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**EZUTTACCAN AND HIS AGE**



# EŽUTTACCAN AND HIS AGE

BY

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UNIVERSITY OF MADRAS

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## FOREWORD.

Tunjatt' Eḷuttaccan is to the Malayāḷis in Southern India what Tulsi Dās is to the Hindi-speaking people of the North—the supreme poet and religious teacher. Both were consummate masters in their art, wielding their native speech with the utmost skill and refinement, while at the same time they were able through their human sympathies and godliness to touch the hearts and inspire the imaginations of millions of men inaccessible to the charms of more scholastic and sophisticated art. Both too devoted their finest works to the glorification of the same deity, Viṣṇu, and in their representations ennobled the traditional pictures of Him by stripping away the overgrowth of unworthy ideas that seemed to obscure and dishonour them. But whereas Tulsi Dās for many years past has been known to English readers through the masterly works of Mr. Growse and Sir George Grierson, hardly any of them has ever heard the name of Eḷuttaccan. This is not wholly unnatural, for in comparison with the many millions of the Hindi-speaking North the Malayāḷis are a small people, and none of them has hitherto been able to present an adequate account of Eḷuttaccan's work and all that it signifies for the moral and spiritual life of his countrymen. Mr. Achyuta Menon's study however, will now remove any justification that henceforth might be pleaded for such ignorance.

Mr. Menon in the following pages has endeavoured to show the full significance of Eḷuttaccan as poet and teacher; and, in my opinion, he has been eminently successful. He has carefully investigated the historical background of his author's career and the various literary and religious currents which reached him and stimulated his art. In pursuing these lines of study Mr. Menon has shown how Eḷuttaccan has often boldly recast, and even rejected, traditional ideas in order to attain a higher moral harmony for his poems; and he has not shrunk from combating some popular misconceptions which have long been prevalent in religious and literary circles. His work is thus a product of scholarly and courageous criticism, and will be indispensable to those who seek to know what is highest and best in the soul of India.

*School of Oriental Studies.* }  
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON. }

L. D. BARNETT.



## INTRODUCTION.

The work on 'Ežuttaccan and His age' that is now being presented to the public embodies my original research in literary and popular poetry in Malayālam and was accepted as the thesis for my Ph.D. degree by the London University in 1938. It has since been revised and brought up to date. Appendices 5 to 8 have also been added. The importance of Ežuttaccan in Malayalam Literature lies in the fact that in him the popular and classical traditions of Malabar have combined to produce an outstanding literary achievement which inspired its subsequent development and gave it a definite lead. The saintly poet has almost become a mythical figure in Malabar and the task of deciphering the man out of the morass of legendary lore that surrounds him has not been easy. The historical background and other influences that shaped his genius and work have not been investigated nor a proper analysis of his complex personality been attempted before. My endeavour has been to work up this unexplored field and fill the gap with the materials gathered through my independent study and original investigation.

The influence of social institutions and folklore on literary developments is very often ignored by scholars in Malayālam. I have attempted in my survey to trace their inter-relationship and thereby throw light on many dark corners in the history of Malayālam Literature.

Some space has been given to the discussion of matters which are relevant to my study of Ežuttaccan but are not strictly scientific researches, viz., discussions on the plots of the Ramāyaṇa, with attempts to correct what I believe to be erroneous popular views in this connection. I have dealt at some length on these topics because of the nature of my theme, which is to present a complete view of Ežuttaccan's personality, his literary and religious activities and the manifold influences that operated upon him. It has therefore, been needful to analyse the various elements of the Rama-sāga which came down to him and were worked up by him; and so I have sought to show the discrepancies of ideas between the primitive sāga, the more sophisticated version of it presented by Vālmiki, and the still more advanced conception given in the Adhyātma-Rāmāyaṇa. In doing this I have come into conflict with many cherished prejudices and devout beliefs of

orthodoxy. Moreover, I am aware that my arguments against the historicity of Vālmiki's picture of the Rākṣasas' kingdom may appear to Western eyes somewhat elementary; most Western scholars probably would be satisfied to take my main views on this matter for granted, and regard my arguments as superfluous. But I have thought it desirable to take account of conservative opinions that are still strong in India, and to address myself to the task of disproving them.

I have followed the system of transliteration adopted in the list of quarterly publications issued by the Government of Madras except in the case of ḡ for which I have used the symbol ž to avoid confusion. In respect of words like Nāyar, Brāhman, Nāḍu and Maḍham, (Nāir, Brāhmin, Nāṭu, Maṭham,) which have two accepted spellings, I have tried to be uniform as far as possible.

