

• THE
AGE OF MANICKA VACHAKAR,
•

WITH AN ACCOUNT OF THE
THIRD ACADEMY AT MADURA,
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MADRAS:

THOMPSON AND

1899

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Printed at
The "Minerva Press,"
Popham's Broadway, Madras.

INTRODUCTION.

The idea of writing this brochure occurred to me when I perused sometime ago 'Some Milestones in the History of Tamil Literature,' by Professor Sundaram Pillai, M.A., whose untimely death the Tamil literati of the day sincerely lament. Though he spared no pains in fixing the age of the Child-Saint, though his decision of Tirujnâna Sambandar's time is final, he seems to have had no settled view as regards the age of the sage Mânickavâchakar. About the beginning of his book he unhesitatingly considers Mânickavâchakar as having lived much prior to Jnânasambandar. But towards the close of the work he entertains serious doubts of it. So I was at first very diffident of handling such unsettled questions of great historical and religious importance, yet the thought that no competent hand has come forward to argue the question in all its bearings which has been working in my mind for a long time, at last emboldened me to take it up in right earnest.

The Essay on Tamil Literature by Mr. Seshagiri Sastriar, M.A., of the Presidency College, has irritated the Tamil world to a degree, especially his many hasty and unfounded conclusions in connection with the Ancient Tamil Academy at

Madura. The most flagrant of these have been reviewed and rebutted in the body of this work, and I regret my oversight in it of the Professor's view exploding the high antiquity of the Ancient Tamil classics and undermining the authenticity of their authorship.*

Two of the Ten Tamil Idyls, namely, பட்டினப் பாலை and பெரும்பாணாற்றுப்படை, are the productions of a poet named Kadiyalûr Rudrankannanâr. The first work is addressed to Karikala Chola and the other to Tondaimân Ilantirayen. Mr. Seshagiri Sastriar somehow strongly assumes that the name Tondaimân first appears in history *only* after the time of Kulotunga Chola, who ruled from 1064 to 1113 A.D. He leads the reader to think that Tondaimân, the son of Kulotunga, should have been the first sovereign by that name. As there is a wide gulf between Karikala and Tondaimân, extending over many centuries, the antiquity and genuineness of the authorship of the works break down. This is what he drives the reader to infer. Whence he derived his materials to arrive at the conclusion that Kulotunga's son, Tondaimân, was the ancestor of the Tondaimân line of kings is not indicated, nor is it known. Whatever the sources, I wish he turn to page 1059 of Devaram Adangal Murai (*sthala varisai*) and see that saint Sundarar, who flourished about 825 A.D., refers to Tondaimân in a way which leaves no room to doubt that Tondaimân

* Vide page 37, Essay on Tamil Literature.

preceded the sage by several centuries. Tondaiman seemed to Sundarar an antique mythological personage. Pity it is that opinions which are absurd on their very face have been given currency to.

The reader will find many side-hints, jotted down as footnotes to serve as clues to those who may work up certain interesting points in connection with Tamil Literature.

My thanks are due to M.R.R. Swaminatha Aiyar Avergal of the Kumbakonam College for his kindly furnishing me with some information as regards the Purambayam tradition.

A few errors, mostly typographical, have unfortunately crept into the work, which I have corrected in the *errata*.

S. A. TIRUMALAI KOLUNDU.

எப்பொருள் யார்யார்வாய்க் கேட்பினு மப்பொருள்
மெய்ப்பொருள் காண்ப தறிவு.

Sacred Kural.

Read not to contradict and confute, nor to believe
and take for granted, nor to find talk and discourse,
but to weigh and consider.

Bacon's Essay on Studies.

THE AGE OF MÂNICKAVÂCHAKAR

WITH

An account of the Third Academy at Madura.

Leaving out of consideration the minor defects, in one great point of importance, the Tamil Language is far behind the times. It has not got an authentic history of its literature. In India, unlike Europe and elsewhere, the historic spirit is of quite a recent growth, so much so that even Sanskrit has not got a correct history of its literature. It may however be contended that in the case of languages of great antiquity, a correct account of their ancient literature is well nigh an impossibility. Tamil scholars with sufficient culture in English should sit very early to remedy this sad desideratum ; without Western culture the historic and critical spirit cannot be easily acquired by a Hindu.

A correct history of Tamil Literature implies two great difficulties ; they are (1) a correct account of literary periods and the lives of authors and (2)

a reliable chronological basis. Without a reliable chronological basis any authentic account of an author cannot be sufficiently interesting. The Tamil public are eternally indebted to the late lamented Mr. Sundaram Pillai, M. A., of Travancore, for his indefatigable labours in having at least broken the ice in this respect in his famous dissertation on the age of Jnânasambandar.

The 'present dissertation is intended to push his labours a little further into antiquity, and to fix the age of Mânickavâchakar from evidences of the most trustworthy type. "The farther we proceed in antiquity, the darker naturally becomes the view around." It requires uncommon patience and perseverance to launch into the dark depths of antiquity. Any success honestly made therein should be welcome to the Tamil world.

The *Saiva* religion or the worship of the holy *Siva Lingam* can be easily shown to be the most ancient religion of India and especially of Southern India the Land of the Tamils. It received the greatest opposition at the hands of the Buddhists and the Jains ; it was after the appearance of the four great Saiva reformers Mânickavâchakar, Appar, Jnânasambandar and Sundarar on the religious field, that Buddhism and Jainism which were then in the most depraved form gave way, unable to contend against Saivism after the impetus given to it by the religious revival. Mr. Sundaram Pillai rightly holds that, among the Saiva community of Southern

India no name is held in greater veneration than that of Tirujnânasambandar. The other three poetic saints are also held in high veneration. In point of heart-melting tendency the names of Mânickavâchakar and Appar rank foremost; Appar's fame is restricted to the Tamil land and even the name of Jnânasambandar is widely known to the Europeans on account of the death-blow Jainism received at his hands. The name most familiarly known both in India and abroad is that of Mânickavâchakar or as his name implies 'the author of the ruby-like utterances.' The learned Dr. Pope who takes perpetual delight in deciphering Dravidian thoughts nobly observes, in the advertisement to Tiruvâchakam which has been translated by him into English verse and is on the verge of publication that "few works are so full of feeling, so instinct with devout emotion and so finished in expression as many of these lyrics. It is a phase of thought and feeling which is worthy to be studied even more than the remains of Sanskrit Literature." Even in the Tamil land if the name of Jnânsambandar is held generally in great esteem the name of Mânickavâchakar is darling to the minds of great many Saivas; if we may judge of their relative glory from the honor paid to their holy idols in Saiva shrines Mânickavâchakar takes the upper hand. Places are allotted to the four Saiva reformers in all the sacred shrines of Siva in Southern India; but no separate shrine seems exclusively to be set apart for these saints

excepting in the case of Mânickavâchakar ; at Tirup-
perundurai the spot wherein Mânickavâchakar re-
ceived spiritual initiation, as we shall shortly see,
known generally as Avudaiyarkoyil* there is a large
temple even well worth a visit consecrated to
Mânickavâchakar. The temple is managed by the
Tiruvavaduturai Mutt and our poetic Saint is daily
worshipped in that shrine ; periodical festivals are
also held in his name ; the rush of *Saivites* of true
devotion is very great during a certain festival
when Mânickavâchakar the prime minister is re-
presented to get spiritual initiation at the hands of
his Holy Guru seated under the sacred *Kurunda*
tree.

In certain respects the influence of Mânicka-
vâchakar was greater than that exerted by his collea-
gues ; the spirited effusions of the *Vedantic* saint
Tattuvarâyar clearly manifest how much he was
absorbed in the works of our great sage which have
moulded his style, thoughts and pathos. Sivapra-
kâsar of the *Vira Saiva* community the author of
Prabhulingalîlai and other works speaks only with
the greatest devotion and admiration whenever he
has occasion to speak of our saint. In a certain
passage† he claims for Tiruvâchakara a place higher
than the Vedas on very substantial grounds ; the
late Mr. Sundaram Pillai of Travancore following the

* This is a place in the Madura District at a distance of 27 miles
from Pudukotah.

† Refer to the 4th Stanza in நால்வர் நான்மணிமாலை by Sivapra-
kâsar.

footsteps of Sivaprakâsar praises Tiruvâchakam at the cost of the Vedas.* In Europe the holy strains of Mânikavâchakar are more widely read than the writings of the Dêvâram hymnners. The common proverb† 'He who is not melted at Tiruvâchakam cannot be melted by any other book' proves the paramount importance of Tiruvâchakam as a heart-melting work. The popularity of the work has grown so high as to necessitate a European translation of it.

The earliest of the biographers of Mânikavâchakar seems to be Kadavulmâmuni whose 'Vâthavûrar Puranam' is exclusively devoted to a sketch of our holy saint's life and writings; the account given by this poet is generally based upon internal evidences and is complete from beginning to end. The next poet‡ who gives the life of our Saint is Paranjôti Munivar the author of Tiruvilayâdal Puranam (literally an account of Sacred Sports); herein the poet describes the sixty-four acts divine of Sôma-sundara the local God of Madura in 64 chapters of which four are consecrated to Mânickavâchakar; these chapters form some of the most fascinating portions of the work; the story is kept up with

* Refer to the lines,

மனங்கரைத்து மலங்கெடுக்கும் வாசகத்தின் மாண்டோர்கள்
கனஞ்சடைபென் றுருவேற்றிக் கண்மூடிக் கதறுவரோ.

Manonmaniyam தமிழ்த் தெய்வவணக்கம், at the beginning

† திருவாசகத்தி னுருகான் மற்றொரு வாசகத்து முருகான்.

‡ Poets were the only historians and biographers in the Tamil land.

great interest but towards the close from where Mânickavâchakar takes leave of the Pandya, the remaining adventures in the life of our poetic saint are wound up in a few quatrains as it was not the immediate province of the poet to detail events of importance connected with other shrines. In quite recent times, that is, about a quarter of a century back Mañâ Vidvân Mînâkshisundaram Pillai of the *Tiruvavaduturai Mutt* has depicted the life of the great sage in his *Tirupperundurai Purânam*. An account of his life can also be seen in the Sanskrit Hâlasya Mahâtmyam.

The main incidents in the life of Mânickavâchakar are reflected in his own works; and a critical writer can find ample materials in *Tiruvâchakam* to write out an authentic sketch of his life. We shall try as far as possible to give a highly true account of his life with the help of the best evidence in our power.

Mânickavâchakar the mind-melting poet and saint of the Tamil land was born of Brahmin parents at Vâthavûr on the banks of the river Vaigai about the beginning of the second century A. D.* or about the close of the first century. He seems to have been brought up in rigid conformity with the *Vedic* principles and was given the highest literary culture. His precocity enabled him to digest the subtlest principles of religion even at an early age and by the age of sixteen his education received its con-

* The evidence upon which we rest this conclusion will be understood later on.

summation. The then Pandyan king* pleased at the charming reports of the young sage sent for him and conferred upon him the prime minister-ship; the king presented him with the *nom-de-plume* Tennavan Brahmarayan† (*lit.* Brahmarayan of the Pandyan king). Our sage was a happy companion of the king and a great lover of devotees. Placed as he was at such a high station, his mind was not attracted by its pleasures, but yearned for a deliverer who would disentangle him from the miseries of birth by darting at him a glance divine; there were then in existence all the schools of philosophy ‡ namely, Atheism, Materialism and Idealism side by side with the various religions then in existence; none could please him; they were all hindrances on his way; they seem to have engaged his attention but were unable to arrest his mind which was resolved upon the attainment of salvation through a deliverer. § The saintly prime minister was as it were steering his career very

* We doubt seriously the genuineness of the name Arimardhana given by Paranjōti Munivar. The names given by the Tiruvilāyādal Purānam are mostly Sanskrit names, whereas ancient Tamil literature gives purely Tamil names to the Pandyas.

† From the *nom-de-plume* we can infer that Mānickavāchakar belonged to a family speaking Canarese that settled long ago in the Pandyan Kingdom. The term அநேந்து occurring often in Tiruvāchakam verifies our inference.

‡ Refer to பேரறித்திருவகவல், lines 54—56.

§ Paranjoti Munivar lays particular stress on the necessity of a guru (*vide* வாதஞ்சுரடிகளுக்குபதேசித்தபடலம் in Tiruvilāyādal, stanza 14); Christianity and Saivism agree in this respect. The Saiva religion is more tolerant than Christianity as it does not restrict the deliverer to one particular personage.

skillfully between Scylla and Charybdis. While in this state, the king came to know of the inefficient condition of his cavalry and asked our saint to secure him very good horses; the poet set out with enormous treasure to carry out the mission. Before a long journey, however, our saint had to stop short at the sight of a sage surrounded all round by disciples well-versed in all branches of lore, under the cool shade of a *Kurunda* tree at Tirupperundurai. The minister whose heart was already yearning with all fervour for getting sight of a deliverer soon melted into love and approached the sage with hands raised in adoration and with all the eagerness of a man almost dying of thirst, at the sight of water. His desires for wordly comforts as well as pleasures in the land of the Gods were at an end †; pain and pleasure were equally welcome to him and he was in fact at the right stage for receiving spiritual initiation at the hands of a true deliverer. The deliverer who was specially come to the spot for the sake of Vâthavûrar ‡ now fully ripe to receive the divine blessing at his hands darted a look of glance divine, laid his sacred feet on the head of the poet, and whispered into his ears the true meaning of the three terms Pati, Pasu and Pâsam, his hands all along rest-

† For instance refer to stanza 2 in his திருச்சுதம்.

‡ It is strange to note that in the case of many Tamil poets the name by which they were known to their parents are forgotten; they are either known by their village name or by any special name of merit. Our saint is known as Vâthavûrar as he was born at Vâthavûr.

ing on the head of his ripe disciple. This act of grace divine * had a marvellous effect upon the saint who became divine love as it were which exhibited itself by the spontaneous outbursts in verses immeasurable in value commemorating the glory of his spiritual redeemer.† The deliverer conferred upon the poet and saint the most suitable appellation—Mânickavâchakar (lit. *the ruby-like utterancer*)—in token of the preciousness of his songs. After sometime the spiritual *Guru* vanished along with his followers leaving Mânickavâchakar to bemoan the loss in poetic rhapsodies of deep pathos. The treasure‡ in his possession was spent mostly in the construction of a temple at Tirupperundurai and partly in the extension of charity to the devotees of Siva. His actions did not, however, remain long unknown to the king who soon sent messengers in search of Mânickavâchakar; the minister was at a loss to send a suitable reply and so hurried to the temple and implored God's grace to remedy his grievances; the words of God fell in his ears and our saint soon made way home to Madurai and told the king that he could expect the horses on a certain day in the month of Avani.

* St. Mânickavâchakar frequently refers to his spiritual redemption; for a detailed account of this incident refer to his திருத்தெள்ளேணம் which is nothing but his autobiography so far as that special incident is concerned.

† The very first poetic effusion or at least the strains composed on the day of his spiritual redemption was the third agaval (திருவண்டப்பகுதி); see especially at its close where his emotions overpower his expression.

• ‡ On the day of his redemption he renounced his body, wealth and to his life guru; vide stanza 7 in குழைத்தபத்தி.

The king was pleased and was coolly waiting for the day. The friends and relatives of Mânickavâchakar teased him with wordly advice and pronounced his actions as unwise, inexpedient and dangerous to the interest of his family and friends. The sage's mind, rivetted as it was on the form of his divine deliverer at Perundurai, was not in the least affected by their wordly wisdom; the sage simply replied that he was prepared to undergo the worst form of punishment that might await him, but that he could not for a moment forget Siva. His relatives and friends had no more concern with him. The appointed day was approaching and the king was anxiously waiting for the arrival of the horses. God Siva—the ways of God are not easily known—metamorphosed a good lot of the foxes of the jungle into stately horses of high worth and conducted them to Madura himself seating on the most beautiful among them. The approach of the horses was known to the king as well as the people of the city, first by the cloud of dust raised afar and afterwards by their deafening tread. In a moment were the horses at the gates of the palace; the Pandyan king, the ministers and all else repaired to the spot at once. The king was bewildered with joy at the sight of the horses which were in his estimate of a price higher than he advanced for them through his minister; the sweet face of the divine head-horseman naturally enticed the heart of the king; Mânickavâchakar who knew very well that God Him-

self had appeared in flesh and blood for his sake was all love * at the happy sight. The king presented him with a rich golden garment which the divine horseman received at the end of his whip even without the formality of a salute. The king got offended† at the insult but our sage soothed him by telling him that it was the fashion of their country. After the due receipt of the horses the divine head-horseman followed by his retinue the other horsemen left the court and vanished. Mânickavâchakar was again recompensed for his splendid success in the undertaking; he received the compliments but indifferently knowing the evanescence of all earthly glory and lo! at night the mystic horses assume their native shape and pounce upon the old horses in the royal stable and after a hearty dinner to their stomachs' content bolt out into the jungle making a wild howl which awoke the city. The king soon understands the trick and grows wild and orders his servants to oppress Mânickavâchakar till they could squeeze out from him the last pie due to the king. The devotee is taken to the hot sands of the river Vaigai and made to lie on his back there in the hot sun. This was too much for God to bear; the Vaigai (the river that runs past Madura) was soon in a flood which threatened the destruction of the city; the angry flood dashed furiously upon the banks and water

* Refer to passages wherein he graphically describes the form of Siva in the guise of the horseman; especially to திருப்பரணடிப் பதிகம் stanza 6.

† Vide verses 38—40 in கிர்த்தித்திருவகவல்.

began to overflow the sides ; no moment could be lost ; the king was in a great fix ; the bank was apportioned out by the officers of the king to the several citizens for speedy repair and protection against the flood ; a certain portion of the bank fell to the lot of a devout matron whose vocation was the preparation and sale of the powdery diet (known in Tamil as *pittu*). She was of a very pious turn of mind and now she was mightily aggrieved as she could not find a workman to finish her portion of the royal mandate. God Siva Himself condescended to be her servant and appeared before her as a *cooly** with all the necessary apparatus of the calling ; the bargain was soon struck, the disguised *cooly* consenting to lend all his services in return for *pittu*. The divine workman was very wise, however, to get his wages first but when the embankment was all finished his portion of the labour remained untouched. The furious current was widening the breach more and more asunder. The king with his officers repaired to the banks of the river for inspection ; it pleased him much and when he approached the breach he got vexed and was given to understand that it was due to the negligence of the *cooly* who was engaged by the poor matron, the *pittu*-seller. The divine workman in tattered attire was found lounging on the ground when the king gave him a good

* This incident is referred to by the poet several times ; for example, *vide* verses 46 and 47 in the 2nd agaval and stanza 8 in திருவம்மாலை. Also refer to the 49th agaval in கல்வாடவுரை, page 409.

caning; and the mysterious servant suddenly became invisible emptying the contents of the basket into the breach which forthwith closed. The king got alarmed and from above sprang the words "King! you little know the merits of Mânickavâchakar for whose sake We first metamorphosed the foxes of the jungle into horses; he spent your treasure only for your good in all charitable ways; you oppressed him further and We sent this flood to endanger the safety of your city; and for the sake of the devout matron whose hair is silvered over with age, We have appeared as a common *coolie*." The king melted into love and began to bemoan his unwisdom which hindered him from understanding the nature of his saint minister. Hastily does he go to Mânickavâchakar in deep meditation at the shrine and begs his forgiveness. Forgiveness does he readily grant but does not consent to become his prime-minister again as he has been ordered by God to go to Tirupperundurai. The wordly turmoils of our saint were all over then and he hastened with all speed to Perundurai to see again his deliverer.

