03. Panel C. 3.30- 5.30 . Combination Room.
Identity, Landscape and Ecology.

Nature, Identity and Tamil Literature - A.Veluppillai. (Summary)

1.Introduction.

1.1 Dravidian Identity in South India and Tamil identity in Sri Lanka. Looking back to a Tamil literature which appeared before the Saiva and Vaishnava bhakti movement. Identities overlap but not to the same extent.

1.2. **periyaaar** and **a'rignar** return for revenge. **a'rivan** was the earlier form for **a'rignan**. **vaala'rivan** seems to be the equivalent of **peara'rignan**. **a'rivan** stood for Jain fordmaker. **periyaaar** was a title for 3 Jain monks at Kazukumalai.

1.3 Dravidian movement looks back to a glorious past. *Paththuppaaddu, Edduththokai; Tholkaappiyam, Thirukku'ra'l* and *Chilappathikaaram*.

2.Nature nurtures life of the Tamils in Changkam Age.

2.1 Nature integrated to **akam** and **pu'ram** traditions. 3- tier structure of 5 landscape **akam**. **karupporu'l** indicate the importance of nature. 5 landscape **pu'ram** related to akam. Each of the 10 indicated by the name of a flower. There is no poem on nature as such. People didn't view themselves as separate from nature.

2.2 Nature in akam tradition important to Tamil identity even during classical times. *Ku'rinchippaaddu* colophon says, "**aariya aracan pirakaththanukku tthamizh a'rivitta'rku kkapilar paadiya ku'rignchippaaddu**".

261 lines long poem. more than 90 flowers listed. importance of flowers for the Tamils. Professor XavierThani Naayakam, who did his basic research on Nature in Cangkam Literature, emphasize this point.

2.3 Were the ancient Tamils secular or pluralistic? Tamil Lexicon glosses **muthal poru'l** and **karupporu'l**. **theyvam** seems to be degraded deva. Each landscape has a different deva. No creator god who can be savior. people worshipping different devas should have been getting on well.

3. Tamils forged relationship with plants and animals.

Tholkaappiyam Marapiyal important for Tamil tradition. 9 designations for young ones; 15 designations for males; 13 designations for females. grass (and palms), trees, birds, wild animals, domestic animals, aquatic animals share these designations. About accurate usage in each case, there were some differences of opinion. There must be a pattern in these designations. **ea'ru** appears to be applicable to virile males of all categories. If investigated, usages of **peadu** and **peddai** almost correspond to each other.

4. Six classes of life, sharing the environment.

4.1 Origin of the concept of 6 classes of life, based on senses and reason. (1) touch – plants. (2) 1 + taste – snail & shell-fish. (3) 2+ smell – termites & ants. (4) 3+ sight – crabs & bees. (5) 4+ hearing – animals & (irrational) humans. (6) 5+ mind – (rational) humans.

Tholkaappiyar's or Tamil or Jain classification? Tholkaappiyar himself disowns. Most probably Jain classification. What the author says about **muthal nuul**, "**vinaiyin niingki**

vi'langkiya a'rivin munaivan ka'ndathu mutal nuul aakum' (*marapiyal*, 96).

munaivan = sama'nan. Jain fordmaker?

4.2 Jains and ancient Tamils: who were more environment friendly? Ancient Tamils appear more positive. Within the later anthology of *pathine'n kiizhkka'nakku*, it was a Jain monk who writes *Ealathi*, an ethical work and *Ti'naimaalai Nuur'r'raimpathu*, the longest **ainthi'nai** work among 5 such works within that collection.

5. Nature/**akam** tradition in bhakti literature.

5.1 Nature descriptions in bhakti hymns. Campantar, a Saiva Brahmin leader. half- God, half-nature hymns. Attempt to fit in Siva bhakti within Tamil tradition. Vaishnava bhakti, especially poems of Thirumangkai, Aa'ndaa'l and Nammaazhvaar. The last 2 synthesize akam tradition and Krishna/Vishnu bhakti in an excellent manner. Aa'ndaa'l becomes a goddess. Nammaazhvaar's poems become the fifth Veda.

5.2 Saivite assertion of sharing life with plants and animals. Maa'nikkavaachakar's *Thirukkoavaiyaar*, a kind of synthesis of **akam** tradition and Siva bhakti. He also says, "**pullaaki ppuudaay ppuzhuvaay maramaaki-----paampaaki kkallaay-----thaavara changkamaththu'l**". echo of *Thol marapiyal*. That plants have life. like animals and human beings, but a different variety of existence , was also one of the arguments in the *Civagnaacittiyaar parapakkam* for rejection of Buddhism.

5.3 Jain exposition of akapporu'l non sectarian. *Akapporu'l Vi'lakkam*. Compare Saivite claim on *I'raiyanaar Ka'laviyal* and Vaishnavite claim on *Maa'ran Akapporu'l*.

6. Landscape descriptions in all **kaappiyams** of all religious backgrounds.

6.1 Jain authors were trend-setters. *Chinthaama'ni* & *Chuu'laama'ni*. Narratives alien to Tamilnadu: a kind of indigenization or nativization. Saivite *Periyapuraa'nam* settles for Kaviri river, Coazha:naadu and Thiruvaaruur. Vaishnavite *Iramaaya'nam* with Sarayu river, Koacala:naadu and Ayoaththi go for Tamil landscape descriptions also. *Irakuvammicham* from Ilangkai describe the same locations as *Iraamaaya'nam* appear to have more complete Tamil landscape descriptions.

6.2 Christian and Muslim authors follow suit. Catholic Christian *Theampaava'ni* , Muslim *Chii'raappuraa'nam* and Protestant Christian *Irada'niya Yaaththirikam*.

7. Conclusion.

Modernization during the 20th century ends the old era of old style **kaappiyam**, **koavai**, etc. Paarathiyar himself makes an impassioned appeal for a new type of **kaappiyam**. But revival of classical Tamil studies and resurgence of Dravidian/Tamil national feeling has given classical Tamil its due importance.