I have to crave the indulgence of the readers for the large number of abbreviations used, particularly in Chapter III. A list of them is appended. They were originally introduced to save space in typing and when composing they were set in linotype straightway. When I thought of correcting them it was too late to recompose the whole matter.

It now remains for me to acknowledge my indebtedness to various persons who took an interest in the present work and helped me in various ways. First and foremost, I must mention the name of Dr. L. D. Barnett, the eminent Orientalist on the staff of the School of Oriental Studies, under whom I had the privilege of working for two years as a candidate for the Ph.D. Degree of the London University. His wide knowledge of the various aspects of Indian cultural traditions has been of invaluable assistance and a source of inspiration to me and I take this opportunity of expressing my warmest gratitude for the genuine interest he evinced in my studies and the appreciative foreword which he has been kind enough to write for my work.

I am also under obligation to Messrs. C. S. K. Pathi, M.A. (School of Oriental Studies, London), T. N. Menon B.A. (Hons.) (Office of the High Commissioner for India), R. P. Sethu Pillai, V. R. Ramachandra Dikshitar, and M. D. Raghavan (Govt. Museum, Egmore), for their valuable suggestions. The willing co-operation of Mr. P. Krishnan Nayar (Siromani) the junior lecturer, Sry. M. N. Sreedevi, B.A., L.T., Sry. M. P. Bhadramma, B.A., (Hons.) and Mr. P. V. Krishnan Nayar, B.O.L., research students, of the department, who carried out my instructions at various

stages of the publication deserves special mention in this connection.

I avail myself of this opportunity to thank the authorities of the University of Madras, for having sanctioned this publication.

The G. S. Press deserves every credit for the neat printing of this work.

C. ACHYUTA MENON.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### CHAPTER I

#### A BRIEF SURVEY OF MALAYĀLAM LITERATURE BEFORE EZUTTACCAN

	PAGE
The Sanskrit Origin	.. 2
Tamil Origin	.. 4
Rāmacaritam and Rāmakathappāṭṭu 10th Century A.D.	.. 14
Dārukavadham	.. 14
The Sanskrit period (12th to 16th Century A.D.) Unnunili-sandēsam	.. 17
The Campus and the Prabandhams	18
Punam	.. 21
Maḥamaṅgalam—Naiṣadhacampu	.. 24
Bhārata Campu	.. 27
Nārāyaṇiyam	.. 27
Popular Ballads	.. 29
Niraṇam poets	.. 30
Mādhava Paṇikkar	.. 31
Śankara Paṇikkar	.. 33
Rāma Paṇikkar—his date and family	.. 33
Ceruśśēri	.. 38
Ceruśśēri's date	.. 41
Ceruśśēri's poetry	.. 43

### CHAPTER II

#### A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Introductory	.. 45
Legendary account of Ezuttaccan's life	.. 49
His birth and family	.. 51
His name	.. 53
Ezuttaccan's date—Views of European scholars	.. 57
The views of Malabar Scholars	.. 61
A new theory	.. 64
Nāṭuvāzis	.. 66

## CHAPTER III

## ADHYĀTMA RĀMĀYANAM

	PAGE
Introductory	.. 73
The influence of Vaiṣṇavism	.. 74
The theory of the Aryan invasion of South India	.. 77
Agastya legend	.. 82
Vālmīki's epic—primarily a literary work	.. 84
Aryan superiority untenable	.. 84
The Story:—Kaikēyi's intrigue	.. 88
Bāli episode	.. 91
Śūrpanakha and Sīta	.. 97
Rākṣasas	.. 101
Adhyātma Rāmāyana	.. 102
The genesis of the Adhyātma Rāmāyana in Malayālam	.. 103
Eṣuttaccan's epic	.. 107
Eṣuttaccan's Rāma	.. 107
Eṣuttaccan's Rāvana	.. 118
Eṣuttaccan's Sīta	.. 123
Eṣuttaccan's Bharata and Hanumān	.. 124
Conclusion	.. 126

## CHAPTER IV

## ŚRĪMAHĀ BHĀRATAM

Introductory	.. 127
Mahā Bhāratam, the history of criticism	.. 130
The epic in Malayālam	.. 132
Importance of Kṛṣṇa in Eṣuttaccan's Epic	.. 135
The Central theme of Eṣuttaccan's Epic	.. 137
Eṣuttaccan's omissions—Hariścandra and Sāvitrī	.. 141
Bhagavadgīta	.. 142
Eṣuttaccan's Kṛṣṇa	.. 144
Other Characters	.. 146
Eṣuttaccan's poetry	.. 146
Love	.. 149
Heroines	.. 149
Other sentiments	.. 150