His deliverer was as before seated in the midst of a large number of devotees and Mânickavâchakar prostrated himself before his lord like a palm-tree uprooted; the lord laid his hands on his devotee with great grace and asked him tenderly to rise up. Mânickavâchakar was blessed and after a while his emancipator left them (Mânickavâchakar and devo-

tees) with a mandate that they should all remain at the spot till the appearance of a blazing fire in a pond yonder, when they should all leap into it and attain bliss excepting Mânickavâchakar who should go to Chidambaram for salvation. The devotees remained there and the celestial light did appear and they all leapt into the pond and disappeared excepting our poet who at once left the spot to Tiruvuttarakôsamangai (a Siva shrine in the *Zemindary* of Ramnad) where God appeared in the form of his holy *Guru*. It is here that our saint improvised his Nîttal Vinnappam of 50 quartrains. After worshipping some other shrines of his beloved Pandyan kingdom* the saint came back to Perundurai and sang the Kîrti Tiruvagaval (*lit.* agaval on God's Glory). The sage then left the Pandyan kingdom once for all and after touring over the important shrines in the land of the Chola gracing them with his heart-melting effusions, repaired last to Pon-nambalam or Chidambaram whereunto his Lord Divine had asked him to come. The divine dance of Lord Natêsa of the shrine bewitch his senses and mind and our saint stands motionless like a pillar his eyes pouring streams of water on either side ; at distant intervals, however, sprang from his mouth the words '*Siva Siva Pôtri*'; he be-

* That Mânickavâchakar was a great patriot of his native land the kingdom of Pandya is often manifested in his works. Refer for instance to the 11th Stanza in திருவம்மாளை as well as to verses beginning with தென்னுடையசெவனே and பாண்டிநாட்டே பழம்பதியாகவும் in the famous *agavals*.

came an object of pity to the people of the city and our saint soon repaired to an adjacent jungle and sat in contemplation.

While matters were thus at a stand some of the Buddhists of Ceylon got infuriated at the charming reports of the sacred shrine of Chidambaram and wanted to convert it into a Buddhist monastery by vanquishing the Saiva creed in an open discussion. The Sakyā monks accordingly were soon seen at Chidambaram and their arrival and mission was intimated to the Brahmins of the temple. This was a great alarm to the Brahmins and they had too little a trust in their ability to contend. Their fear and diffidence gave way soon as they resolved to request our saint to contend against the impious heathens. Mânickavâchakar accordingly appears on the scene and overpowers his opponents in the religious discussion; he seems also to have cured the dumbness of a maiden which spoke much to his credit. The Buddhists threw away their garb and became converts to the Saiva faith and Mânickavâchakar again repaired to the jungle for undisturbed contemplation.

His solitude was, however, soon disturbed as an old Brahmin professing to be a native of the Pandyan kingdom came to the saint. Our sage after according him the right welcome accosted him as to his whereabouts and mission; the old man told him that he was a native of the Pandya-dêsa and had come specially to see him on

account of the great fascination which his writings created in him. Mânickavâchakar was highly pleased at the old man and the latter gently requested our saint to sing again his poems in order that he might commit them to writing. The ruby-like utterancer agreed and the old Brahmin was fast writing as the verses were recited. Tiruvâchakam was thus over and the old man requested our sage to compose a *Kôvai* (a garland of verses) in commemoration of the glory of Lord Natêsa of Chidambaram. This was also relishingly agreed to and Tirucchittambalakkôvai of 400 quatrains (seemingly on love but with higher esoteric meanings imbedded) was the outcome. After duly writing this the old man mysteriously disappeared and Mânickavâchakar saw reasons to believe that it was Lord Natêsa that had so come and cursed his inability to understand the divine trick and sent down streams of tears from his eyes for the grace with which God condescended to come to him for writing his verses. Soon after a copy of Tiruvâchakam and Tirukkôvaiyâr was seen under the holy feet of Natêsa in the Chidambaram shrine; devotees of God tried to make out the meaning of these heart-melting strains but in vain; they all with God's permission repaired to the hermitage of the poetic saint and conducted him to the shrine; he was then presented with his own poems copied by the hand divine and was very humbly requested to explain their meaning. The saint simply advanced towards

Lord Natêsa saying 'He is the meaning of these verses' and became invisible on approaching close the interior shrine.

Thus the life of Mânickavâchakar ends with a mystery as is the case with the lives of Dêvâram authors. A great part of Mânickavâchakar's biography can, as it were, be extracted from his own works as we have shown.

The next subject for serious consideration is the question of the priority of Mânickavâchakar to Jnânasambandar. Serious misconceptions have, of late, arisen regarding this subject; in fixing the time of our great poet, a thorough investigation of the origin of such misconceptions is essential for placing his priority beyond the pale of controversy.

It is admitted on all hands and is also supported by internal evidence that the heretic religion in existence in Southern India at the time of Mânickavâchakar was Buddhism*; we cannot assert that Jainism was not then existent; Jainism is generally considered to be an after-growth of Buddhism, after the latter lost its glory; that they were totally different creeds based on different principles cannot be doubted. From Mânickavâchakar's history we learn that he defeated the Buddhist doctors in a religious discussion held at Chidambaram, whereunto the Buddhist monks repaired to establish their faith and uproot the Saiva creed. The history of Jnânâ-

* Vide stanza 6 of திருத்தொழைக்கம்.

sambandar reveals to us that he was the destroyer of the Jain faith. As Jainism was an after-growth due to the downfall of Buddhism, we can presume, even in the absence of further evidence, that Mânickavâchakar preceded Jnânasambandar.

A careful examination of their diction irresistibly forces upon us the conclusion that Mânickavâchakar belongs to or at least is much influenced by the school of poets who cultivated the Tamil language with the greatest assiduity * during the Golden Age of Tamil Literature, *viz.*, the last Sangam at Madura.

The same conclusion is strengthened further by the fact that the renowned commentators on ancient classics in Tamil such as Nacchinârkkiniyar, Pêrâsiriyar, Adiyârkkunallâr, Parimêlalagar, and others have copiously cited from Tiruvâchakam and Tirucchittambalakkôvaiyâr in support of their views in the course of their commentaries, whereas they have all scrupulously avoided all references to the works of the Dêvâram hymners, namely, the poetic saints Jnânasambandar, Appar, and Sundarar, whose works are also undoubtedly worthy models of dignified diction. *This is a very highly significant fact.* It should mean one or other of two things ; namely, either that the commentators should have lived before the time of the hymners of Dêvâram or at least should have thought that Dêvâram was not sufficiently old (in their time) to

* There is our poet's own evidence in support which will be indicated a little later in the course of the treatise.

rise to the rank of furnishing support to their commentaries on the Tamil classics. Pêrâsiriyaṛ, who at the least was the contemporary * of Nacchinârkkiniyaṛ, has also elaborately commented on Tirucchittambalakkôvaiyâr of Mânickavâchakaṛ touching only the outer side of the work, as he felt great diffidence † to enter upon the esoteric meaning imbedded in it. This evidence is sufficient in itself to establish the priority of Mânickavâchakaṛ to Jnânasambandaṛ. The inference, negative though it be, is none the less strong for it.

We, however, have a more positive evidence furnished by Dêvâram itself establishing the anterior existence of our poet. Appar, one of the hymnners of Dêvâram and a contemporary of Jnânasambandaṛ, alludes in a *pathigam* of his, sung at Tiruvârûr, to the mysterious metamorphosis ‡ of the foxes of the forest into stately horses by God Somasundara of Madura. This is a divine feat intended to relieve Mânickavâchakaṛ from the oppression of the Pandiyaṅ king. Mânickavâchakaṛ himself refers to this very often in Tiruvâchakam and the tenderest way in which he describes the form of Siva as the head of the horsemen will convince anybody as to

* Nacchinârkkiniyaṛ refers to Pêrâsiriyaṛ by name in the commentaries on Tolkâppyaṁ Poruladikâram Agattinai Iyal *sutra* 46.

† *Vide* Pêrâsiriyaṛ's commentaries on the first stanza of Tirucchittambalakkôvaiyâr. The commentaries are wrongly edited with the name of Nacchinârkkiniyaṛ as commentator.

• ‡ Refer to page 652 of Ramaswami Pillai's Edition of Dêvâram Adangaṁ Murai, *stanza* 2.

the truth of his personal perception of the divine vision. The whole of the *Pandippathigam* is devoted to this subject.

We have not brought as evidence, either tradition, or the Madura Sthala Purana, both of which also favour the same conclusion. It is not at all safe to rest our conclusions on the testimony of Puranas or tradition, as they at times misguide us a great deal out of the way. When other evidences tend to a certain conclusion these can give subsidiary evidence and no further.

Tiruvilayâdal Purânam, a Tamil version of the Madura Sthala Puranam and Halâsya Mahatmyam, the Sanskrit Purâna of the shrine both place Mânickavâchakar before Jnânasambandar. According to Tiruvilayâdal Puranam, Mânickavâchakar precedes Jnânasambandar by the reigns of *ten* Pandyas.

There is a tradition current in some circles that Appar had a copy of 'The holy strains' of Mânickavâchakar ever in his hands, which he used to study with perpetual ecstatic delight. It is further said that Appar's devotion was modelled on Mânickavâchakar's. As Appar lived after the time of the author of the ruby-like utterances, it is perfectly certain that he should have read the holy strains of our saint. We shall presently shew, that Appar's devotion, thought, and expression have received their shape from Mânickavâchakar.

A comparative study of Dêvâram and Tiruvâcha-

kam easily manifests to any reader the superiority of the latter in point of melting the heart. In the Dêvâram, the hymns of Appar transcend those of the other hymnners in that respect. In fact whenever any heart-melting strains from Dêvâram be desired the verses of Appar are generally taken. Thus the most touching portions from the Saiva Literature of the Tamils are decidedly the classical poems of Mânîckavâchakar and the musical hymns of Appar. We were at a loss to know how Appâr's strains happened to be more touching than those of Jnânasambandar and Sundarar, the other authors of Dêvâram. A critical study of Tiruvâchakam and Appar's Dêvâram reveals, to us, the fact that Appar is indebted to Mânîckavâchakar in thought, expression and devotion. Some thoughts and expressions peculiar to Mânîckavâchakar occur in the strains of Tirunâvukkarasar (Appar), whereas they do not find a place in the hymns of the other two saints. Compare, for instance,

யாவர்கோ னென்னையும்வந் தாண்டுகொண்டான்
யாமார்க்குங் குடியல்லோம் யாதும்ஞ்சோம்
மேவினோ மவனடியா ரடியாரோடும்

of Tiruvâchakam — *Tirucchatakam* stanza 30 with the following strains of Appar,

† நாமார்க்குங் குடியல்லோம் நமனையஞ்சோம்

* * * *
* * * *

† Vide page 1174 of Ramaswami Pillai's Edition of Dêvâram Sthala Murai.

கோமாற்கே நாமென்றும் மீளாவாளாய்க்

கொய்மலர்ச்சே வடியிணையே குறுகினேமே.

where both the saints speak of their fearlessness to any body, even the God of death not excepted as they have become 'vassals' of Siva.

Again, the author of the ruby-like utterances lays down a great divine truth, *viz.*, that God can be worshipped only with His grace divine, thus,

* அவனருளாலே யவன்றூள் வணங்குகி

which again is expressed in a more explanatory way by Appar, in the following verses,

† அவனருளே கண்ணாகக் காணினல்லா

லிப்படிய னிந்நிறத்த னிவ்வண்ணத்த

னிவனிதைவ னென்றெழுதிக் காட்டொணுதே.

This thought does not seem to occur in the hymns of the other Dêvâram authors.

To take another instance ; the expressions,

‡ சிந்தையே கோயில் கொண்ட வெம்பெருமான்

(the Lord who has made my heart his temple)

§ என்னுடைய சிந்தையே ஆராகக்கொண்டானுவந்து

(He has cheerfully made my heart as his fitting residence)

recur in Appar as,

|| நினைப்பவர் மனங்கோயிலாய்க் கொண்டவன்

* *Vide* verse 18 in the first *agaval* of Tiruvâchakam.

† Refer to the tenth *pasuram*, page 1174 of Dêvâram.

‡ கோயிற்றிருப்பதிகம் Stanza 10.

§ திருவெண்பா Stanza 11.

|| *Vide* Stanza 1, page 5 of Ramaswami Pillai's Edition of Dêvâram.

(He who makes the heart of those who think of him his temple).

Also compare,

உற்றொ யான் வேண்டேன்

குற்றலத் தமர்ந்துறையுங் கூத்தா

Stanza 3 of திருப்புலம்பல் in Tiruvâchakam with Appar's

உற்றொ ராளுரோ வுயிர்கொண்டு போம்பொழுது

குற்றலத் துறை கூத்தனல்லால் நமக்—குற்றார்

in his திருவங்கமாலி (the garland of human parts). Herein both the sages spurn away their relatives and think of God at குற்றலம். Such coincidences, in thought and expression, cannot at all be due to accident. It is certain that one of them should be indebted to the other. The borrower, no doubt, should be Appar.

The devotion of Appar, modelled as it was upon that of Mânickavâchakar, is of a higher pitch than that of the other hymners; nowhere in Dêvâram can we search for expressions similar to, 'சிவமாக்குயெனே யாண்டவத்தன்' (the Lord who has made me his 'vassal' by making me Sivam) which recur so often in Tiruvâchakam; according to the Agamâs, there are four kinds, rather stages, in salvation, corresponding to the form of piety adopted by the devotee. These are *Sâlôka*, *Sâmîpa*, *Sârûpa*, and *Sâujjya*, i. e., Life in the same world as God, Life near Him, Attaining the form of God, and Coalescence with God. The salvation, that Mânickavâchakar speaks of, is the last and the crowning point of man's greatest

achievements. The nearest approach to it that we are able to find in the Devaram hymns, is in the strains of Appar; for in his famous Tiruvankamâlai, he says rather exultingly that he was able to find in himself, after search, the divinity above the reach of Vishnu and Brahma.

The strange omission of the name of Mânickavâchakar from Dêvâram can be explained away by the fact that the full collection of Dêvarâm we have at present known as '*Adangal Murai*' is simply a small fraction* of the complete number of *pathigams* sung by the hymners. What we have at present are the relics left unto us, after the moth and white ants have done their work.† If we have the full collection we can probably expect some account of Mânickavâchakar in Dêvâram itself; as we have already seen, Appar has alluded to a sacred sport of God Siva in the interests of His devoted disciple Mânickavâchakar. If Mânickavâchakar lived after the times of Appar, Jnânasambandar, and Sundarar he would, in all probability, have referred to their glory as he has done in the case of two of the canonised saints‡ Kannappar and Chandêsvarar. Thus the negative inference is also in favour of the priority of the age of Mânickavâchakar.

*Number of *Pathigams* now extant is 795; originally, however, there were 102,000.

† Vide திருமுறைகண் டுராணம் of Umâpatisivachâryar usually found tacked on to the Periapuranam of Sêkkillâr.

‡ Vide Tiruvâchakam Stanza 4 in திருக்கோத்தும்பி and Stanzas 3 and 7 in திருத்தேவாரணைக்கம்.

In the light of so much overwhelming evidence a certain misconception distorting the true times of Mânickavâchakar and Jnânasambandar seems slowly to gain ground. Even in the very able dissertation of the late lamented Mr. Sundaram Pillai of Travancore on the age of Jnânasambandar we are very sorry to find a certain unsteadiness* in his view regarding the age of Mânickavâchakar. The Honorable P. Kumarsawmy of Colombo wishes to place the time of Jnânasambandar long before the age of Karikâla, when, Silappatikâram, one of the five ancient epics in Tamil Literature, was composed. He upholds this view on the ground that the miracle of the Vanni tree, with which Jnânasambandar is associated in the Tiruvilâyâdal Pûranam, is alluded to by the heroine† of Silappatikâram. If this view be admitted Jnânasambandar would precede Mânickavâchakar in time which would certainly be absurd, in the light of the overwhelming and conclusive evidences we have already furnished, in establishing the priority of Mânickavâchakar. We shall, however, examine the materials that led to this unprecedented view as to their validity. That the *Vanni* tree tradition should have been in existence during the last Sangam period cannot be doubted as Ilangôvadigal the author of Silappatikâram refers to it in the mouth of Kannagi

* Compare the tone in which Mr. Sundaram Pillai speaks of Mânickavâchakar's time in page 3 with that at the close of his 'Some Mile Stones in the History of Tamil Literature.'

† Vide verses 5 and 6 of the 21st canto in Silappatikâram.

the heroine of this epic poem of classical times. As we can learn easily from internal evidence, that the epic was composed during the reign of Gayavahu* in Ceylon who on the strength of Mahavamso the chronicles of Ceylon of established authenticity, flourished about 113 A. D. the tradition should have originated in the first century A. D. or earlier. The difficulty, however, lies in the impossibility of Jnânasambandar living at such an early age as the Tîruvilayâdal Puranam asserts. For the purposes of clear elucidation, we cannot but relate the miracle as laid down in the Tîruvilayâdal Puranam†. It is briefly as follows :

A well-to-do merchant living in a port (name of the port is not given by the Puranam) was blessed with an only issue a daughter whom he wished to give in marriage to his nephew at Madura who was already a husband. He gave expression to his wish in the midst of his relatives, but the cruel hand of fate was soon upon him and he expired before disposing away his daughter ; and his chaste wife entered the funeral pyre soon after his death, leaving behind her, disconsolate, the only daughter, with an enormous wealth. The tidings of their death reached their nephew at Madura who hurried to the spot and did all the necessary funeral rites. He sent in advance, not only all the treasure bequeathed to him, but also all his retinue re-

* Vide உரைபெறுகட்டுரை at the end of the பதிகம் in Silappatikâram and verses 160—163 of the 30th canto in the same epic.

† Vide the 64th canto in Tîruvilayâdal Puranam.

taining only the virgin girl, betrothed to him already by her father—an arrangement, as Mr. Sundaram Pillai sagely remarks, extremely unnatural from a Hindu point of view. The couple came to Purambayam, a Siva shrine, where, unluckily the young merchant was bitten by a cobra and died on the spot. The unhappy virgin, too chaste and modest to approach her intended husband, was none the less aggrieved at his death. She wailed with heart-rending grief but yet keeping herself at a respectful distance from the dead man. Jnânasambandar who was then present at the shrine* on his tour observed her sad lot and by casting a gracious look on the corpse gave life to it; the man got up as though awakened from deep sleep and at the request of Jnânasambandar the marriage was performed at the temple, a *lingam*, a well, and a Vanni tree standing as witnesses to the sacred ceremony; and the pair hastened to Madura with all speed. Very soon he was blessed with a child by his second wife. A childish quarrel between this boy and the children of his first wife brought the usual misunderstanding between the two wives, when, the elder tauntingly questioned the legal status of her co-wife. Unable to offer better evidence as to the validity of her nup-

* This is the unwarranted link that led to the serious distortion of the view of Jnânasambandar's age.

Paranjoti Munivar seems a little careful, however, in not ascribing any *pathigam* to Jnânasambandar to awake the dead-man. Mr. Sundaram Pillai's version of the Tiruvilayadal story is a little erroneous as he makes Jnânasambandar improvise a *pathigam* to revive the corpse.

tials, the younger wife cited the Vanni tree, the holy *Sivalingam*, and the well of the Purambayam shrine. These appeared on the scene at the Madura shrine and proved beyond doubt her chastity. The story ends with the forgiveness granted to the first wife by the second wife as their husband determined to excommunicate his elder arrogant wife for her impudence in questioning the chastity of his younger wife.

Before proceeding to examine the historic value of the last episode, it will be convenient, to narrate in brief, the analogical tradition given in the Periyapurānam, which Paranjōti Munivar of Tiruvilayādal Purānam has dovetailed rather cleverly into another quite an independent tradition, namely, the Vanni tree miracle, as we shall presently show.

A trader of the Vaniga caste living at Vaippar had seven daughters one of whom he promised to bestow in marriage to his nephew ; but tempted by lucre he was silently disposing away his daughters one by one to rich parties ; six of his daughters were thus given away and the greedy merchant was anxiously waiting for a rich suitor to dispose away the only remaining daughter. She, however, had a piteous heart and formed her love towards her cousin attracted to him more by his sad position. There was no other way of defeating her father's secret intention but by eloping with her cousin ; they both set out to consummate their marriage elsewhere. On

their way they had to halt at Marukal * a place quite close to Tirucchenkâttangudi, the residence of the far-famed Siruttondar. Unhappily the man suffered instant death by a cobra-bite and the unhappy maiden in her great dilemma wailed loudly and piteously but keeping herself at a modest distance from the corpse, as she could not touch it, as she was still a virgin. Jnânasambandar who was sojourning there with his retinue hastened to the spot and moved more by the decorous behaviour of the maiden who in her worst moments of tribulation kept up her modesty improvised a *pathigam*† on the local God and awakened the dead man; Jnânasambandar advised them to perform their wedding there, in order that they both might mutually help each other in the way. The marriage was accordingly performed in the temple but there were no *inanimate witnesses* as in the previous tradition.

Any reader can see for himself, how natural the second story is when compared with the first which is uncouth and unnatural and contains many improbable elements. In the first place a man of highly well-to-do circumstances blessed with an only daughter would not in the least condescend to give away his daughter to an elderly man and already a husband to boot. Secondly, it is quite

* The place is within 10 miles from Tiravârun in the Tanjore District.

† This *pathigam* is in the *Devaram Adangal Murai* and the strains are simple and touching; the saint describes the wailings of the virgin. *Vide* page 622 of *Devaram*, Ramaswami Pillai's Edition.

improbable that a man would send away all his retinue in advance to his place with nobody to attend on him, entrusting them with the treasure. The idea of travelling with a virgin, alone, after wantonly sending away all attendants and relatives is really shockingly unnatural, at least from the Hindu point of view. The merchant should have been the worst fool to travel alone like men left forsaken in the world for want of kith and kin. Further if Jnânasambandar had witnessed the wedding with his retinue she could very well have referred to the incident. So much as to the absurdity manifested by the story itself. Purambayam is a village within six miles north of Kumbakonam possessing an ancient Siva shrine ; Mânickavâchakar makes mention of it as a spot where many charities were performed* ; within the temple walls there are the reputed *Vanni* tree, kitchen, *Siva lingam* and the well. Sêkkilâr whose Periapuranam passes high for its historical value, does not make mention of any snake-bite at this spot cured by Jnânasambandar. In Marukal on the other hand there is no *Vanni* tree ; here no doubt a young man was bitten by a snake and his desolate virgin (his would-be-wife) wailed bitterly and her sufferings were put an end to by Jnânasambandar as we have already described. How then was Paranjôti Munivar able to associate the miracle with Jnânasambandar in the absence of any evidence ? The only points of similarity of any solid

* Refer to the line புறம்பயமதனி லறம்பலவருனியும்.

interest are the elopement and the snake-bite in the two stories. These were the incidents out of which the author of the Tiruvilayâdal Puranam wove out a compound story, as we shall show, from the further evidence furnished to us regarding the Purambayam shrine, which agreeably fits with the reference made to the miracle in the ancient epic of Silappatikâram.

Mr. Sundaram Pillai is perfectly correct in conjecturing that the canto in the Tiruvilayâdal Puranam headed 'வன்னியுங்கிணறும் லிங்கமும் அழைத்த படலம்' is a patch-work* of two independent traditions. One of these two is the Marukal snake-bite scene depicted well by Sêkkilâr and supported by Dêvâram itself and the other is what we are now to relate.

Purambayam is a sacred *Siva* shrine at a little distance from Kumbakonam as already said. We have not yet obtained a full account of all the traditions connected with the spot; as however, Mâpîckavâchakar refers to it as a place where several charities were performed, a *Sthala Puranam* of it, if in existence, might give us much interesting information. What immediately concerns us, however, is the Vanni tree miracle; till very recently a drama was actually played every year at the temple and was known as 'Vanni Nâtakam'; this throws an abundance of light dispelling the mist that en-

* Vide p. 57 of 'Some Milestones in the history of Tamil Literature' by Mr. Sundaram Pillai.

velopes the question of the priority of Mânickavâchakar to Jnânasambandar.

The true tradition of the Vanni tree miracle has nothing to do with Jnânasambandar and is as natural as it is simple. There was a merchant living at Pugâr otherwise known as Kaverippûmpattinam who had an only daughter; he had a strong desire to give her in marriage to the son of his sister, whereas his wife (*i.e.*, the girl's mother) was strongly bent upon marrying her daughter to a younger brother of hers. The virgin, however, had a liking for the bridegroom intended for her by her father. This rupture in the family delayed the marriage for a long time and the pair knowing very well that their matrimony would be further delayed wished to elope simply to consummate their marriage elsewhere without giving pain to the mother. They had to halt at Purambayam on the way where the husband, as in the other versions, died by snake-bite; the forsaken virgin bewailed bitterly her sad lot and sent screams of despair. *Then the local God appeared as a snake-charmer and revived the dead man*, and asked them to perform their wedding in the shrine to which they did not consent, on the ground that it would be unfair to perform such an act without the testimony of their relatives and friends; the snake-charmer, however, gave them hope that the five things in the temple, namely, the *lingam*, the goddess, the well, the Vanni tree, and the kitchen, would stand as witnesses. They laughed at it, but the sudden and mysterious disappearance of

the snake-charmer created a reverential dread in them for the charmer, whom they began to consider as God in human form specially come to them to relieve their misery. The marriage was, therefore, speedily solemnised at the shrine and the pair went to Madura the residence of the husband. The subsequent events agree pretty closely with the episode given in the Tiruvilayâdal Puranam excepting in one, particular, *viz.*, the number of witnesses. The Tiruvilayâdal gives *three* witnesses, the *Vanni* tree, the well and the *lingam*, whereas the Purambayam tradition gives *five*, the goddess and the kitchen being included. The Purambayam tradition just cited is better founded, from the fact that the kitchen referred to in it occurs in Silappatikâram. The *Vanni* tree miracle is thus, at least, as old as the Sangam age. The absence of all reference to the name of Jnânasambandar in the more genuine tradition of Purambayam, which we have just given, removes the only misconception that has, of late, been gaining ground. The dovetailing of the two independent traditions—the Marukal snake-bite scene and the Vanni tree miracle—is due to the ingenuity of Paranjôti Munivar who wanted to give a higher colouring to the Vanni tree miracle by associating it with the name of Jnânasambandar on the very slender analogy that existed between the two traditions, namely, the elopement and the snake-bite. Further we have to repeat the cautious remarks made by the learned professor as regards the

historic value of the Tiruvilaiyâdal Puranam ; however admirable it may be as a work of art, the Puranam is not distinguished for historical accuracy and it stands alone in associating the Vanni tree story with Jnânasambandar.

Thus there is not the least evidence to prove that Jnânasambandar lived during the period when Silappatikâram and other works of the *Sangam* period were composed ; nor does tradition incline in its favour ever so little ; to try to shift the time of Jnânasambandar to the *Sangam* age is simply to construct a dreamland.

Our readers will pardon us for the elaborate way in which we had to deal with the point, as our sole aim was to clear all misconceptions and establish the priority of Mânickavâchakar on an unshakeable basis, especially, when such misconceptions originate from high quarters. Two other difficulties are to be brushed off before beginning to fix the age of the author of the ruby-like utterances. These are (1) why do the works of Mânickavâchakar not occupy the first place, as they richly deserve, in the Saiva Bible of the Tamils, *i. e.*, in the compilations known as the Twelve Tirumurais ? ; and (2) why does not the name of Mânickavâchakar find a place in Tirutondattokai or the List of Canonised Saints furnished by Sundarar the last in time among the Dêvâram hymners ? The Saiva Bible of the Tamils known as the Saivattirumurai contains 12 books of which the *first three* contain the hymns of Jnânasambandar, the

next three those of Appar, the *seventh* the Dêvâram of Sundarar ; the *eighth* comprises the works of Mânickavâchakar, namely, his Tiruvâchakam and Tirukkôvaiyâr ; the *ninth* is the Tiru Isaippa of the nine great men, one of whom was Kandarâditya a Chola king of Uraiyur, whose name occurs in the list of Cholas deduced from a study of inscriptions ; the *tenth* contains the dignified quatrains of the *Yôgi* Tirumûlar known as *Tirumantram* ; the *eleventh* is an *omnium gatherum*, some of which decidedly belong to the Sangam period, Tirumurugâttruppadaï in the Pattupâttu forming a portion of this ; the *twelfth* is the Periapurânam of Sêkkilâr. Thus the works of Mânickavâchakar are placed behind those of the hymners of Dêvâram as the eighth of the Tirumurai. How do the hymns of Jnânasambandar come to claim the first place in the Saiva Bible of the Tamils ? Various conjectures are adduced as solution to this question as well as to the more difficult one the second question, and most of these are noted more for their ingenuity than for soundness. (The true solution, however, is that the superhuman feats ascribed to the holy hymners were fresh in the memory of Nambi A'ndâr Nambi*)—the Vyâsa of the Tamils, as Mr. Sundaram Pillai styles him. (This prodigy flourished at the time of Rajarajadeva, the Chola king of Tanjore, renowned as the constructor of the famous Tanjore temple. As Rajarajadeva ascended the throne in 984 A. D., Nambi A'ndâr Nambi that

* The compiler of the Saiva Tirumurai.

compiled the Saiva Bible of the Tamils should have flourished in the tenth century A. D. ; thus, the gap of time that separates this Tamil Vyâsa from the Dêvâram hymners is about 4 centuries, as Jnânasambandar's time is fixed to be about the end of the sixth century or the early part of the seventh century). Further, the hymns of Dêvâram when set to music produce a peculiar pleasure which can be better experienced than described ; these hymns were ever in the mouths of the Tamil Saivas producing a peculiar charm. The superhuman feats of the Dêvâram hymners combined with the charm of the hymns fascinated * the hearts of the Tamil Saivâs of the days of Nambi A'ndâr Nambi. Tiruvâchakam, on the other hand, though possessing intrinsic merits scarcely surpassed by any other work in any language, cannot however, cope with Dêvâram when sung with the proper *pan* (பண்); if this be also accompanied by the *yal*, the famous instrument in which Tirunîlakaṇṭa Yâlpâna Nâyanâr was setting to music the hymns of Jnânasambandar as they were passing from the baby-mouth of the saint, Dêvâram should be given a solitary eminence. † In the closet, however,

* We are glad to find that Dr. Pope agrees with us. He says ' These hymns and the music had a profound and permanent effect upon the Tamil people ; though as far as a foreigner can judge, his hymns are by no means of a high order—far inferior to those of Manickavâchakar, who seems to have lived about a century earlier.'

Vide ' Tirugnânasambandar ' in the ' *Indian Magazine and Review*.'

† This however is a truth to which Europeans would not easily respond unless the hymns be sung in their ears with rigid observance of the rules of Dravidian music.

Dêvâram should give way to Tiruvâchakam in its heart-melting tendency. Further the life of Mânîkavâchakar is not so much filled with miracles wrought out by him as in the case of Dêvâram hymners. Thus the hymners of Dêvâram whose fame was fresh in the memory* of Nambi A'ndâr Nambi found the most prominent place in the Tamil Saiya Literature. Why the name of Jnânasambandar should be the first among the Dêvâram hymners is not far to seek; he was the greatest poet among them as manifested by the variety and difficulty of metres in which he has sung apparently with no effort†; if any poet truly lisped in numbers it is certainly Jnânasambandar as we can even learn from his own mouth ‡ if not prepared to believe the veracity of his noble biographers, Nambi A'ndâr Nambi and Sêkkilâr; his superhuman achievements, the result of his high and true devotion, have raised him to the rank of divinity in the eyes of

* For instance, observe the tone in which Nambi A'ndâr Nambi extols Tirujnânasambandar in the eleventh Tirumurai.

† Refer also to the testimony furnished by Sundarar one of the authors of Dêvâram, describing him as 'the able poet of good Tamil.' Page 167, Stanza 3 of Ramaswami Pillai's edition of Dêvâram Adangal Murai.

‡ The very first *pathigam* of Jnânasambandar proves beyond doubt, that the vision of Siva was before him, though invisible to the mortals round him; but there is no evidence in it to prove his early age. The evidence as to his precocity is, however, not wanting as Mr. Sundaram Pillai seems to think, for on turning to a different *pathigam*, the child-saint extols God's glory in making him his 'vassal' detailing the circumstances under which this grace was shown him. Vide page 124, Stanza 2 of Ramaswami Pillai's edition of Dêvâram Adangal Murai; also refer to the *pathigam* sung at Madura beginning with மானிசேர்விழி.

many Saivas who regard him as an incarnation of Siva's son Subramanya.

Some Saivas, however, are not easily satisfied with this reason and argue that so far as the arrangement of Dêvâram and Tiruvâchakam is concerned the latter is placed later on account of its superior importance and that the order is based on the principle of development. They say that Tiruvâchakam should be taken last, after the mind is duly made fit and devout to touch its more heart-melting strains.

Whatever be the reason for the first place given to the hymns of Jnânasambandar it gives no clue to their relative chronology. The works are not placed at all in any chronological order and this is evident from the position assigned to Tirumûlar's Tirumantram and some of the works of the Sangam age.

We shall take up now the question of the strange omission of the name of Mânickavâchakar from the versified list of saints furnished by Sundârar—we mean his famous *Tiruttondattokai*. We consulted with some of the leading men of the times, whose opinion generally passes for high value, and no reasonable solution of the difficulty was forthcoming. It is said that in a certain Roman funeral procession the statues of Brutus and Cassius were conspicuous by their absence; more so in the case of Mânickavâchakar's name, which does not find a place in the famous Versified List of Canonised Saints fur-

nished by saint Sundarar—the basis out of which the famous Biographer of Saiva Saints has constructed one of the lasting monuments of Saiva Literature, namely, the *Periapurānam*. Can the omission be due to oversight as some assert? To bring forward this reason is certainly disparaging to the saintly celebrity of the author of the ruby-like utterances. When Sundarar had the goodness to hunt after the names of the most insignificant among the Saiva devotees, it is creditable neither to his devotion nor to his fame, to omit the name of the great saint, whose works never fail to bring down tears of joy divine, from the eyes of any human being endowed with the least spark of devotion.

The famous list contains the names of 62 individual saints who along with Sundarar who has extolled them make up the 63 *Saiva* saints; in this list, of course, are included the names of Jnānasambandar and Appar and several others of various vocations and castes, as well as the names of several kings and chiefs, inclusive of Kûn Pandya known as Nedu Mâran, and Kôcchengannan who is often referred to by Jnānasambandar. Besides the names of these saints, the list furnishes the names of *nine* companies of saints (called *Tokai Adiyargal* in Tamil) to make room for all else who might have attained salvation. These are :

1. Tillaivâl Andanar தில்லை வாழந்தணர் (*Lit.* the Brahmins living at Chidambaram, but really the

Three Thousand Brahmins attached to the shrine, as evident from the interpretation of Sêkkilâr).*

2. Poyyadimai Illâtha Pulavar பொய்யடிமை யில்லாத புலவர். (*Lit.* Poets of no untrue devotion. Nambî A'ndâr Nambi and Sêkkilâr interpret this to mean the poets of the Madura Academy).†

4. Paramaneyîpâduvâr பரமனையேபாடுவார் (Those who sing of God alone).

5. Sittattai Sivanpâlêy Vaittâr சித்தத்தைச்சிவன் பாலே வைத்தார். (Those that have rivetted their mind on Siva).

6. Tiruvârûr Pirantâr திருவாரூர் பிறந்தார். (Those born at Tiruvârûr).

7. Muppolutum Tirumêni Tînduvâr முப்பொழுது ந்திருமேனிதீண்டுவார். (Those that touch the Holy Body—Siva Lingam—all the three times).

8. Mulunîru Pûsiya Munivar முழுநீறுபூசியமுனி வர். (The sages who smear their bodies completely with holy ashes).

9. Appâlumadi Sârndâr அப்பாலுமடி சார்ந்தார். (*Lit.* those that attained God's feet even beyond).

The word *appâlum* is interpreted by Sêkkilâr in a double light very correctly. One interpretation is 'beyond in time'; according to this interpretation Sundarar considers himself a servant unto all those

* See தில்லை வாழ்ந்தணர் புராணம் in Periapuranam.

† See Tirutondartiruvantati of Nambî Andâr Nambi Stanza 49 in the eleventh Tirumurai and பொய்யடிமை யில்லாத புலவர் புராணம் in Periapuranam.

that have attained beatitude before his time as well as to those that might attain such bliss after his time. The other interpretation is '*beyond in place*', i. e., foreign lands beyond the land of the Tamils.

Some find no objection to the omission as the name of Mânickavâchakar can find a place in the company of saints known as *Appâlumadi Sârndâr*. Such an argument should be dismissed without serious consideration as it is damaging to the reputation of both the saints Mânickavâchakar and Sundarar for reasons similar to those already adduced in the objection to the first explanation.

What else can be the cause of this strange omission? Some *Saivas* bring forward the argument that Sundarar might have omitted the name of Mânickavâchakar, on considerations of hoary antiquity, as he has done in the case of Mârkindêyar, whom he has referred to in eulogising the praise of Siva at Tirup-punkûr * without, however, giving place to his name in the famous list. In the case of Mânickavâchakar such an argument is not applicable as he is not so old in the eyes of Sundarar. For Sundarar has in-

* The *pisuram* referred to is:—

அந்தணுனான் னடைக்கலம்புகுத
வவனைக் காப்பது காரணமாக
வந்த காலத்தன் னொருயி ரதனை
வவ்வினாபுக்குன்றன் வண்மைகண்டடியே
னைநலையேனை நமன்றமர்நலிய்
லிவன்மற்றெ னனடி யானென விலக்குள்
சிந்தையால் வந்துன்றி நுவடியடைந்தேன்
செழும்பொழிற்றி ருப் புன்கூ ளானே

• Page 167 Dêvâram Adangal Murai Ramasawmi Pillai's Edition.

cluded in his list two saints whose glory is referred to by Mânickavâchakar * with reverential admiration. These are (1) Kannappar the Huntsman who plucked an eye of his and applied it to the bleeding eye of God Siva to stop the bleeding; and (2) Chandêsvara the Brahmin Cowherd who cut away his father's feet, when his irreligious parent interrupted him sacrilegiously, while engaged with full devotion in the holy worship of Siva. A perusal of Kallâdam † and some of the works of Nakkîrar ‡ lays bare the fact that there were *three* other saints (whose names find a place in the famous list) that preceded Mânickavâchakar; those are the famous Lady of Kâraikkâl, Mûrthi Nâyanâr that rubbed his elbow on the *stone* § for want of a piece of sandalwood and Sâkkyar who threw stones at a *Siva Lingam* without fail every day. Thus there were at least *five* saints who preceded Mânickavâchakar but yet found a ready welcome to their names in Sundarar's list. Thus the argument that Mânickavâchakar's name should have been omitted on considerations of hoary antiquity is entirely baseless and absurd.

Some devout *Saivas* attribute this conspicuous

* Refer to the 4th Stanza in திருக்கோத்தம்பி and Stanzas 3 and 7 in திருத்தொண்டைக்கம்.

† Refer to the 78th agaval where the Lady is referred to as a demon that witnessed the charming dance of Siva at Tiruvâlankâdu; also to the agavals 57 and 68 of Kalladam, Subbaroya Mudaliar's Edition.

‡ Refer to verses 17 and 18 of Nakkîrar in Kopapprasâdan in the eleventh Tirumurai.

§ The stone is a சந்நைக்கல்.

omission to the greatest admiration which Sundarar had for Mânickavâchakar whom he feared* to cull out as a devotee separate from God; so also the author of Ilakkanakkottu (lit. a bunch of grammatical principles) has said 'It is quite certain that Mânickavâchakar is Siva Himself from his superior wisdom'.† This argument, however, will not be received easily by the Saiva public to some of whom Tirujnânasambandar is a divinity.

The last argument advanced by some of the Saivas when every other solution is beaten down as erroneous is: 'Though the saints Mânickavâchakar and Jnânasambandar were true devotees of Siva, yet there is a subtle difference in the nature of their creed.' The Dêvâram hymners wanted to teach a practical lesson to the masses, in religion; they wanted to impress on the minds of the people the idea of a personal God to whom all beings should pay obeisance. Whereas in Tiruvâchakam the idea of divinity is a little too high pitched. Only minds advanced in culture and devotion as Mânickavâchakar can have the true insight of the doctrines of the great saint. The religious ideal in his eye is of a very high type for common humanity to comprehend. The oft-recurring expression "He

* The lives of Tirujnânasambandar, Appar and Sundarar depicted by the famous Biographer of Saints clearly indicate the fact that these reformers had the greatest veneration for departed devotees of great repute, so much so, that they thought it a sacrilege to tread the sacred soil and sang from a distance.