## CHAPTER V

## MINOR WORKS: CONTEMPORARIES

	PAGE
Introductory	.. 153
Brahmāṇḍapurāṇam	.. 153
Uttara Rāmāyaṇam	.. 155
Dēvīmāhātmyam	.. 155
Harināma Kīrtanam	.. 156
Cintāratnam	.. 157
Contemporaries—Rāman and Nētranārāyaṇan	.. 157
Mēppattūr Bhaṭṭatiri	.. 158
Pūntānam	.. 159

## CHAPTER VI

EṢUTTACCAN AS AN EPIC POET, PHILOSOPHER  
AND REFORMER

Eṣuttaccan as an epic poet	.. 160
Eṣuttaccan and his predecessors	.. 161
Eṣuttaccan's philosophy and religion	.. 162
Eṣuttaccan as a social and educational reformer	.. 164
His interest in military training	.. 165

## APPENDICES.

I. Lilātilakam	.. 157
II. Tamiṣakam	.. 169
III. Distinctive features of the Malayāḷam language	.. 169
IV. Matriarchy in Malabar	.. 171
V. <i>Tiśai-Col</i>	.. 173
VI. <i>Kiḷippāṭṭu or Parrot-song</i> :—	.. 174
VII. The legend about Kāḷi	.. 179
VIII. <i>A Note on Bhāgavatam and its Authorship</i>	.. 181



## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADH.:	.. Adhyātman.
A.R.	.. Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇam.
A. R. (MAL.).	.. Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇam, Malayālam.
BH.	.. Bhāratam.
B.P.	.. Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa
E.	.. Eḷuttaccan.
K. Gīta	.. Kannaśśa Gīta.
K. Arjuna	.. Kārtavīryārjuna.
K.B.S.C.	.. Kēraḷa Bhāṣa Sāhitya Caritram.
K.K.T.	.. Kuṅṅu Kuṭṭan Tampurān.
K.P.	.. Kṛṣṇappāṭṭu.
M. Bh.	.. Mahābhāratam.
P. Rāma	.. Paraśurāma.
U.R.	.. Uttara Rāmāyaṇam.
T.E.	.. Tuṅṅatteḷuttaccan.
V.R.	.. Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇam.



## CHAPTER I .

### A BRIEF SURVEY OF MALAYĀLAM LITERATURE BEFORE EZUTTACCAN'S TIME

Outstanding figures in all walks of life often eclipse lesser luminaries in the same field, who either lived before them or were their contemporaries. Even in modern times, when we have every facility for verifying our views on men of distinction, it is our experience that contributions of those who are not at the top, but who at the same time wield remarkable influence within their own sphere, are often ignored or even ascribed to greater men who engross attention. The phenomenon has added force when we are dealing with historical figures whose works have left an indelible impression on their contemporaries and continued to influence succeeding generations. It is small wonder, therefore, that a good number of Malayālis still think that there is hardly anything worth mentioning or knowing in Malayālam literature before Eẓuttaccan, who they believe, is rightly called the *Father of Letters*,<sup>1</sup> came with his dynamic personality. But scholars are not on that account to close their eyes to the realities of the case which have been brought to light by recent researches on the subject. This is not a phenomenon peculiar to Malayālam literature alone. Vālmiki and Kālidāsa in Sanskrit and Shakespeare in English, command by their extraordinary brilliance our all-absorbing attention, and we often do not think of other minor writers of the day. A closer study reveals that these minor ones often supply stimulus and inspiration to the greater giants, and it is essential that a knowledge of the former should be acquired as a pre-requisite for our study of the latter to enable us to estimate their worth and influence. In the case of our language considerable confusion, which is inevitable in the early stage of research, has arisen in the attempts to trace its early history, partly on account of the inadequacy of the materials available and partly on account of the personal predilections of scholars. The confusion is aggravated by the absence of a reliable political and social history of Malabar from the very beginning to modern times, while the peculiar features of the evolution

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1. The word Eẓuttaccan is composed of two distinct parts.

(a) Eẓuttu=letters. (b) Accan=Father, or leader.

of Malabar polity, which in its early stage presents no central figures controlling the events but a host of small representative assemblies called "Kūṭṭams", render the task of the historian exceedingly difficult.

In the circumstances a brief discussion of the origin of the Malayāḷam language will be helpful to a proper understanding of the history of its literature.