† Refer to Ilakkanakkottu lines 10 and 11, page 14 of Arumuga Navalar's second edition of the same.

who has made me his 'vassal' by making me Sivam" does not occur even once in the whole range of Dêvâram. Any approach to it, if at all be found, may be seen in the verses of Appar who in his famous *Tiruvankamâlai* breaks out as follows:— 'I have searched and found out in me the divinity soaring beyond the reach of Vishnu and Brahma'. Even this tendency in Appar to realise the divinity in himself can be traced to the influence of Mânickavâchakar as we have already shown. It is for this reason (the difference of creed) it is contended that Sundarar has not mentioned the name of Mânickavâchakar in the list.

However ingenious this argument might be, it may not be satisfactory and convincing. True, though it be, that the religious ideal pitched by Mânickavâchakar is of a very high type, we can find ample evidence in his works to shew that he had a great admiration even for the lower stages of the faith. He deprecates* himself much for not extending all the services in his power for winning God's grace, such as, sweeping the temple, besmearing it with cowdung, tying garlands, etc. With growing experience in religion the sage, no doubt, transcended to heights beyond the comprehension of ordinary mortals. His *Tiruvâchakam* contains certain passages of a paradoxical nature† puzzling

* Refer for instance to the 14th Stanza in திருச்சதகம்.

† For instance refer to Stanza 7 in கோயிற்றி நுட்பதிகம்.

even the greatest psychologist. Thus to attribute the omission to this cause is not safe.

This conspicuous omission is the most vexed question of the day; after a good deal of reflection we arrived at a solution which is offered for what it is worth. Sundarar seeing that his list would swell out did not make mention by name of Nakkîrar, Paranaar, Kapilar, Kallâdar and other important poets and sages of the Sangam period whose works have, after his time, found a place in the eleventh Book of the Saiva Bible of the Tamils but included them all under the common clause '*Poyyadimai Illâtha Pulavar*' or 'Poets of no untrue devotion.' That this refers to the poets of the Madura Academy is clearly seen from the interpretation given to it by Nambi A'ndâr Nambi the Tamil Vyâsa and Sêkkilâr the author of the great Puranam. Their interpretation is, however, a little narrow as they restrict the expression to the Bench of poets—the 49 poets who conducted the academy and especially to the last 49 members of the Board, *i.e.*, to the members who presided over the last formal sessions of the Madura College when Tiruvalluvar took his Sacred Kural for their approval. Outside the Board there were ever distinguished poets * whose contributions were readily received and accepted. So the term '*Poyyadimai Illâtha Pulavar*' should

* Inclusive of the members of the Academy there were 449 poets attached to the Sangam. *Vide* Commentaries on the 1st Sutrām of Iraiyanar Agapporul.

refer to the poets of the Sangam period including both the members in the Board and the distinguished literati of the day connected with the Bench. As a general rule the poets of the Sangam age were devout followers of the Saiva faith which was the prevalent creed of Southern India then.* Sundarar instead of making individual mention of the names of the poetic sages of the Madura academy which would have swelled his list beyond practical bounds gave them a place in the expression 'Poyyadimai Illâtha Pulavar.' We see sufficient reasons to think that, in all probability, Sundarar has purposely omitted to make individual mention of the name of Mânickâvachakar, as the latter was a poet of the Sangam age and thus included in the Company of Saints known as பெரியபுலவரில்லாத புலவர்.

As we have established the priority of Mânickavâchakar to Jnânasambandar and the other Dêvâram hymnners, the age of Jnânasambandar is decidedly the inferior limit to the age of Mânickavâchakar. As for the decision of the age of Tirujnânasambandar we would refer our readers to the masterly dissertation by Mr. Sundaram Pillai, M.A., of Travancore, titled 'Some Milestones in the History of Tamil Literature found in an enquiry into the age of Tiru Jnânasambandar'. Therein the learned professor proves from the internal evidence furnished by Saiva Literature that Jnânasambandar should

* There is abundant evidence in favour of this view which however is reserved for a separate and elaborate handling.

have preceded by some centuries Kandarâditya one of the authors of Tiru Isaippa, the ninth book of the Saiva Bible of the Tamils, who should have flourished about the close of the ninth century as he preceded by several generations Rajarajadeva the constructor of the Tanjore Temple who ascended the throne in 984 A. D. From the evidence furnished to him by Sanskrit Literature the professor was able to make the age of the renowned Sankaracharyar the inferior limit to the age of Jnânasambandar as the former has referred to the boy-saint Jnânasambandar as the 'Dravida Child' that rose to great poetic eminence by tasting the milk procured unto him by the 'Daughter of the Mountain'. The date assigned tentatively to Jnânasambandar is the beginning of the seventh century, *i. e.*, about 600 A. D. The learned professor was able to adduce other independent facts that result at the same conclusion. This he has done in the latest edition of his essay in the Indian Antiquary. A study of inscriptions laid bare the fact to Dr. Hultzsch* that Narasimhavarman defeated the Chalûkya king Pulikêsan and destroyed his capital Vatapi (two documents are in support of this fact) *i. e.*, Badami in the presidency of Bombay. Siruttondar a decided contemporary of Jnânasambandar was a general under the king and 'reduced to

*This gentleman, whose indefatigable labours in Archæology make him a great benefactor to India and more especially to the Land of the Tamils, possesses a real critical insight of the traditions of the Tamils, which was sadly wanting in several of the European scholars, who nevertheless stand as great benefactors to the Tamils by the superior disinterested services they have done to Tamil Literature.

dust Vatapi', as evident from Sēkkilār's Periapuranam. Pulikēsan began to reign from Saka year 532 corresponding to 610 A. D. So Siruttondar's time falls about the beginning of the seventh century and Jñānasambandar also decidedly belongs to this period.*

Thus 600 A. D. is the inferior limit to the time of Mānickavāchakar.

. To reach the time of the author of the ruby-like utterances we shall have to clear the thick mist that envelops the truly golden epoch of Tamil Literature, namely, the period of the reputed Academy at Madura. The more we advance into antiquity the darker naturally becomes the view around. Any honest attempt in this direction crowned even with an iota of success should be welcome to the Tamil public.

The study of inscriptions has not made sufficient advancement as to give any reliable chronological information regarding the ancient history of Southern India; no doubt it has succeeded to a very fair extent in unravelling the medieval history of Southern India, so much so, that the age of the Dēvāram hymnners as deduced from a pure study of archæology precedes the time of Rajarajadeva,† the great Chola Emperor of medieval times, that ascended

* Thus to associate the Vanni tree tradition with Jñānasambandar is clearly absurd.

† Dr. Hultzsch and his hardworking assistant Mr. Venkayya deserve the highest credit for reaching at such decisive conclusions regarding the famous Saiva reformers.

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temple recording
images of Nambi A'rûrar
avaiyâr (his consort), Tirunâ-
iyar (Appar) and Tirujnâna Sambhandigal,
irujnânasambandar) writes "This inscription is of
great importance for the history of Tamil Literature
it forms a *terminus ad quem* for the time of the
outstanding authors of Dêvâram. Dr. Caldwell was
inclined to assign their poems to the end of the
fifteenth century. But the present inscription
shows, it must have been written before the time of
Rajadeva." If the study of inscriptions can shed
independent lustre on the age of Karikâla and place
it beyond the pale of controversy, it would be
affording an invaluable boon to the student of
ancient Tamil Literature.

At the present, however, the only safe course left
is careful study of the ancient classics with criti-
cism, if any true account of the Sangam age
is necessary. These classics never fail to render
immense help to an honest enquirer. Be-
fore proceeding to give an account of the reputed
age of Tamil Literature, it is essential in the
first place to examine the historic value of the
works we have to handle and secondly to clear

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which ostensibly gives an account of the period as well as of the lives of Mânickavâchak and Jnânasambandar. It is not free from anachronisms and evinces little of historical and critical taste in the author. We quite agree with Sundaram Pillai in saying that it should not be regarded as of any historical value though it stands very high in the rank of works of art. When evidences are in favour of any theory, this Purâṇa might render its help by way of corroboration. The same is the case with the Sanskrit Hymn Mahâtmyam. As regards the Periapurâṇa Sêkkilâr we can in general depend upon its testimony; the author spared no pains in collecting the most reliable information, and, in his account of the Dêvâram hymnners, he was mostly guided by internal evidence furnished by their *pathigam*. He decidedly flourished in mediæval times and his testimony can be safely relied on. Still in a few particulars even this renowned biographer of Sâmbandar sadly failed. The evidence of Nambi Andar also can be given much weight to.

Dêvâram or the Sacred Hymns of Appar, Jnânasambandar and Sundarar deserve a critical study as genuine works of paramount importance to the historian. The evidence furnished by them may be taken as solid truths as their works have come to us with scarcely any change in the reading. In certain respects they are the autobiographies of the three Saiva reformers. Tiruvâchakam is almost nothing but the autobiography of the saint, dwelling more especially on God's grace in having made him 'his *vassal*.'

Pattupâttu and Ettuttokai, compilations of the genuine works of the Sangam, comprising eighteen works are the most reliable works in the language in furnishing the most authentic information regarding the Sangam age; Silappatikâram Manimêkhalai and Kallâdam are also Sangam works from which ample and reliable evidence can be drawn. It is strange that Jîvakachintâmani* is perfectly silent in this matter without furnishing any clue whatsoever regarding the ancient literary history of the Tamils, though it is reputedly known as the best of the ancient epics in Tamil.

Now as regards the misconceptions that have grown of late regarding the Sangam age. Mr. M. Seshagiri

* We believe that Jîvakachintâmani was not composed during the Sangam age (as Mr. Swaminatha Aiyar would induce us to think in the introductory memoir of Tiruttakkatêvar he has furnished to his very able edition of Jîvakachintâmani). It is a work of the Jains after the downfall of the Sangam; as it is written in *viruttam* metre no further evidence is necessary to show it is a later work. It is decidedly the first of the epics based on the Sanskrit model.

Sastriar, Professor of Sanskrit and Comparative Philology, Presidency College, has brought out an Essay on Tamil Literature, the introduction of which speaks very high to the Professor's credit. The introduction is replete with sage reflections and hints which, however, we are very sorry to note, have strangely been set at defiance in the body of his Essay. With all our admiration for the great scholar, we cannot pardon the feelingless way in which he has gratuitously indulged in passing many uncalled-for remarks which are as erroneous as they are virulent. The Professor will have to thank himself, if the untenability of his positions be laid before the public view. Any honest literary historian possessed of the real insight into the ancient classics of Tamil Literature can easily see in Mr. Sastriar's Essay a studied aversion towards the antiquity of a language for which even some of the foreign scholars of high repute such as Father Beschi, Dr. Caldwell, Dr. Pope, Mr. Bower and several others have had the greatest admiration.

Mr. M. Seshagiri Sastriar first tries to prove that the Third Sangam did not *perish** after the presentation of Tirukkural for its approval. We do not controvert his view which in this respect is well founded but wish to add that no academy in its full glory can die a violent death all at once; the fact is that the Sangam merely lost its reputation and discipline after 'the oracular utterances of the weaver-poet

* Vide page 15 of 'Essay on Tamil Literature.'

of Mailapûr' were presented to the Board for approval.

Next Mr. Seshagiri Sastriar wants to prove and thinks that he has proved that the Sacred Kural was composed several centuries prior to the formation of the Third Sangam.* We wonder how the Professor arrived at such an astounding conclusion. In the eyes of the learned Sastriar, the *Hâlâsya Mahâthmyam*, i.e., the *Śhālāpurānam* of Madura in Sanskrit, is all in all. Every statement in it passes for gospel truth with the Professor, who would not however open his eyes towards the internal evidence furnished by the ancient classics in Tamil—the only genuine source of true information available at present. A gentleman that ostensibly set out to beat down the misconceptions of many *pandits* should not himself slip into their own folly. According to his statement the Sacred Kural was composed in the early part of the second century A. D. or sometime earlier. He *assumes* (reasons not clearly known) that Rajaśekhara Pandya, occurring in the list of Pandyas as can be made out from *Hâlâsya Mahâthmyam*, was a contemporary of Karikâla Chola about whose reign two of the five ancient epics in Tamil, namely, *Silappatikâram* and *Manimêkhalai* were composed. The Professor then proceeds to say that between this Rajasêkhara and Vamsasêkhara, in whose reign the Third Sangam was constituted there were 38 Pandyas and that the gap of time

* Vide page 33 of 'Essay on Tamil Literature.'

between these two Pandyas would be 760 years allowing a period of 20 years' reign to each of the intervening kings. Thus the Professor is led to think that a period of 760 years intervened the age of Karikâla and the Third Sangam. From Mahâvamsa the *Chronicles of Ceylon* which is a work of authentic information, the date of Gayavâhu who was a contemporary of Karikâla, as known from the epic Silappatikâram, is ascertained to be 113 A. D. Thus if we give credit to the Professor's conclusions the constitution of the Third Sangam should be shifted down to the latter end of the ninth century A. D., i.e., to a period much posterior to the times of the renowned authors of *Dêvâram*—a conclusion plainly absurd ! Nakkîrar, Kapilar, Paranaar, Mângudi, Marudanâr, Kallâdar and the host of other poets who constituted the Sangam should have flourished subsequent to the times of the hymners of *Dêvâram* ! Such decidedly ancient classics as *Mathuraikkânchi* (or the Gentle Hint as designated by Mr. Sundaram Pillai), *Nedunâlvaâdai* (the Dreary Winter) describing the prowess of the Pandyan king who won the battle at *Talayâlankânânam*, *Puranânûru* containing eulogistic verses addressed to patrons, chiefs, kings and poets (of whom *Kôcchengannan*, often referred to by Jnânasambandar in his *Dêvâram*, is one) and *Pathittupattu* a work in commemoration of Chera kings (one portion of which is personally addressed to Shenkuttuvan, the brother of Ilangovadigal, the author of Silappatikâram, written as long ago as the second

century A. D.) should be brought down to the latter end of the ninth century!!! Surely the errors of Dr. Burnell and Dr. Caldwell at which Mr. Sundaram Pillai was so much offended in his masterly dissertation on the age of Jnânasambandar are really nothing in comparison with this seriously distorted picture of the Sangam period. We cannot but repeat the sage remarks made by the late lamented Tamil scholar,—‘ If native scholars fail to imbibe the historical spirit of modern times and do not stir themselves to help forward the researches made regarding their own antiquities they will have themselves to thank, if their favourite language and literature are condemned and thrown overboard as is summarily done by Dr. Burnell.’ In the present case, however, it is not a foreigner that has offered this gratuitous insult to the renowned Tamil tongue; this indeed is all the more shocking for the feelingless way in which the author has dealt with the language; his work seems to smell much of the common oriental misgiving, that no tongue can claim independence of Sanskrit.

The Professor, after satisfying himself so far, proceeds to disprove the simultaneous existence* of the poets of the Last Sangam at Madura. This he does offhand by resting his conclusions on the Hâlâsya Mahâthmyam; he argues that as the names of these poets occur during the reigns of different Pandyas according to that *purânam*, these poets cannot be

* Vide pages 34 and 35 of ‘ Essay on Tamil Literature.’

contemporaries. But what trust can be placed on the historical testimony of a Sanskrit *purānam* setting out to give an account of the Tamil poets and their works? It is the common *pandit's* way of reasoning. Let *purānas* be not our guides ever the least in questions of historical importance; where other evidences, such as the internal evidence of works, evidence of inscriptions and plates, seem to favour a certain hypothesis, the testimony of *purānas* may be called in to give subsidiary and corroborative proof of the facts. The evidence of *purānas* should thus be held subsidiary and not as hypothetic (as is done by the Professor) to remain unchecked until the contrary be proved. It is not far from the truth to say that our Professor has for the basis of his Essay such quicksands as the *purānas*. Upon such a slippery basis, he piles up conjecture on conjecture and constructs a vast dream-land abounding in confusing labyrinths.

After disputing in this offhand fashion the synchronous existence of the poets of the Last Academy, he advances the most insulting of his propositions, *viz.*, that the *Sangam* was a mere fiction.* This, in our humble opinion, is tantamount to one's wish overriding one's reason. That Mr. Seshagiri Sastriar, M.A., should go the extreme length of saying that the Tamil Academy is an imposture, not only similar to, but modelled on, Bhojaprabanda is nothing but an expression of a deep-rooted malice against

* Vide page 39 of 'Essay on Tamil Literature.'

the antiquity of Tamil Literature over which he began to sit in judgment without the requisite insight to understand its deep-buried merits.

It is very easy indeed to make such gratuitous conjectures ; we wonder how the learned Professor condescended to indulge in such uncalled-for and profitless dogmatism. We beg leave to say that the renowned Sastriar would not have merited our criticism ever the least, if he had rested at least one of his astounding positions on any solid foundation. It is the duty of all honest students of any literature to ward off without reserve all mischievous attempts to cry down their literature. His hypotheses based, as they mostly are, on the slippery basis of the Hâlâ-sya Mahâthmyam (we speak not disparagingly at all of the merits of the *purânam* in improving one's devotion) cannot be relishing to any ears excepting those that have a studied disdain towards the Tamil tongue which has sprung out of a blind love for the Sanskrit Literature whose excellence is sought to be established by throwing into shade the importance of the Tamil Literature.

We shall presently prove that the Tamil Bench of Poets at Madura was no imposture as the Professor would induce us to think ; and we shall raise a strong presumption in favour of the fact that the Sangam poets (whose names occur in the 'Garland of Tiruvalluvar') had a synchronous existence, and find the true meaning of the statement that the Last Sangam was presided by 49 poets from remote times until

it lost its reputation and discipline after the presentation of the Sacred Kural for its approval.

Now as regards the positive existence of a Bench of Poets at Madura. There is overwhelming evidence in support of this. Poets of all ages have testified to the fact as well as all the renowned commentators* of the ancient classics in Tamil. If the present age be not prepared to accept the testimony of the poets of modern times, we can adduce the support of the medieval authors. Uṁāpati Sivāchāryar, one of the renowned theologians of the thirteenth century; Sēkkilār, the famous author of the Lives of the Holy Saiva Saints; Nambi A'ndār Nambi, the Tamil Vyasa, of the tenth century; and the erudite Kambar have all spoken of the existence of the Sangam.† Even Sundarar, one of the authors of Dêvâram, has referred to the poets of the Madura Academy if we give credit, as indeed we must, to the interpretation by Nambi A'ndār Nambi of the expression '*Poyyadimai Illātha Pulavar*' occurring in the Versified Catalogue of Saints already referred to. The most conclusive and irrefutable proof of the existence of a Bench of Poets at Madura is furnished by Mānickavāchakar himself in his Tiruchittambalakkôvaiyār, a work ostensibly on love but

* Nakkirār, Ilampūranar, Nacchinārkkiniyār, Adiyārkkunḍlār have all testified to the existence of the three Sangams.

† That Nambi Andār Nambi and Sēkkilār have referred to the Sangam has already been shown. As regards Kambar's evidence vide 31st stanza in கரடவீட்டுபலம் of Kambarāmāyanam Kishkindākāṇḍam.

fully imbedded with esoteric meaning which no commentator has dared to decipher out of deference to the greatness of the author. Therein the great sage makes a man accost his friend whose shoulders have become thin by the pangs of love, thus :*

“ Friend, have you plunged into *the field of the fertile and sweet Tamil Literature cultivated with assiduity at Kûdal* (another name of Madura) or into music with its seven notes ? What has happened to your mountain-strong shoulders ?” This is an encomium on the sweet tongue hardly to be expected from a Brahmin ! Still in the eyes of Mânickavâchakar, Brahmin as he was, the two important studies requiring the greatest effort and culture resulting in weakness on the student were Tamil and music, and not even the much praised Sanskrit ! To an honest worker the Tamil language would exhibit itself as a highly philosophic tongue in the world.† Happy are we to find this undoubted testimony which has surprised our expectations by furnishing, in addition to the proofs we were in search of, evidence as to the grand eminence of the Tamil Language which was decidedly a superior subject of study to the Brahmin Saint Mânickavâchakar than

* சிறைவரன்புலத்தில்லைச்சிறற்றம்பலத்தமென்சிறந்தயுள்ள
முறைவானுயர்மதிக்கடலினுயந்தவொண்டந்தமிழின்
முறைவாய்புகுந்தனையோவன்றியேழிசைச்சுழல்புக்கோ
விறைவாடடவரைத்தோட்டுகன் கொலரம்புகுந்தெய்தியதே.

Stanza 20 Tirucchittambalakkôvaiyâr.

† Glad are we to note that Dr. Caldwell has anticipated our view. A full exposition of this view will be no doubt highly interesting but should be examined separately at leisure.

Sanskrit. Thus to dispute in an haphazard manner the very existence of a learned assembly at Madura bent on the cultivation of the sweet tongue is to make one's idiosyncracies ride the better of reason.

We have not adduced as evidence the support given by Nakkîrar in his commentaries on Iraiyanâr Agapporul as we agree with the learned Sas-triar as to the suspicious nature of the testimony given by commentaries wherein interpolations can easily find a place.

Our assurance as to the existence of the Sangam is made doubly sure by a passage in one of the ancient 'Ten Idyls' (known as *Pattuppâttu*), compilations of established authenticity comprising *ten* works of the Sangam period. The Tamil Idyl known as *Sirupanâttruppadaï*, composed by Nattattanâr, one of the poets of the Madura Bench, as we shall see further on, describes the munificence of Nalliakôdan who was a powerful chief of the times. In it is the reference to the great literary activity of Tamil in Madura*; Tamil, whose sweetness overfills the Pandya with cheer is spoken of as residing permanently in all the streets of Madura. In the face of such clear evidence from the decidedly ancient classics of Tamil Literature, who with any tinge of reason, can dare to dispute the existence of the great literary activity at Madura?

On opening the pages of Kallâdam, a genuine

* Refer to verses 65—67 in செறுபாணற்றுப்படை one of the Ten Idyls in Tamil.

work of the Sangam period, as even our Professor would accept, a more detailed account of the famous Bench and of several works of the age can be drawn. *Kallâdam* is a work of high repute, so much so that it has gained a proverb * in recognition of its merits, viz., 'Don't discuss with one versed in Kallâdam.' It is a work ostensibly on love in a hundred phases, but in truth, it is more a garland of *agavals* commemorating the local god of Madura in the sublimest language, lacking naught in pathos and devotion. In certain respects it copes successfully with the highly touching passages of *Tiruvâchâkam*. Each *agaval* is more or less a long complex sentence winding up the idea to the highest pitch of excellence. It is thus a work which can be better appreciated in the original than in any spirited translation. Difficult as the work is for a thorough comprehension, the labour surely 'physics pain'. We are indebted to this great work for a more detailed account of the Madura Bench.

In the 13th *agaval* of this famous work, Kallâdar extols Tiruvalluvar (whose Sacred *Kural* was presented for the approval of the Madura Bench) as a poet who has dwelt on Virtue, Wealth and Pleasure on a perfectly non-sectarian basis. *Iraiyânâr*, whom Kallâdar thinks in common with his colleagues to be Siva in human form, has improvised the '*first eulogy*' on *Tirukkural* in the presence

* The Tamil proverb runs thus: கல்லாடங்கத்தறவனோடுமல்லா
டாதே.

of the '*prosperous poets*.' This proves beyond doubt the existence of a clear Bench of poets that used to sit in judgment on works presented for their approval; the words '*Mutharkkavi*' (the first eulogium) imply that the other poets have testified in their turn to the merits of the Sacred Kural of imperishable fame. All these eulogies are preserved with perfect correctness and exist as the '*Garland of Tiruvalluvar*.' As this *garland* has, from time immemorial, been tacked on to the Sacred Kural in all editions and commented upon in a masterly way by several commentators, of whom Parimêlalagar stands foremost, no one but a wanton sceptic would dispute the authenticity of this string of eulogies. With the evidence furnished by Kallâdam, to dispute the authenticity ever more is nothing short of madness. On turning to the 65th *agaval* in the work we were overwhelmed with delight to alight upon the specific mention of *the particular number of poets* who constituted the Bench. Herein Kallâdar distinctly says that *Iraiyanâr Agapporul*, a decidedly ancient work of the Sangam times, was composed for the elucidation of all the 49 poets of the Bench. Thus we are in possession of the best evidence, which proves not only the existence of the Bench of Poets, but also the *number* of Poets who constituted the Bench. Poets, who are alluded to by name in this famous work, are Paranar (பரணர்), Rudrasanmar (உருத்திரசன்மர்) the Mute Critic, and Nakkîrar.

(நக்கீரர்); and the works referred to are Iraiyanâr Agapporul, Iraiyanâr's Sonnet addressed to the Bee, Siva's letter to Cheramân Perumâl and Commentaries on Iraiyanâr Agapporul. Students of Tamil Literature need no more grope in the dark as to the existence of a genuine Bench of Poets at Madura before whom the Sacred Kural was presented for approval.

Now as regards the question of the synchronous existence of the poets of the Madura Bench. That the Bench was constituted of 49 poets who relished the contents of Iraiyanâr Agapporul is quite clear from Kallâdam. We shall try to prove their synchronous existence also in the light of other independent evidences to put an end to all controversy regarding the constitution of the Bench. This by no means is an easy task especially when many of the ancient Tamil classics are yet to see the light of the day. But we shall prove positively that several of the chief poets in the list were undoubted contemporaries and that several others in the same belonged at least to the classical times.

The 49 poets who improvised on the merits of the Sacred Kural when Tiruvalluvar presented it to the Board for the recognition of its importance are the following* as given in the *Tiruvalluvar Malai* or the *Garland of Tiruvalluvar* :—

* We do not consider Iraiyanâr as a poet in the staff of the Madura Bench as there are 49 other poets of the Bench who have praised the Kural. The Tiruvilayadal Puranam, however, considers Iraiyanâr as a poet in the Board. He was undoubtedly a poet of the times and took a prominent part in the cultivation of Tamil Literature

1. Kapilar கபிலர்.
2. Parānar பரணர்.
3. Nakkîrar நக்கீரர்.
4. 'Mâmûlanâr மாமூலனார்.
5. Kallâdar கல்லாடர்.
6. Sittalai Sâttanâr சீத்தலைச்சாத்தனார்.
7. Maruttuvan Dâmôdaranâr மருத்துவன் தாமோ
தரனார்.
8. Nâgantêvanâr நாகன்றேவனார்.
9. Arisirkkilâr அரிசிற் கிழார்.
10. Ponmudiyâr பொன்முடியார்.
11. Kôdamanâr கோதமனார்.
12. Nattattanâr நத்தத்தனார்.
13. Mugaiyalûr Sirukarunthumbiyâr முகையனார்
சிறுகருந்தும்பியார்.
14. A'siriyar Nallanduvanâr ஆசிரியர் நல்லந்துவ
னார்.
15. Kîrandaiyâr கீரந்தையார்.
16. Sirumêdâviyâr சிறுமேதாவியார்.
17. Nalkûrvêlvīyâr நல்கூர் வேள்வியார்.
18. Todittalai Viluttandinâr தொடத்தலை விழுத்த
ண்டினார்.
19. Vellivîdiyâr வெள்ளி வீதியார்.
20. Mângudi Marudanâr மாங்குடி மருதனார்.

by helping the Bench when they were in difficulty. That Iraiyanar had some mystery about him is certain from the conduct of Nakkirar towards him. This point is discussed at length a little later in the treatise.

21. Ericchalûr Malâdanâr எறிச்சலூர் மலாடனார்.
22. Pôkkiyâr போக்கியார்.
23. Môsikîranâr மோசிகீரனார்.
24. Kârikkannanâr of Kaverippûmpattinâm காரி
க்கண்ணனார்.
25. Madhuraittamil Nâyaganâr மதுரைத்தமிழ் நாய
கனார்.
26. Bhâratampâdiya Peruntêvanar பாரதம்பாடிய
பெருந்தேவனார்.
27. Rudrasanmakkannar உருத்திரசன் மக்கண்ணார்.
28. Perunjîttanâr பெருஞ்சீத்தனார்.
29. Nariveruvûttalaiyâr நரிவெருஉத்தலையர்.
30. Madhuraittamilâsiriya Senkuntûrkkilâr மது
ரைத்தமிழாசிரியர் செங்குன்னூர்க்கிழார்.
31. Madhurai Aruvaivânigar Ilavêttanâr மதுரை
அறுவைவாணிகர்இளவேட்டனார்.
32. Kavisâgarapperuntêvanâr கவிசாகரப்பெருந்தே
வனார்.
33. Madhuraipperumarudanâr மதுரைப்பெருமருத
னார்.
34. Kôvûrkkilâr கோவூர்க்கிழார்.
35. Uraiyûr Muthukûttanâr உறையூர்முதுகுற்ற
னார்.
36. Ilikatperunkannanâr இழிகட்பெருங்கண்ணனார்.
37. Seyirkkâvîriyâr Maganâr Sâttanâr செயிர்க்
காவிரியார்மகனார்சாத்தனார்.
38. Seyalûrkkodunchengannanâr செயலூர்க்கொடி
ஞ்செங்கண்ணனார்.
39. Vannakkan Sâttanâr வண்ணக்கண்சாத்தனார்.
40. Kalattûrkkilâr களத்தூர்க்கிழார்.

41. Nacchumanâr நச்சுமனார்.
42. Akkârakkanî Nacchumanâr அக்காரக்கனி நச்சுமனார்.
43. Nappâlattanâr நப்பாலத்தனார்.
44. Kulapati Nâyanâr குலபதிநாயனார்.
45. Tênikkudikkîranâr தேனிக்குடிக்கீரனார்.
46. Kodijñalan Mânippûdanâr கொடிஞாழன் மாணிப்பூதனார்.
47. Kouniyanâr கௌணியனார்.
48. Madhuraippâlâsiriyanaṛ மதுரைப்பாலாசிரியனார்.
49. A'langudi Vanganâr ஆலங்குடிவங்கனார்.

From *Puranânûru* (புறநானூறு) one of the books comprised in *Ettuttokai* (எட்டுத்தொகை) and a work of the highest importance in furnishing materials to build up the ancient history, both political and literary, of Southern India about the Christian Era; and the *Ten Idyls* (பத்துப்பாட்டு); and *Ahanânûru* (அகநானூறு) a work that has not yet seen the light of day in print; and the other compilations forming the *Ettuttokai*; and last but not least from *Silappatikâram*, an earnest antiquary will find ample matter for framing an authentic history of Tamil Literature of remote times. It requires honest workers in the field such as the late lamented Mr. Sundaram Pillai, M. A., of Travancore and Mr. Kanakasabai Pillai whose contributions to the *Indian Antiquary* and *Madras Review* give an unceasing delight to antiquaries, to work up a history of the ancient Tamil Literature on a thoroughly sound chronological basis. In this dissertation, however, we shall briefly touch on some

important points immediately serving our object—the proof of the synchronous existence of the Sangam poets.

From *Silappatikâram* any one can clearly see that the following kings were living about the same time :—

1. *Nedunchelian** the Pandyan king at Madura and victor of Talayâlankânam as known from the Tamil Idyls, Nedunalvâdai and Madhuraikkânchi. (He dies on the royal couch† on learning his gross injustice of the execution of Kovâlan, from the conduct of Kannagi the heroine of the Epic).

2. *Ilanchelian* or *Vettrivêrcchelian*‡ of Korkai who offered a thousand goldsmiths as sacrifice to the deified Kannagi to appease her wrath when he saw that rain had ceased and famine and plague invaded the Pandyan kingdom. (Ilanchelian appears to us as the successor of Nedunchelian and seems to have shifted his capital to Korkai to escape the calumny at Madura which was also more or less destroyed by fire at the indignation of Kannagi).

3. *Perunarkilli*§ of Uraiyûr who raised a temple in honor of Kannagi, deified as the Goddess of

* Mr. Swaminatha Aiyar seems to hold a different view ; in his opinion the Nedunchelian referred to in *Silappatikaram* is different from the victor at Talayalankânam.

As there are other links which prove the synchronous existence of the poets, our view cannot affect the validity of the proof, even if erroneous.

† See the closing lines of *Mathuraikkandam* in *Silappatikâram*.

‡ See the உண்பெறுதல்நேர in *Silappatikâram*.

§ See *Ibid*.

Chastity, and sacrificed an innumerable number of goldsmiths to propitiate her.

4. *Gayavāhu** (Sans. Gajabahu) King of Ceylon who was present at Vanchi the capital of the Chera kingdom when Kannagi was freshly deified as the Goddess of Chastity by Shenkuttuvan the Chera Sovereign of the times.

(*Gayavāhu*† is distinctly spoken of by the author as the king of Lanka everywhere surrounded by the ocean; thus he is decidedly one of the two *Gayavahus* whose names occur in *Mahavamso* or the *Chronicles of Ceylon*).

5. *Shenkuttuvan* the Chera king of the times and the brother of *Ilangôvadigal*, the author of this ancient Epic.

(It was this king that yearned to commemorate the chastity of Kannagi by deifying the heroine. For full particulars, *vide* *Vanchikkândam* in *Silappatikâram*).

We also learn from the work that *Cheralâthan* was Shenkuttuvan's father and that Shenkuttuvan was the grandson of a Chola king (in all probability the famous Karikala as Mr. Sundram Pillai assumes) through his daughter. These are all indisputable facts gathered from the epic itself.

Puranânûru the historical value of which has already been spoken of lays bare the following facts:—

* *Vide* lines 160-163 in the 30th Canto of *Silappatikâram*.

† *Vide* *Silappatikâram* உரைபெறுகட்டுரை.

There were, during the Sangam age, seven men of great prowess who were objects of dread in the eyes of the Tamil kings, Chera, Chola and Pandya ; they were of special fame for their gifts to the needy and stood very high as patrons to the poets of the day. Of these we are certain at least of five as contemporaries. These are Athyamân (அதியமான்), Kâri (காரி), Pêkan (பேகன்), Pâri (பாரி) and O'ri (ஓரி).• A short account of their career cannot but be interesting. •

*Athyamân** was the feudatory king of Thahadûr ; he was a great patron of the poets. *Avvaiyâr* who may well be called the Dravidian Sapho was the chief literary luminary of his court. She has praised him much for the gift of a rare fruit whose taste would protract the period of one's existence on earth. He sacked Kôvalûr the capital of Kâri ; the bard *Paranar* praised his achievements on that occasion. The unbounded ambition of Athiyamân who wished to extend his dominions to a very wide area incensed the wrath of the Chera king who at once marched with an army to Thahadûr to subdue the refractory chief ; Athiyamân was mortally wounded in the battle and the poetess of his Court be-moaned his loss in touching strains. *Ponmudiyar* also has addressed this chief.

N.B.—We learn from this account that the poets *Avvaiyâr*, *Paranar* and *Ponmudiyâr* were contemporaries.

• * For particulars of his life refer to *agavals* 87-95, 97-101, 103, 104, 158, 206, 208, 231, 232, 235, 310, 315 and 390 of *Puranânûru*.

*Kâri** known as Malayaman Kari was the feudatory king of Malâdu. His capital was Kovalûr the modern Tirukkoilûr, as Mr. Kanakasabai Pillai seems to hold. He was a lover of Brahmins and his Court was ever crowded with the A'ryâs. *Kapilar*, a Brahmin poet and a chief member in the Madura Academy, has praised in glowing terms the munificence of the chief to Brahmins and minstrels. He waged war against O'ri, another powerful chief and benefactor of bards, and killed him in battle and restored the lands to the Chola. Elated at such successes he formed the grand idea of becoming an independent sovereign and assumed the diadem and was ever afterwards known as *Tirumudikkâri* or "the crowned Kâri." This naturally infuriated the Chola King who at once invaded his dominions and killed him in battle.

N.B.—*Kapilar* was a contemporary of Kâri.

Pêkan† was a great patron of the poets of his day. The history of this chief affords an interesting clue in deciding the contemporariness of some of the poets whose names occur in the 'garland of Tiruvalluvar.' For misconduct or for some other cause not clearly known he had to set aside his consort Kannagi (this lady should not be confounded with Kannagi the heroine of Silappatikâram); the poets *Kapilar*,

* For an account of his life refer to *agavals* 121-124, 126 and 158 of *Puranânûru*.

† For particulars of his life read *agavals* 141-147 and 158 of *Puranânûru*.

Paranar, *Arisirkkilâr* and *Perunkuntûrkkilâr* interceded on her behalf and induced him to take her back, by speaking high of her virtues.

N.B.—*Kapilar*, *Paranar* and *Arisirkkilâr* were contemporary poets of the day.

*Pâri** stood high in the rank of public benefactors. His name is a by-word for unbounded munificence; he was the ruler of a small principality known as *Parambu*. His prowess and munificence raised him high in popular esteem and he began to claim perfect independence of the Tamil kings. He was passionately fond of Tamil poetry and his court was ever crowded with the bards of the day; no minstrel found a more cheerful welcome anywhere but in his court. His fame raised the envy of the three Tamil Sovereigns in whose ears the bards of the times sang the glory of the poets' friend. The kings were unable to throw down their common foe in any fair encounter but only by a stratagem they took hold of his fortress and killed him in battle. All his brave kinsmen fell in the battle; his daughters and the bards were the only beings left to bemoan his untimely death. *Kapilar* one of the greatest

* Refer to the following agavals of *Puranânûru* for a full account of his life: 105—120, 200—202 and 236. All 'the last seven donors' (கடைபெருவள்ளல்) are referred to in *Sirupânattruppadai* one of the Ten Idyls of the Sangam age.

That *Pari*'s name was a by-word for munificence even in the days of the Saiva reformers is evident from a line in *Sundarar*'s hymns. He says therein கெடுக்கிரதனைப்பாரியே யெழு உழி னுங் கெடுப்பாரில்தே. This occurs in a *pathigom* of the saint sung at புகனூர் on the exultation of seeing the bricks he used as pillow turned into gold of high carat by God's grace.

of his admirers pitied the sad lot of *Pâri*'s daughters whom he tried his best to dispose of in marriage to the chiefs of the times. Foiled in the attempt the maidens were given in marriage to Brahmins.

N.B.—*Kapilar* was a contemporary of *Pâri*.

Thus we learn from the history of these patrons that *Avvaiyâr*, *Kapilar*, *Paranar*, *Arisirkkilâr* and *Ponmudiyâr* were contemporaries. The same truth may be come to from other quite independent evidences. *Paranar* seems to be the most elderly member * in the Board as he has addressed his eulogies to *Ilançhêchenni* (இளஞ்சேட் சென்னி) the father of *Karikâla*, *Chêralâthan* and *Shenkuttuvan*. His eulogy on *Shenkuttuvan* brings him to the time of composition of *Silappatikâram*. Thus the poets *Avvaiyâr*, *Kapilar*, *Paranar*, *Arisirkkilâr* and *Ponmudiyâr* who were contemporaries should^o have flourished when the Epic *Silappatikâram* was in preparation.

Sittalai Sâttanâr, the author of *Manimêkhalai*, whose name occurs in the list of the 49 Poets of the Bench was an eye-witness to some of the incidents that transpired at *Madura* when *Kannagi* appeared at the Court of *Nedunchelian* for wreaking her vengeance upon him for the unjust execution of her husband. It is on hearing the narration of the thrilling events in the history of *Kannagi* from the

* *Kalladar* seems to favour the same view and in all probability *Paranar* was the president of the Board; in naming the poets who were present when *Nakkirar* read out his commentaries on *Iraiyanar Agapporal*, *Kallâdar* says *Paranar* and others were the audience. See *Muzgarthuthi* in *Kalladam*.

lips of Sittalai Sâttanâr at the Court of Shenkuttuvan, whereunto the poet repaired for getting donation, that Ilangôvadigal the king's brother formed an idea of working up all the events into a splendid epic to teach the world three great lessons, *vis.*, (1) That justice brings down the head of a sovereign who swerves from it, (2) That the world with its great men commemorates the glory of a woman's chastity, (3) That *karma* follows the dead behind their graves, and clings to them in their next birth. Sittalai Sâttanâr who had already in view this project had to give up his original plan but wrote a sequel to Silappatikâram dwelling on the last but not the least of the four gifts of mankind, namely, Salvation or Divine Bliss (*môksham* or *vîdu*). This sequel epic is *Manimêkhalai* which treats rather elaborately of the renunciation of *Manimêkhalai* the daughter of *Mâdavi*.

This *Sittalai Sâttanâr* was a very squeamish critic who could not relish any work if it contained errors of any sort of either inelegance in expression or inaccuracy of thought. His name itself explains his nature; Sittalai (சீத்தலை), literally the wounded head emitting pus is the surname of the poet. He used to give a blow on his own head at each and every error he might meet with in any work presented to the Bench for their approval, as he could least brook to hear any book of flaws if presented for his perusal. Thus he ever had an unhealed sore on his head emitting pus.

Maruttuvan Dâmôdaranâr one of his colleagues in the Board who had a very high admiration for this critic has testified to the merits of Kural in a curious manner. 'Common headache' says he 'is cured by a mixture of several drugs, whereas these were of no avail to bring relief to Sîttalai Sâttanâr's strange malady, but by the presentation of the Sacred Kural for his review his headache completely ceased.' This is an indirect but a forcible way of saying that the Sacred Kural was flawless both in thought and expression. Thus it is quite clear that Sîttalai Sâttanâr and Maruttuvan Dâmôdaranâr were contemporary poets of the time of the Chera king, Shenkuttuvan, the brother of Ilangôvadigal.

Mângudi Marudanâr one of the most fearless poets of the day in inculcating the evanescence of earthly pleasures into the hearts of monarchs turned dizzy by their worldly victories and pomp, has dedicated his work *Madhuraikkânchi* (or the Gentle Hint) to Nedunchelian the victor at the battle of Talaiyâlan-kânam. The Pandyan king Nedunchelian had the highest regard for this great poet from the way in which he refers to the poet (*vide* *Puranânûru*).

Nakkîrar surely the greatest poet and critic of the times has given a graphic account of the battle at Talayâlan-kânam and praises the military prowess of the king.

Kallâdar also has addressed a certain *agaval* (in *Puranânuru*) to Nedunchelian the victor at Talayâlan-kânam.

Thus the poets Mângudi Marudanâr, Nakkîrar and Kallâdar were contemporaries as they had all addressed Nedunchelian the victor at the battle of Talayâlankânam. The victor of Talayâlankânam subdued a Vellala chief of the times known as Evvi; as Evvi was praised by Kapilar it follows naturally that Mângudi Marudanâr, Nakkîrar, and Kallâdar had a contemporary existence with the poets already mentioned.

Môsikîranâr and *Arisirkkilâr* (we have already proved the latter to be a contemporary of Kapilar, Parinar, etc.) have praised the Chera king Perunchêral Irûmporai. *Môsikîranâr*, on one of his visits to his royal patron inadvertently sat on the drum-couch and unconsciously fell asleep. When the king saw that his visitor was fast asleep on the strange bed fanned him with his own hands till the poet got up. *Mosikîranar* has extemporised an eulogy on the king's glory (*vide* *Puranânûru*).

Ponmudiyâr and *Arisirkkilâr* were contemporaries (independent of the evidence already furnished) as they both encouraged the king Chera with hopes of success in a coming battle (*vide* *Tolgâppyam* Poruladikâram Purattinai commentaries, page 138 of Mr. C. W. Tâmothaïam Pillai's Edn.). *Ponmudiyâr's* verses occur in several other places of *Nacchinârkiniiyâr's* Commentaries on *Tolgâppyam*. Further *Ponmudiyâr* was a contemporary of *Athiyamân* as already shown.

Thus *Môsikîranâr*, *Ponmudiyâr* and *Arisirkkilâr*

were not only contemporaries among themselves but with the other poets whose names were already given.

Kârikkannanâr of Kaveripûmpattinam has extolled the glory of Piddangottran (பிடங்கோத்தன்) a general of a Chera king. As Marûttuvan Dâmô-daranâr the colleague and admirer of Sîttalai Sât-tanâr has also sung the glory of Piddangottran it follows that *Kârikkannanâr* of Pugâr belongs to the same age as that of the preceding poets.

Thus out of the 49 Poets of the Bench we were able to prove the synchronous existence of *eleven* of the poets, *viz.*—Kapilar, Paranar, Arisirkkilâr, Sîttalâi Sât-tanâr, Maruttuvan Dâmô-daranâr, Mân-gudi Marudanâr, Nakkîrar, Kallâdar, Môsikîranâr Ponmudiyâr and *Kârikkannanâr*. And these are almost the only luminaries of the Madura Board. More critical researches can bring to light the fact that several of the other poets were contemporaries. The difficulties would be greatly diminished if the still-hidden Tamil classics are brought to light.

In the case of the following authors we can be certain at least of their existence in classical times :

1. *Nattattanâr*. He is the author of Sirupânat-truppadaï one of the Ten Idyls of the Sangam age of reputed merit for the reality and force of description. The poet describes *Nalliakkôdan* who after the time of the seven reputed donors shone very high in the rank of public benefactors. [Elsewhere

a certain other poet consoles his mind for the loss of Pâri of Parambu as it can find a fit representative of Pâri in the person of *Nalliakkôdan* of unbounded generosity. From the tone of this eulogy (in *Puranânuru*) we can safely conclude that *Nalliakkôdan* should have been a contemporary of Pâri and after his untimely death at Parambu should have risen high as a public benefactor. Thus Nattaṭṭanâr's synchronous existence with the poets already named, may be relied upon].

2. *Nallanduvanâr*. He is the author of the most finished specimens of literary excellence, namely, the *Kalittogai* (a treatise on the five phases of love in the *Kalippa* metre) which forms one of the *Ettuttokai* a compilation approved by the Madura Bench.

3. *Perundêvanâr*. He was the first Tamil poet that composed the Bhâratam in Tamil. This is in the *Venba* metre interspersed with prose in chaste diction; he has also composed the eulogistic verses on God (Śiva*) in the beginning of several of the compilations by the Bench.

4. *Mâmûlar*. He has composed several of the stanzas in *Aganânûru* one of the *Ettuttokai* already referred to and is also considered as the author of *Sirupanchamûlam* one of the eighteen didactic works approved by the Madura Board and known as *Pathinenkîlkkanakku* (பதினெண்கீழ்க்கணக்கு).

* The initial stanzas are headed as கடவுள் வாழ்த்து (encomium on God) but invariably praise Siva.

5. *Kôvûrkkilâr*. He is the author of several stanzas in *Puranânûru*.

6. *Todittalai Viluttandinâr*. His name also occurs in *Puranânûru*.

7. *Nariveruvûttalaiyâr*. He had an awkward countenance (whence his name) which was set right on seeing a certain Chera king (*vide* *Puranânûru*). The renowned commentator *Nacchinârkkiniyâr* refers to this poet in his commentaries on *Tolgâppyam Maippâtiyal*; *vide* page 482 of Mr. C. W. Tâmôtaram Pillai's Edition of *Tolgâppyam Poruladikâram*.

8. *A'langudi Vânganâr*. His name also occurs in *Puranânûru*.

9. *Vellivîdiyâr*. He is the author of the *agavals* 26 and 58 in *Kuruntogai* one of the *Ēttuttokai* already referred to. His verses are quoted by *Nacchinârkkiniyâr* in his famous commentaries on *Tolgâppyam Poruladikâram*.

10. *Kôdamanâr* a Brahmin was the author of the third *pattu* (பத்து) in *Pathittuppattu* (பதிற்றுப் பத்து) one of the eight compilations comprised in *Ēttuttokai*.

11. *Mugaiyalûr Sirukarunthumbiyâr* has addressed a stanza in *Puranânûru* in commemoration of a certain deified hero whose statue was erected.

Thus we have proved that 22 of the poets belong to the classical times of whom 11 are undoubtedly contemporaries. Deeper researches conducted

Measure should bring to light the fact that in the list had a synchronous existence. Encouraging to note that the poets whose literary existence is proved are almost the chief members of the Board as has already been observed.

What then is the meaning of the statement made in the commentaries of Iraiyanâr Agapporul that 'the last Sangam flourished for 1850 years presided by 49 poets during the reigns of 49 Pandyas'? It is not improbable at all for 49 kings to rule for a period of 1850 years; this would give to each sovereign a period less than 38 years. The early history of the Tamils is sunk in deep obscurity for want of antiquarian spirit in the Tamils; it would require the honest endeavours of antiquaries well versed in all branches of knowledge to bring out the prehistoric facts about the Tamils. We cannot, however, easily dismiss away the incidents iterated by ancient poets and commentators. The most rational way of interpreting the statement is that *the Academy was presided at any point of time during the long sessions by 49 poets but not that the 49 poets continued to flourish for eighteen centuries and a half*. Even outside the Board there were always distinguished poets connected with it, so that when the place of any member in the Bench fell vacant either by death or infirmity, it was forthwith filled by a fitting member chosen by the Board from these poets of repute. In fine we can rest assured that *there*

were 49 seats in the Madura Board of its commencement up to its down when Tiruvalluvar repaired to the Academy getting a formal *imprimatur* to his Tamil from the Professors of Tamil, the 49 seats were occupied by the 49 poets whose names are for 'the garland of Tiruvalluvar.' In the light of the overwhelming evidence we have already adduced as to the positive existence of a regular Tamil Academy at Madura there is no better way of explaining the continuance of a Bench of 49 poets for several centuries. It speaks high, no doubt, to the credit of our ancients who were able to establish a permanent institution which efficiently continued to do its work for many centuries. In good many respects the Tamils clung to their customs and habits with so much pertinacity that they are even to-day one of the most conservative nations on the globe. The blind adherence to authority * which Dr. Caldwell has condemned rather vehemently proved in one way a blessing to the language as well as to the philologist. The Tamil Language has remained stereotyped for many centuries † fettered by the rules of grammar. Tamil Literature as old as nearly 2,000 years does not materially differ from choice speci-

* Vide Dr. Caldwell's Dravidian Grammar, page 89, first edition.

† Eighteen centuries were unable to effect a hundredth part of the change which two centuries were able to do in the case of the English Language. Compare, for instance, the language of Chaucer with that of Shakespeare; Tamil Literature at present remains almost the same as it was eighteen centuries ago.

mens of modern literature.* This is due to the lowest minimum of wear and tear to which the language was subject in spite of its existence for an enormously long period of time. This again explains why every work claiming any repute had to be scrutinised by an assembly of the wits of the day before it could come out free into the hands of the public. Such a rigid adherence to authorily checked, no doubt, spontaneity and originally in the development of its literature. The Tamil mind, 'cabined, cribbed, and confined' as it was by the fetters imposed on it by the rules of grammar was not however prevented from exhibiting its powers. To rise to the rank of even an ordinary poet a great amount of culture in the language was highly essential; thus Tamil Literature contains no spurious works † as those that exist in the literature of Europe. Whatever, therefore, we have in genuine Tamil Literature are finished specimens of literary excellence. It is only such works that are admitted into the pale of genuine

* For instance *Nithinerivilakkam* or the Light of Just Path by Kumaraguruparar of the seventeenth century can be placed quite at par with the didactic poems known as *Pathinenkilkanakku* of the Sangam age.

† The Tamil literati of ancient days cared more for culture in the tongue than for literary eminence. *Ilangovaligal*, *Sittalai Sattanâr*, *Sekkilar* and last but not least *Kambar* would have died in humble silence but for the force of circumstances which pushed them on to execute their works. Thus many great Tamil scholars should have perished without contributing anything to the bulk of Tamil Literature. This accounts for the want of sufficient number of works in the language though it existed as a highly cultivated tongue from remote antiquity.

Tamil Literature. But with the modern advancement of civilization such fetters should be really loosened to some extent to cope with the culture of the times. The times are really changing as novels and dramas based on the English model are finding favour with the educated Tamils of the day. A certain degree of check, however, is necessary to prevent such compositions from degenerating into spurious literature. Let every work be executed with the best of one's powers *without being curbed* entirely by the hard and fast rules imposed on the language but *without setting at defiance* the established rules of Tamil grammar.

To revert to our subject. Our object will receive its consummation if we can also prove the contemporaneous existence of Tiruvalluvar with the Professors of the College who have praised his imperishable work in all varieties of expression abounding in charming conceits. A perusal of the panegyric stanzas known as Tiruvalluvar Mâlai will manifest to an unprejudiced mind that the encomiastic verses should have been composed then and there in the presence of Tiruvalluvar. As each poet of the Board was forced to give his *imprimatur* to one and the same work special care was taken to preserve the individuality of their position by having recourse to all possible varieties of expression abounding in charming conceits. *Kapilar* praised the work for its conciseness mingled with lucidity; *Paranar* for the expansion of all human knowledge

embraced in it; *Nakkîrar* for the world's incapacity to be sufficiently thankful to the work; *Kallâdar* for its complete freedom from sectarianism. *Sîttalai Sâttanâr* praised the work as a rare ornament to the Tamil Kings, *Maruttuvan Dâmôdaranâr* as a rare specific for the incurable malady of his friend *Sîttalai Sâttanâr*. *Kodamanar* remarks that Vedas stand high for the dignity of their sound and Kural for the dignity thought; *Nallanduvanâr* gives the palm of professorship to the author of Kural; *Vellivîdiyâr* praises the work as a Universal Code of Mankind. *Mângudi Marudanâr* speaks of the rare merits of the work in enticing the hearts of sages with unceasing delight; *Rudrasanmakkannar* considers the work as the best suited to improve one's understanding; *Vannakkan Sâttanâr* claims equality to the Tamil Tongue with Sanskrit; *Nappâlattanâr* praises the work as an intellectual lamp to be placed within the mind for dispelling ignorance; *Madhuraippâlâsiriya* has expressed the same idea in a slightly different form. The 'garland of Tiruvalluvar' thus furnishes in itself inferential evidence as to the contemporaneousness of Tiruvalluvar with the Professors of the Madura College. The genuine authorship of the eulogies is pretty evident from the eulogies themselves. A few of them are supported by external evidence. To prove for instance that *Kallâdar's* encomium in the 'Garland' is genuine compare the panegyric *venba* given by him with what he says in quite an independent work by him namely the *Kallâdam*. In the *venba*

he says that the words of *Valluvar* will be received without discussion by all religionists; he expresses the very same truth in *Kallâdam* by saying that *Valluvar* has treated on the nature of mankind without following any sectarian view. There are various such critical points in the 'Garland' itself to prove its genuineness and the synchronous existence of the poets with Tiruvalluvar.

The evidence of *Kallâdar* whom we have shown to be one of the Professors of the Madura Board places beyond doubt the fact that *Tiruvalluvar* took his work before the Board for getting formal recognition of his work's merit at their hands. To make assurance doubly sure we shall try to prove the contemporary existence of Tiruvalluvar with the Poets of the Madura College from further evidences of quite an independent type.

All ancient accounts of the Sangam agree in saying that the Last Sangam began with the reign of the Pandya *Mudattirumâran* and ended with the reign of *Ukkirapperuvaludi*. If the dissolution of the Last Sangam was the result of the presentation of the Sacred Kural for its approval, *Ukkirapperuvaludi* should have been the Pandyan king at the time of *Tiruvalluvar's* appearance before the Board for getting their formal *imprimatur* in recognition of his work's true worth. That indeed he (*Ukkirapperuvaludi*) was the Pandyan king in whose reign the Sacred Kural came to the Madura Board for review is clearly evident from the encomiastic *venba* he

has given to the work which in his opinion was more an object of worship than any specimen of literary excellence. Traditions also are all in favour of this. We extract below an account of the history of the Sacred Kural given by Dr. Pope in his very able edition of the same work.

“ Tradition declares that Tiruvalluvar composed “ Kurral at the request of his neighbours, in order “ that the Tamil people might have a Vēdam “ of their own ; and it was doubtless intended to “ become the abiding authority on [all ethical sub- “ jects for the Tamil country. The author must “ have already possessed a great reputation or this “ request would not have been made ; yet there are “ no traces of any other work of his.

“ The Kurral, when finished, is said to have “ been taken by its author to Madura, where there “ was a College of learned Tamil Scholars, supposed “ to have been founded in the days of Vamsa “ Sekhara, an ancient king of the Pandyan kingdom. “ In this college Siva himself had condescended to “ appear as the forty-ninth professor, especially “ devoting himself to the exposition of the Tamil “ Language. The God also bestowed on the College “ a sacred Bench of solid diamond, on which no “ one could sit who was not a faultless scholar. “ Lists are given of the forty-eight members of this “ Academy, but there are no genuine remains of “ their writings. The result of the appearance of “ Tiruvalluvar is variously stated. The general

“idea is that the high caste assembly would not
 “permit him to take his seat on the bench with the
 “learned pandits, on account of his want of caste ;
 “but that, meekly acquiescing in his own exclusion,
 “he simply requested permission to lay his book
 “on the end of the seat. On this being granted,
 “the book was placed where the poet should have
 “been seated and the whole bench at once disap-
 “peared, leaving the learned professors afloat in
 “the Lotus-tank. This story is obviously incon-
 “sistent with the idea which is equally prevalent,
 “that the president was Kapilar, himself a Pariah,
 “and a brother of Tiruvalluvar.

“The truth seems to be that the Madura School
 “of Tamil Literature, now too full of Sanskrit in-
 “fluences, was supreme until the advent of the St.
 “Thôme poet, whose fame at once eclipsed that of
 “the Southern sages.”

Dr. Pope follows the footsteps of many of the
pandits in ascribing the origin of the Board to the
 reign of Vamsa Sekhara on the strength of the
Sthala puranam of Madura. Ancient accounts seem
 to give no hold as to the truth of a sacred plank of
 diamond on which the learned professors sat while
 engaged in the exposition of the Tamil tongue.
 Tradition and puranic evidences, however, unani-
 mously agree in supporting the existence of the sa-
 cred plank which extended when new and fit profes-
 sors came to find a seat therein and contracted when
 a professor left the Board. Dr. Pope finds a certain

inconsistency, in the tradition ; he thinks that the exclusion of Tiruvalluvar from a seat on the sacred board is quite inconsistent with the fact that Kapilar, himself a Pariah, was the president of the academy.

Caste-distinction did not, however, take such a formidable form in the golden days of Tamil Literature as at the present day. *Tolgāppyam* the oldest work extant in Tamil allows intermarriage of *Brahmins* with wives in the three lower castes *Kshatrya*, *Vaisya* and *Sudra*, only that for religious ceremonies the *Brahmin* wife was considered more highly suited than the other consorts ; so also a *Kshatrya* was allowed to marry maidens from the *Vaisya* and the *Sudra* castes ; and a *Vaisya* was permitted to take as wife a *Sudra* girl. Sanskrit Literature also seems to throw the same light on the matter. These are all rules ; what we want are practical examples to show that such unions were not held in disrepute. *Kapilar*, as we have already seen, after the death of his distinguished patron *Pari* (பரி) a *Vellala*,* endeavours his utmost to persuade two of the chiefs of the day to take his patron's daughters as wives. His request not being complied with *Kapilar* disposes of these two *Vellala* girls in marriage to *Brahmins*. (These are historical facts supported by *Puranānuru* a work of high historical value of the Sangam age). Toleration which extended so far as to sanction the legality of an intermarriage of a

* Nacchinarkkiniyar, the able Commentator on *Tolgāppyam*, invariably considers the *Vellalas* as *Sudras*.

Brahmin with girls in the three lower castes did not however countenance an intermarriage of a *Brahmin* with a *Pariah* wife. Nevertheless this bar had not sufficient check as to outcaste any *Brahmin* who condescended to take a wife from outside the caste-pale. The bar was therefore more a sort of politic advice left to the discretion of a *Brahmin* to adopt or reject at his will and pleasure. Thus the sage *Vyasa*, the author of the Sanskrit *Bhāratam* and the originator of the *Vedānta Sūtras*, was the outcome of the union of a *Brahmin* with a fisherwoman. In the *Sangam* age also there were such unions; *Kapilar* one of the members of the academy at *Madura* was the issue of a *Brahmin* father by a *Pariah* wife; the issue, in obedience to a promise between the couple was dropped at the place of birth (*Tiruvārūr*). The foundling which had a charming face was picked up by a childless *Brahmin* of the place and brought up in due *Brahmin* fashion, with great tenderness. The foster-parents of the boy wished to make the usual *upanayanam* ceremony (the investiture of the sacred thread); the *Brahmins* of the place raised serious objection to this. The boy who was a precocity put all the *Brahmins* to shame by the weight of his arguments which denounced the distinction of caste based on birth and proved that caste follows one's course of conduct. * His speech had a thrilling effect and he was at once admitted as the *Brahmin*

* *Vide Kapilar's agaval*. This famous poetic dissertation, written as it was at least 18 hundred years ago, is remarkable for the weight of its arguments and critical acumen of the writer.

of Brahmins. This masterly dissertation reveals to us certain other facts of great importance. From this monument of ancient thought we learn that *Bhagavan* a Brahmin was *Kapilar's* father and *Āthi* of *Karūr* a Pariah lady was his mother; * that *Avvāiyar*, brought up by parents of the string-musician's caste (admittedly a low caste, even in the olden days, called as *pānar*) was an elder sister of his; that *Tiruvalluvar*, picked and brought up by a Pariah a Mailapūr, was also his brother. As regards himself he says that he was brought up as a Brahmin by his Brahmin foster-parents at Tiruvârūr.

That the outcastes were not treated in the ancient times with so much disdain as now, we can learn from the history of the sage Jnānasambandar who, as we have already said, flourished at about the beginning of the seventh century. Tirunīlakantayālpānar a string-musician (of the *pānar* caste) followed the young saint throughout his excursions to the Saiva shrines setting to music every *pathigam*

* The words ஆதி பகவன் in the first distich of the Sacred Kural secretly teach us the parentage of Tiruvalluvar; the evidence is certainly quite trustworthy for several reasons. The words when understood in the light of Avvaiyār's golden line 'அன்னையும் பிதாவ முன்னறி தெய்வம்' reveals to us even the cause of the prior position given to the mother. The words ஆதி பகவன் refer both to God and Tiruvalluvar's parents. Of the sacred Kural it may very forcibly be asserted that it is the pure well of Tamil undefiled; the occurrence of two foreign words in the very first distich of his classical work is strikingly strange especially when there are various other strong terms in pure Tamil to express the idea of divinity.

Thus evidences flowing from all directions irresistibly force upon us the conclusion that ஆதி and பகவன் were the parents of Tiruvalluvar.

from the lips of the child-poet. At Sâttamangai Tirujnânasambandar had to halt at the request of a Brahmin devotee named Tirunîlanakkar (he is also one of the 63 canonised Saiva saints); Tirunîlanakkar had to provide room for the retinue of the Saiva reformer and among them especially to Tirunîlakantayâlppânar to whom he set apart one of the sacred spots of his house, namely, the pial, near the sacrificial undying fire. Sêkkilâr the biographer says that the flame rose high and burnt with dazzling brilliancy turning round and round from left to right when the low caste saint went to the spot to take his abode.* Thus magnanimity of disposition and propriety of conduct, as the wise Kapilar has laid down, were the true marks of one's rank in life. Where these high qualities existed, lowness of caste was no impediment to the recognition of one's glory in those golden days of yore. To the credit of the Brahmins it should be said that they richly deserved the title by birth, disposition and conduct in the good days of old. It is only when they fell low in rank for want of the noble qualities which would befit them to the title of Brahmins (*lit.* those that understood the Brahman), that they, as a course of expediency, made the barrier of caste very rigid. It was then that intermarriages of

* *Vide Tirunilanakkar puranam* in Periapuranam. There are a lot of other incidents in the Tamil Saiva literature proving the utter uselessness of the caste barrier when sterling worth is found in a low caste man. The history of the Tiruppân Alwâr in the Vaishnava Literature is equally in favour of the view.

Brahmins with the three other castes was put down as gross sacrilege with an iron hand. The Brahmins of later ages bound no more to keep up the prestige of their status by the possession of the truly-essential magnanimous elements in their character underwent spiritual degeneracy and devoted their physical and mental powers to the aggrandisement of vain power and affluence. After this explanation of the nature of caste-distinction in days of antiquity there is nothing objectionable in the history of the lives given of himself and brothers and sisters by Kapilar in his famous *agaval*.

Dr. Pope rather hastily mentions that there are no genuine remains of the writings of the poets that sat on the Madura Board during its last sessions. In proving the synchronous existence of the poets of the Bench we have already referred to the writings of some of these poets. For the purposes of clear elucidation, however, we recount the works composed by the distinguished poets of the Bench. Nakkî-rar the most prominent member in the Board, setting apart his minor works, has furnished two out of the Ten Idyls—Tirumurugâttruppadaï on God Muruga and Nedunalvâdai or the Dreary Winter extolling the military prowess of the Pandyan king Nedunchelian at the battle of Talayâlankânânam while his consort was pining within his palace at the separation of her husband in Dreary Winter. Mângudi Marudanâr another poet of the Bench was a highly distinguished member whose undying fame rests on

Madhuraikkânc̣hi or the Gentle Hint; the fame of Kallâdar one of the most pious members rests upon Kallâdam; Sîttalai Sâttanâr is the author of Manimêkhalai one of the five ancient epics of established repute in Tamil; Perundevanâr's fame rests upon his Bharatam in Venba metre interspersed with specimens of choice prose diction; Mamûlanar is considered the author of Sirupanchamûlam one of the eighteen didactic works approved and compiled by the Board and known as Pathinenkîlkanakku. Nattattanâr is the author of Sirupânâtruppadaï one of the famous 'Ten Idyls'; Kapilar, setting aside several of his minor works, is the author of Kurin-chippâttu one of the 'Ten Idyls.' Nallanduvanâr stands very high in the poetic rank of the Sangam age and is the author of Kalittogai a rare specimen of Dravidian literary glory affording much intellectual food to efficient Tamil scholars. So there were at least *nine* poets in the list who have written large works in Tamil; our readers would be aware of the fact that several other poets of the Board were famous for their miscellaneous writings. We are very sorry to point out that European scholars have rushed into misconceptions through hastiness. We would not blame them for the errors which they occasionally slip into, as good Homer sometimes nods, but for the fact that any misconceptions from scholars of established fame pass for axiomatic truths and it requires afterwards a mountain of labour to wipe away such wrong impressions from

the minds of the easily-believing readers. It should be the duty of every true Tamil scholar not to allow any distorted picture of the literature of his birthright for offer to public view. In such cases, it should be remembered, that work of destruction is more difficult than one of construction. If a scholar of great eminence gives currency to a wrong opinion it soon finds its way into the minds of the readers who abhor to question the validity of the opinion, springing as it does, from such high quarters. To wipe away the wrong impression once created and implant the correct notion is indeed a taxing work.

Again, Dr. Pope has incidentally said that the academy was constituted of high-caste members. With due deference to the learned doctor, we beg to differ from his view. Highness of caste was no necessary passport to gain a place in the Bench. Spiritual and intellectual eminence was the only criterion enforced upon the members of the Board. From the nature in which Kallâdar rails at impiety we should seriously conclude that the members of the Board were really of a very high religious bent of mind which induced Sundarar, the last of the Saiva reformers, to give them a place in his famous Versified Catalogue of Saints known as Tiruttondattokai already referred to. All kinds of castes were represented in the Board ; we are not, however, in possession of evidences to say in the case of *every* member to which caste he belonged.

To begin with Nakkirar; he belonged to a caste of men whose profession was to split the conch; Sittalai Sattanâr was a seller of grains by caste; Kapilar a foundling passed for a Brahmin; Maruttuvan Dâmodaranâr in all probability was a barber by birth; * Arisirkkilâr, Kovûrkkilâr, Senkuntûrkkilar and Kalattûrkkilâr were *Vellalas* of a special order; Kallâdar was not a Brahmin especially from the high tone in which he speaks of Brahmins which would amount to self-praise if he had been a Brahmin. Karikkannanâr of Kaverippûmpattinam was a Vaniga (merchant caste) Ilavêttanâr of Madura was a weaver or a seller of clothes by profession; Kodamanar and Rudrasanmakannar were Brahmins. Thus the Board was constituted of members of all vocations and castes; there is however, no trace of any evidence as to whether a Pariah was a member of the Board.

If literary records have any value, Tiruvalluvar the author of the Universal Code and Kapilar one of the most prominent members of the Madura Bench were decidedly brothers and Avvaiyâr was their common sister. There are, in addition, further evidences of quite an independent type to prove at least their

* In the Tamil land barbers of rank and intelligence leave off their trade and usually take up the profession of medicine as more honorable; the term மருத்துவன் literally means the 'man of medicine;' still no native doctor of any other caste would consider it an honor to tack on this surname to his name. A மருத்துவன் therefore means in ordinary language a barber, so also a மருத்துவச்சி denotes a barber-women practicing midwifery.

Vukkirapperuvaludi was the
 whose reigns the long sessions
 conducted; three* of them
 distinguished for letters as to sit
 rati of the Bench. Vukki-
 one of these distinguished
 among others extolled the merits of
 which to him was an object of worship
 as it was nothing but the true essence of the Vedas.
 From Puranânûru we can learn that Avvaiyâr † has
 addressed certain of her sonnets to Vukkirapperuva-
 ludi. She was also the most distinguished of the poets
 that adorned the court of Athyamân one of 'the last
 seven donors' already referred to. Therein we have
 already drawn attention to the fact that Avvaiyâr
 and Parānar were contemporaries. Parānar's con-
 temporaneous existence with Kapilar and other
 chief members of the Board was also proved already.
 It follows therefore, that Tiruvalluvar was a con-
 temporary with the members of the Madura Bench.
 Thus evidences flowing from all directions irresistibly
 force upon us the conclusion that Tiruvalluvar

* *Vide* Commentaries on Iraiyanâr Agapporal, Sutra 1.

† There is no name more puzzling to the student of Tamil literature than that of Avvaiyâr. The word Avvaiyâr does not denote any particular individual by that name; it simply signifies an 'old learned lady.' That there was a poetess usually known as *அவ்வையார்* during the *Sangam* age is beyond all doubt. In subsequent times also there should have been poetesses commonly known to the world as *Avvaiyârs*.

We reserve our views regarding this subject to 'The History of Tamil Literature' in preparation.

had a synchronous existence with the Madura Academy.

Thus so far as the Last Sangam have proved in the light of their power the following facts :

1. The positive existence of the academy at Madura in days of yore ;
2. The synchronous existence of the academy of that academy before whom Tiruvalluvar took his Universal Code for formal recognition ;
3. The contemporaneous existence of Tiruvalluvar with those poets ;
4. That the Madura Bench was not constituted of high caste members alone, as Dr. Pope has incidentally said, but that members of all vocations and castes took part in the literary activity of the times and that caste-distinction was not such a curse then as it is at the present day ;
5. That there are genuine writings of the important poets whose names occur in 'the garland of Tiruvalluvar.'

The time of the last sessions of the Last Sangam is pretty certainly known. Mr. Seshagiri Sastriar of the Madras Presidency College, has laid the Tamil public under a sense of gratitude in one great respect. We believe it was he that was the first to point out from Mahavamsa, the Chronicles of Ceylon of established authenticity, the fact that therein occur the names of two Gayavahus, both, kings of Ceylon of whom one should necessarily be identical with the

particular Gayavâhu whose name finds a place in Silappatikâram, one of the five ancient epics of the Tamils. This is quite an original work in Tamil and was written by Ilangôvadigal soon after the transpiry of the events delineated in it. Silappatikâram or 'the Epic of the Anklet' commemorates the glory of Kannagi the heroine of the poem. Her husband Kôvalan was ruthlessly executed for possession of an anklet which the Pandyan king, Nedunchelian, was induced to think to be his queen's through the wickedness of a goldsmith. Kôvalan's chaste wife who at the request of her husband was a boon companion on his way from Kaverippûmpattinam or Pugâr (a city now submerged under the sea, near the mouth of the River Cauvery, whence its name) to Madura whereunto the pair came purposely to sell an anklet of theirs of great value to raise up a capital to trade with. Kannagi was left in the house of a shepherdess and Kôvalan went along the streets of Madura to find a fit purchaser for his anklet. A crafty goldsmith promised to purchase the jewel and repaired to Nedunchelian, the Pandyan king, and told him that he, after all, succeeded in catching hold of the thief who stole the queen's anklet. The Pandyan king who was then busy preparing to go to the palace of his consort hastily said that they could kill the thief and bring the anklet if it was in his possession; the guards and the goldsmith make all haste to the spot wherein Kôvalan was anxiously waiting for the purchaser; the officers

found nothing but innocence on the face of Kôvalan, but after the wily explanation of the goldsmith of the craft of consummate thieves, whose appearance, he said, would be nothing short of pure innocence, one of the cruel officers despatched the innocent Kôvalan and went away to the palace with the anklet. The execution soon spread through the city like a wild fire and reached the ears of the impatient Kannagi who was anxiously waiting for the return of her beloved husband. The news was a dagger to her heart and the lady got infuriated at the injustice of the king and, putting off all feminine reserve so highly natural and characteristic in the case of Hindu ladies, was soon at the gates of the palace. The guard informed the king at once of her arrival and the furious dame was forthwith led to the presence of the monarch. "How dare you execute my husband" accosted the lady. "Is it injustice to kill a thief" responded the king. The infuriated dame made no further discussion but asked the king to produce the anklet in question which she said would contain rubies inside; the king said that his queen's contained pearls. The anklet was broken and to the consternation of the king rubies darted out from it at the king's face. The king unable to bear the reproach of his real injustice, reclined on his royal couch and expired. The city of Madura was soon in a blaze at the wrath* of

* The epic says that Kannagi tore off a breast of hers and flung upon the city which was soon wrapt in flames.

Kannagi ; she left the city and was after some days seen at Shenkuntram under the shade of a *Vēngai* tree wherefrom she ascended the heavens in a celestial car along with her husband. Those that were eye-witnesses to this strange vision repaired to the court of the Chera king, Shenkuttuvan, and thrilled him and his brother Ilangôvadigal, the author of this epic poem, with the strange news. Sîttalai Sâtanâr, one of the members of the academy at Madura who was then come to the court of Shenkuttuvan, the Chera monarch and patron of Tamil literature, testified to the truth of these statements and detailed the whole history of Kannagi to part of which he himself bore the testimony as he was at Madura at the time of Kannagi's appearance at the court of Nedunchelian to wreak vengeance on the king for the unjust execution of her beloved husband. Shenkuttuvan wanted at once to deify Kannagi as the Heroine of Chastity by introducing the worship of Kannagi in Vanchi his capital. Ilangôvadigal, the king's brother, who entered the holy orders in the interests of his brother wished to weave all these events into a splendid epic which he wanted to designate as *Silappatikâram* or 'the Epic of the Anklet.' The epic however took him a great time to finish, for after he began the epic many other events transpired which are all incorporated in the epic. Shenkuttuvan sent men to the Himalayas to bring a stone therefrom for the construction of a statue of Kannagi ; this stone was duly bathed in the holy waters of the

Ganges and was at last brought in the duly religious fashion to Vanchi; * a temple was soon raised and a statue was worked out from the stone and implanted at the very heart of the shrine. King Shenkuttuvan was the first of the monarchs who instituted the worship of this Pattinikkadavul (the goddess of chastity) in his capital; at about this time various princes were present at the Court of Shenkuttuvan and among them Gayavâhu the king of Ceylon; upon all of them the goddess Kannagi conferred her blessings. All these events are detailed with great art and pathos by Ilangôvadigal the poet and a great admirer of the heroine of chastity. Further in the *urai-perukatturai* (a sort of genuine appendix tacked on to the poem) we find that Gayavâhu whose dominions (Lanka) were everywhere surrounded with ocean introduced the worship of this 'virago of chastity' into his land and thereby remedied the famine and drought to which his country was before subject. Thus the epic affords us the most conclusive evidence as to the synchronous existence of Shenkuttuvan the Chera King with Gayavâhu the king of Ceylon. Mr. Seshagiri Sastriar says in his essay on Tamil Literature that he consulted a work on the History of Ceylon named 'Ceylon by an officer late of the Ceylon Rifles.' Therein the learned professor found the names of two Gayavâhus the first of whom began his reign in 113 A. D. and the

* Dr. Pope positively thinks Vanchi to be Karûr which is a small town in the district of Coimbatore.

other about 1127 A. D. The second date is not at all suited as it would bring the last Sangam even after the age of Kambar. The first therefore is the right date of that Gayavâhu who plays a part in the 'Epic of the Anklet.' Thus Shenkuttuvan should have flourished about the beginning of the second century A. D. The Presidency Manual is equally and independently in support of the same view. We find therein the following *: "In A. D. 110 the Cholas again invaded Ceylon and carried away 12,000 Singhalese prisoners. In 113 this outrage was avenged by Gajabhahu, king of Ceylon, who invaded the Chola kingdom and brought back not only the rescued Singhalese captives, but also a large number of prisoners." This evidence which proves the presence of Gayavâhu in the land of the Tamils about 113 A. D. thus redoubly makes sure the fact that Gayavâhu of the second century A. D. and Shenkuttuvan were contemporaries. The Chera king Shenkuttuvan decidedly belongs to the Sangam age; we can prove his connection with the Sangam age independent of the link furnished by Sâttanâr the author of Manimêkhalai. (Nacchinârkkiniyâr one of the greatest authorities in Tamil speaks decisively of Sâttanâr as Sîttalai Sâttanâr and author of Manimêkhalai. On the strength of Nacchinârkkiniyâr we can safely absorb Sâttanâr as one of the professors of the Madura academy as the name of

* *Vide* page 117 foot-note of the Manual of the administration of the Madras Presidency.

Sittalai Sâttanâr occurs in the garland of Tiruvalluvar.) *Pathittuppattu* is one of the works comprised in *Ettutokai* compiled by the Madura Bench. The fifth book of this *Pathittuppattu* is composed by Paranaar a very elderly member of the college in honor of of Shenkuttuvan the Chera king and brother of Ilangôvadigal. Several other links may be supplied if necessary to prove the same conclusion but it would end in unnecessary digression. Thus we can rest quite assured that the poets of the Madura Bench flourished about the beginning of the second century. We have also shown already the synchronous existence of Tiruvalluvar with the literati at Madura. Tiruvalluvar's literary monument was composed some time previous to Silappatikâram and Manimêkhalai. The distich 'தெய்வந்தொழாஅன் கொழுநற்றொழு தெழுவான், பெய்யெனப் பெய்யுமழை' (the rain pours readily at the bidding of a lady who never worships God but ever gets up from bed worshipping her husband) is quoted, in both the epics. In Manimêkhalai the author in quoting the distich, commends also Tiruvalluvar as the 'lieless i.e., true poet.' * In the 21st Canto in Silappatikâram the idea of another distich from the Sacred Kural is repeated; *vide* lines 3 & 4 therein. *Pattuppattu* and *Ettuttokai* excepted the Sacred Ku-

* மாபெரும் பூதத்தோன்றி மடக்கொடி

நீகேளென்றே நேரிழைக் குரைக்கும்

தெய்வந்தொழாஅன் கொழுநற்றொழு தெழுவான்

பெய்யெனப் பெய்யும் பெருமழை யென்றவன்

பொய்யில் புலவன் பொருளுரைதேறும்.

Manimêkhalai சிறைசெய்காதை.

ral seems older than almost all the extant literary works in Tamil. It is older than Kallâdam as there are several references to Kural therein; it is older than the commentaries on Iraiyanâr Agapporul as there are four distichs* from Kural therein and because some passages of an extremely amorous nature from Silappatikâram find a place in it. As Silappatikâram was composed after Gayavâhu came to his throne in 113 A. D. we can safely place the date of composition of the Universal Code at the very beginning of the second century, *i.e.*, about 100 A. D. if not earlier. The last formal sessions of the Madura College also should have been conducted at about the same time.

To return to our main subject the age of sage Mânickavâchakar. As already pointed out we should look for his age prior to 600 A. D. the time about which the great child-saint Jnânasambandar flourished.

If we trust the evidence of Tiruvilayâdal Puranam, the Tamil local Puranam of Madura, the gap of time that divides Tirujnânasambandar from Mânickavâchakar would be about 200 years as there are ten intervening Pandyas between Arimardhana, under whom Mânickavâchakar was prime-minister and Kûn Pandya, the Jain king reconverted to Saiva faith by Tirujnânasambandar. On the testimony of this *puranam* the age of Mânickavâchakar would be about 400 A. D. by allowing a period of 20 years'

* Vide Commentaries of Iraiyanâr Agapporul Sutras 2, 30 and 40.

reign to each of the intervening Pandyan sovereigns. But to rest conclusions on such haphazard evidences is not safe. For some time, however, we tentatively held this view namely that Mânickavâchakar should have flourished about the end of the fourth century. We had, still, all along a serious doubt as to the validity of this view especially in the light of several traditions which raise up the time of the author of ruby-like utterances to the Augustan age of Tamil Literature—the Last Sangam. But we were very reluctant to uphold this new view in the absence of more trustworthy evidence, as the question then turned about the relative importance of traditions and the Madura *Sthalapurânam*. There are two important traditions that would take Mânickavâchakar to the Sangam times. One of the traditions asserts that the Sacred Kural by Tiruvalluvar was composed at the instance of God Siva to beat down the literary vanity of Nakkîrar and other members of the Board who audaciously found fault with the famous sonnet of Iraiyanâr and pronounced the Tirucchittambalakkôvaiyâr of Mânickavâchakar as abounding in a hundred errors. The other tradition that dovetails with the first is that Kallâdam was written to vindicate the flawlessness of Tirucchittambalakkôvaiyâr.

As regards the first of the traditions, as far as our researches go there is no literary evidence to shew that the Sacred Kural was composed to put down the literary vanity of Nakkîrar and his colleagues.

We have, however, sufficient proof of Nakkîrar's literary vanity, the divine displeasure to which he was subject and his repentance.* It is true that he audaciously criticized the sonnet by Iraiyanâr which brought down upon him his wrath. In Perunthê-vapâni a work by Nakkîrar comprised in the Book of the Saiva Bible already referred to occur the lines,

சொலற்கருந் தன்மைத் தொல்லோய் நீயே

அதனாற்

கூடலாலவாய்க் குழகனாவ

தறியா தருந்தமிழ் பழித்தன னடியேன்.

(Thou art of ancient indescribable fame ; not knowing Thee to be the beautiful God of Madura, I found fault with thy precious Tamil).

If properly interpreted this throws an abundance of light ; it clearly proves beyond doubt that there was a mysterious personage of literary fame connected with the academy. Iraiyanâr's existence cannot be doubted as several important works and incidents are claimed for him. In the eyes of Nakkîrar he was no more than an ordinary mortal till he incur-

* Even independently of the internal evidence furnished by Nakkirar and Kalladar, the legend of Nakkirar's discussion with Iraiyanar should have had an historical basis ; it is detailed in the Sanskrit Halasya Mahatmyam as well as in the Tamil Tiruvilayadal Puranam. The legend was so popular that Thoorjati one of the eight great luminaries at the Court of Krishna Deva Raja of ancient Vijayanagar has composed a charming work in Telugu known as Kâlahasti Mahatmyam wherein half a canto is exclusively devoted to Nakkîrar. The Sanskrit and the Tamil Puranas on Kâlahasti, which is considered to be Southern Kailas, also detail the feud between Nakkirar and the local God of Madura.

red his serious displeasure. The audacious poet had to find refuge in the Lotus-Tank to escape the fury of Iraiyanâr's fiery eyes and from there he sang the glory of God Siva. Kallâdar testifies to this fact. In the 52nd *agaval* of his Kallâdam which in dignity of thought is scarcely surpassed by any work, he speaks of God Siva as one with a black throat that heard the magnanimous Tamil eulogies sung by Nakkîrar of rare talents in Tamil, from the pond. Thus we can rest assured of the following facts about Nakkîrar:—

Iraiyanâr's composition of sonnet* to relieve the poverty of a Brahmin named Tharumi :

Nakkîrar finding objection to it and appearance of Iraiyanâr on the Board :

Nakkîrar's criticism of the sonnet in the very presence of Iraiyanâr :

Iraiyanâr's wrath at the obstinate criticism of Nakkîrar who grew very dizzy of his literary fame :

Nakkîrar's falling into the Lotus-Tank unable to bear the fury of Iraiyanâr's fiery eye :

Nakkîrar's ultimate conviction of Iraiyanâr as a divinity and subsequent composition of eulogiums on Siva's glory.

We have no literary evidence of any kind to shew that Mânickavâchakar's Tirucchittambalakkôvayâr was subject to the perusal of the Madura Bench for their approval.

* This is supported by Kalladam; and Nakkîrar himself refers to his mischievous criticism of the sonnet in Perunthêvapani as already pointed out.

Now as regards the second tradition. Even a critical study of Kallâdam does not in the least give any clue to the tradition that it was written in support of the flawlessness of Tirucchittambalakkôvâyâr. Neither there is in it any reference to Tirucchittambalakkôvâyâr or to Tiruvâchakam by name. But there is something in the dignity of the passages and the high religious tone in their expression which makes the work appear in certain respects like an echo of Tiruvâchakam. We can even pick out expressions from Kallâdam similar to those occurring in Tiruvâchakam. To make a link between Tiruvâchakam and Kalladam on such slender analogies in the absence of more reliable data would not at all be fair. A close study of Kallâdam fortunately reveals to us two events one of which would decidedly make Mânickavâchakar either a contemporary of Kallâdar or his predecessor. In the 15th *agaval* Kallâdar refers to one of the sixty-four sacred sports of God Siva namely his appearance as a fisherman * to ensnare a huge fish, that was a terror of the times to the fishermen of the east coast. On the strength of the Tiruvilayâdal Puranam and Hâlâsya Mahatmyam this is a feat of Siva performed during the reign of Arimardhana Pândya, the king, whose prime-minister Mânickavâchakar was. We cannot give full credit to these *Puranas* sadly wanting in historical veracity and conclude that Mânickavâchakar preceded Kallâdar. Before giving credit to these

*Vide 1st *agaval* in Kalladam.

Puranas we should be sure of the following facts:—

That the sacred sport in question was performed during the reign of Arimardhana :

That the sage Manickavachakar was the prime-minister of the same king.

But we are certain that the sacred sport was not performed after the time of Mânickavâchakar as he often refers to this divine feat of Siva in a touching tone. A presumption, therefore, is raised in favour of Mânickavâchakar's priority to, or at least synchronous existence with, Kallâdar. And with the evidence furnished by the 49th *agaval* we alight upon *terra firma* as to the time of the author of ruby-like utterances. Herein another sacred sport of Siva is described ; He appears as a common *coolie* in the interests of the devout matron whose hair was silvered over with age, when the Vaigai was in flood dashing the banks to the consternation of the denizens of the ancient city of Madura. Kallâdar refers also to the bargain struck between the divine workman and the matron, namely, the powdery diet (அட்டி) a favourite dish of the Tamils even in days of yore now so well known to the Europeans. Kallâdar refers also to the caning which got Somasundra of Madura condescended to receive at the hands of the Pandyan king. Our readers are well aware of these events from the sketch we have already given of the life of the poetic sage. All the biographers of Mânickavâchakar make mention of the

great inundation of the river Vaigai which was caused in the interests of the sage Mânickavâchakar. We wish, however, to show in the light of purely internal evidence from Tiruvâchakam whether the inundation and the correlated events could have transpired during the life-time of the author. Mânickavâchakar makes mention of these events in several places of his Tiruvâchakam. In the enumeration of the various divine feats * the poet refers to the form of horseman assumed by Siva of Madura and His condescension to bear loads of mud for the sake of the devout old dame in the same city. Siva's appearance as a horseman to sell the mystic horses to the Pandyan is often and often graphically and touchingly described by Mânickavâchakar in whose pious eyes the sacred form of God Siva in the horseman's garb lay imprinted. Kallâdar like Mânickavâchakar was a man of great faith which is clearly indicated both by the religious dignity of his style and by the ready belief in divine intervention. For instance it took a good deal of time for Nakkîrar to believe in the divinity of Iraiyanar who appeared to him no more than an ordinary poet that appeared on the Bench now and then to help the professors. To Kallâdar, Iraiyanâr was decidedly God Siva with triple eyes. To men of faith the world is ever apparelled in celestial light; Kallâdar and Mânickavâchakar were sages that yearned ever after the golden ideal of humanity and lived and moved and

* See lines 44—47 in கீர்த்தித்திருவகவல் of Tiruvachakam.

had their being in God. Men of devotion will find the greatest relish in the perusal of Kalladar's *agaval*s characterized for their loftiness of sentiments and the serene moral and religious atmosphere they make the readers breathe. The evidence furnished by such works is thus decidedly genuine (*i.e.*, well meant and not intended to impose) and it is left to the world to receive it as such or to ungarb it and take it at its historical value. Thus the appearance of a *coolly* to relieve the distress of an old gentlewoman of much devotion and his mysterious disappearance after receiving the caning at the hands of the Pandya are certain whatever the sceptics' view might be. In another place Mânickavâchakar gives a more graphical account of the same incident. Therein he says * "Let us sing the golden body that bore the wound of the king's blow after bearing the burthens of mud and receiving the wages." Tiruvâchakam or the *Holy Word* of Mânickavâchakar is to a critical reader a very good autobiography of its author; the sage's mind, rivetted as it ever was on God and His glory, frequently gave out graphic accounts of all acts of grace divine that transpired in his days. Thus we can find in Tiruvâchakam oft-repeated descriptions of the saint's Holy Deliverer seated under the shade of the *kurunda* tree, Siva's form as a horseman, Siva's appearance as a workman, etc. Thus Siva's condescension to appear in the guise of a *coolly*, though in the interests of the de-

* See the 8th Stanza in திருவம்மாண.

vout matron and seller of *pittu* (the powdery diet of Tamils), should have transpired in the days of Mânickavâchakar as the inundation of the Vaigai was primarily intended to relieve the distress of the poet and saint who was subject to much cruel treatment at the hands of the king's officers for having squandered away the money entrusted to him for the purchase of horses. The evidence of Kallâdam, thus, carries the foremost Saiva reformer to the Sangam period and even earlier. This internal evidence helped by the testimony of the traditions redoubly makes sure the fact that Mânickavâchakar flourished during the age of the last Sangam. The tone with which the saint has referred to the Madura Board from Chidambaram where he composed his famous Tirucchittambalakkôvaiyâr is also equally in favour of the view.

It may be argued that as the name Arimardhana the Pandya, whose prime-minister Mânickavâchakar was, does not occur in the ancient classics of Tamil Literature it would not be safe to place Mânickavâchakar in the Sangam age. We shall prove the utter untenability of such an argument.

To try to find the age of Arimardhana is to begin an impossible task. The theory of fish being heavier after death than when alive that engaged the attention of the Royal Society in the 17th century should not be forgotten. Before setting out to find the age of Arimardhana in whose reign, on the strength of *Puranas*, Mânickavâchakar should have existed we

should be sure of the fact whether there *was* really any Pandyan king in those olden days by the name of Arimardhana. The study of the ancient classics in Tamil clearly shows that all the Pandyan sovereigns were designated by purely Tamil names. Nedunchelian, Ilanchelian, Nintra Sir Nedumârau (originally known as Kûn Pandya) are all *purely* Tamil names by which these Pandyas were known in their times. It is also the same with the names of the other Tamil kings. We need not go far to seek for a genuine explanation of the Sanskrit names by which the Pandyas are designated in the Hâlâsya Mahâtmyam and Tiruvilayâdal Puranam. The Sanskritists avoided the occurrence of Tamil names in Sanskrit compositions; the difficulty was mostly overcome by literal translations of the Tamil names into Sanskrit names. This is no mere conjecture but an undoubted fact. For instance at the time of Tirujnânasambandar, the uprooter of the Jain faith, the Pandya his wife and his prime-minister bore Tamil names and were known as Kûn Pandya (the hunchbacked Pandya) Mangaiyarkkarasi (the queen of woman), and Kulachirai (the family bondage). The Sanskritists who composed the Hâlâsya Mahâtmyam softly turned these genuine Tamil names into Kubja Pandya, Vanitêsvari and Kulabhandana. Again Idaikkâdar one of the 18 reputed sages of Tamil fame is known in the same Puranam as Madhyavanadhîsa. It is needless to bring other proofs of

the tendency of the Sanskrit writers to garb Tamil names in Sanskrit attire. The names of many places were even changed. Thus it is quite clear that there was in existence no Pandya in the olden days by the name of Arimardhana. Paranjôti Munivar, the author of the Tamil Tiruvilayâdal Puranam, followed the footsteps of the earlier *Puranam* writers in making Arimardhana the Pandyan king under whom Mânickavâchakar was prime-minister. Thus neither the Sanskrit Hâlâsya Mahâtmyam nor the Tamil Tiruvilayâdal Puranam can be relied upon as to the genuineness of the names of the Pandyas. Therefore the absence of the name of Arimardhana from the ancient classics of Tamil is of no weight to dispute the existence of Mânickavâchakar during the Sangam age.

In 'Tiruvâchakam occurs the line 'கல்லாடத்திற் கலந்தினி தருளி' which Mr. Subbaraya Mudaliar, an able Tamil scholar and commentator of many of the *agavals* in Kallâdam, interprets as Mânickavâchakar's words in praise of Kallâdam, a work at which God was pleased to the utmost. This interpretation is not universally approved by the Saiva public. The majority of the Saivas are of opinion that Mânickavâchakar meant by *Kallâdam* a shrine by the name, and not the literary work. There is, we learn, a particular spot in the temple of Madura known as Kallâdam; it was there that Kallâdam was read, so the tradition goes, in front of a Sivalingam which shook

its head a hundred times in token of its approval of each and every stanza in the work. To bring out the truth from these traditions is almost a hopeless affair, seeing the remote antiquity of the Sangam age. All that we can be certain of regarding the age of Mânickavâchakar, is that he belonged to the last Sangam age. If we give any weight to the tradition that the Sacred Kural was composed to beat down the literary arrogance of the Board in criticizing Tirucchittambalakkôvaiyâr, then Mânickavâchakar's works should precede Kural. There is, however, one thing strange about Tiruvâchakam and Tirucchittambalakkovaiyâr. As far as our researches go, no work written subsequent to the Kural is free from the influence of this Universal Code. There is scarcely any subsequent writer that is not indebted to Tiruvalluvar. The Universal Code has stamped its influence on all the works of the Sangam age composed after it, such as Silappatikâram, Manimêkhalai, Nakkîrar's commentaries on Agapporul, Kallâdam, etc. Its influence on the later writers need not be said. While such is the case, it is no doubt very strange that Mânickavâchakar's works should entirely be free from the all-pervading influence of the great Moral Code of Nations*. We are in-

* The 44th Stanza in திருச்சதகம் seems to have a parallel thought to Valluvar's distich,

குடம்பை தனித்தொழியப் புட்பறந் தற்றே
புடம்போ டியிரிடை நட்பு,

if we recognise the genuineness of the interpretation of Parimêlalagar. The common comparison in each case is the impossibi-

clined, therefore, to place Mânickavâchakar with his works prior to Tiruvalluvar; we shall, however, be not dogmatic in our assertion and are prepared to receive any genuine view regarding the question of Mânickavâchakar's priority to Tiruvalluvar, if honestly made in the light of real evidences.

To recapitulate. We have pointed out the sad desideratum of the Tamil literature needing speedy exposition; a sketch of Mânickavâchakar's life based mostly on the internal evidence of his work is drawn; the priority of Mânickavâchakar to Tirujnânasambandar is proved, and the distorted view of the latter's time from the Vanni-tree-miracle is exploded; the question why the first place in the Saiva Tirumurai is given to Tirujnânasambandar in preference to Mânickavâchakar, and the more important question of the omission of Mânickavâchakar's name from the

lity of a newly-hatched young of a bird to get back its previous egg-life. Tiruvalluvar employs the comparison, if we give credit to Parimelalagar's interpretation, by way of illustrating the impossibility of the revival of a dead man; whereas Mânickavâchakar compares the eternal freedom from the clutches of the 'mortal coil,' which he requests at God's hands, to the bird's final liberation from the shell. The comparison serves a higher purpose in the hands of Valhavurar. If one has borrowed from the other, he should be Tiruvalluvar. In all probability Tiruvalluvar might never have intended the comparison. By குடம்பை he should have meant simply a bird's nest as several of the Sangam poets have done; the liberation of the life from the body is generally compared to the bird abandoning its nest. குடம்பை in the sense of egg, seems to have crept into the dictionaries only after the ingenious interpretation of Parimelalagar of the distich quoted above. Even this interpretation, I fear, Parimelalagar should have imported to the distich from Tiruvachakam.

versified catalogue of canonised Saints furnished by Sundarar have been discussed ; the historic value of the chief works which might serve to give any guidance to the antiquarian of Tamil Literature has been estimated at their worth; Mr. Seshagiri Sastriar's views, so far as the last Sangam is concerned, are examined and some of his hasty conclusions rebutted. As regards the Madura Academy the following facts are adduced in the light of the most reliable evidence in our possession :—

1. The positive existence of a college of literati at Madura bent on the cultivation of the Tamil language in days of yore :

2. The synchronous existence of the chief poets of the Academy before whom Tiruvalluvar took his Universal Code for formal recognition :

3. The contemporaneous existence of Tiruvalluvar with those poets :

4. That the constitution of the Bench was not purely of high caste members alone, as Dr. Pope has incidentally said, but that members of all vocations and castes took part in the literary activity of the times and that caste-distinction was not such a curse then as it is at the present day :

5. That the list of names in the 'garland of Tiruvalluvar' is not merely an *omnium gatherum* of names without any further associations, but that the important poets in the list have left genuine undying literary monuments of their fame.

6. That the time of the last Academy at Madura when Tiruvalluvar took his work for their approval was about 100 A. D. :

7. That Mânickavâchakar belongs to the Sangam age, leaving his priority to Tiruvalluvar for discussion.



ERRATA.

<i>Page.</i>	<i>Line.</i>	<i>Error.</i>	<i>Correction.</i>
1	5	elsewhere	elsewhere
3	6	even	omit
"	7	the	omit
7	1	at	with
"	8	at	in
9	6	upon the	upon
"	21	made way	made his way
"	footnote 3	to his life	life to his
12	3	out	omit
15	28	as to	and asked
16	3	at	with
17	2	close	closely to
21	5	be	are
23	16	should	must
25	27	in	through
31	6	fits with	fits in with
"	27	an	omit
32	19	died by	died of
37	15	even learn; if not	learn even; if we are not
41	19	giving place	giving a place
44	14-5	might; may be	may; is
59	15	on	to
70	12	at	with
73	12	but	and
80	9	to to	to
81	4	enomously	enormously
"	10	originally	originality
"	footnote 1.	at par	on a par
83	9	dignity thought	dignity of thought
89	9	a	at
91	3	pristige	prestige
"	27	piring	pining
94	footnote	women practicing	woman practising
95	16	wer oecntemporaries	were contempora- ries
97	12	who	omit
"	29	make	made
103	15	sage	the sage
106	12	of sonnet	of a sonnet
108	24	got	god
112	23	woman	women

N.B.—I regret to find that my friend to whom, out of unavoidable necessity I entrusted the correction of the proofs of this book, has not at all attended to punctuation.

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