### *The Sanskritic Origin.*

The theory that is often advanced by the orthodox pandits, who are predominantly Sanskritic in their views, that Malayāḷam is derived from Sanskrit, can be dismissed easily, as it is against all principles of linguistics. The only justification for a consideration of the kind is the existence of a large number of Sanskrit words in the Malayāḷam language. The author of *Kēraḷa Kaumudī*,<sup>2</sup> whose authority is often quoted for this theory, opens his treatise with the following stanza :—

Samskr̥ta Himagiri gaḷitā  
 Drāvidā vāṇi Kaḷindajā mīlitā  
 Kēraḷa bhāṣā Gangā  
 Viharatu mē hr̥tsaraswadāsangā.<sup>3</sup>

This, divested of its poetic imagery, indicates a sanskritic origin for the 'Kēraḷa Bhāṣa'. Mr. Neḍungāḍi only throws out random observations like this and does not discuss the question. He betrays his uncertainty in the next stanza through the expression—

Āryadrāvida Vāgjātā<sup>4</sup>  
 Kēraḷiyōkti Kanyakā.

which means that it is derived from both with no definite emphasis on the priority of either. Apparently he has not considered the question seriously and has only attempted poetic imagery, suggested probably by the abundance of words of both Sanskritic and Dravidian origin in the language. If words are indicative of the origin of a language, all the living languages of the world have to be traced not to one language only but to a number of

2. A treatise on Malayāḷam grammar and rhetoric, by T. M. Kōvuṇṇi Neḍungāḍi, S. Malabar, 1895.

3. "May the Ganges of Kēraḷa Vāṇi which rose from the Mountain of Himālaya and mingled with the Kaḷindajā of Dravidian language play in the ocean of my mind.

4. The Maid of Kēraḷa Bhāṣa born of Ārya and Drāvida languages.

languages. English will have to be derived from German, French and Latin languages, and French from "Roman slang and provincial Latin raised on Celtic soil."<sup>5</sup> In Malayālam there are a good number of Arabic<sup>6</sup> and Persian words, and in modern times English words are also finding their way into it.

The existence of foreign words in a language therefore indicates only the contact—political, social, cultural, or commercial—between the different peoples who speak the languages concerned. In the case of Sanskrit the contact continued for centuries and remained a part of the culture of India, as the Āryans, who spoke that language, made India their own and never returned to their original home. Its influence on the languages of India was consequently abiding. By the time Sanskrit extended its sway to Southern India, the languages of the South had attained a level of development which permitted only absorption of the foreign element but not radical alteration in themselves. This fact is evident from the general Sanskritic vocabulary and grammatical structure of N. Indian languages, in which the Sanskritic contact occurred much earlier and was more in the nature of a transformation, while the languages of South India, owing to their comparative isolation from the north, enjoyed an independent development, retaining their individual characteristics and taking from Sanskrit only what they lacked or were in need of. In grammatical principles and structure they differed fundamentally from Sanskrit, which only enriched their vocabulary. There is no doubt that Sanskrit was for a long time the language of culture and scholarship in the whole of India, as Latin was in Europe, and that scholars who used vernaculars as media of expression often unconsciously introduced 'Sanskritisms'—if I may use the expression—in their writings, which later on profoundly affected their literary development. It was a case of assimilation and not annihilation, as happened in the north. In the case of Tamil, which had already developed an advanced literature, much earlier than its sister languages, such as Telugu, Kanarese and Malayālam, even assimilation was not an easy process, as it offered strong resistance to preserve its integrity. The other South Indian languages which lent themselves to assimilation regulated it in such a way that the result only enriched them without impairing their

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5. Short History of Indian Literature, by Ernest Horowitz. Page 146.

6. Common words like —Karār (agreement) or Takarār (obstacle or difficulty).

individuality. Indiscriminate importations of Sanskrit grammatical forms into Malayālam were not only discouraged but even subjected to merciless criticism, even at an early period by Sanskritists like Tōlan.<sup>7</sup> A serious work on Malayālam grammar and rhetoric entitled 'Lilātilakam'<sup>8</sup> appeared in the 14th Century, in which an attempt was made to analyse the linguistic tendencies of the Malayālam language and systematise Sanskrit borrowings.<sup>9</sup> A distinction was made between indigenous and imported elements, and they were classified as 'Maṇipravālam' and 'Pāṭṭu' respectively. It was not an arbitrary division but a distinction based on some definite maxims. He defines Maṇipravālam as "Bhāṣā Samskr̥tayōgam", i.e., the union or the mixture of Bhāṣā (Malayālam) and Sanskrit. He prescribes certain rules<sup>10</sup> to regulate the mixture of the two languages and discusses at length four combinations<sup>11</sup> which must have been in vogue in his time. His definition<sup>12</sup> of 'Pāṭṭu' is very significant. He insists on a preponderance of Malayālam words over the Sanskrit ones with ('Etuka' and 'Mōna')<sup>13</sup> as an essential part of the composition. As examples of Pāṭṭu Lilātilakam gives extracts from certain works which are unknown now. The quotations form ample evidence of the fact that Malayālam at that age had attained a high degree of development as an independent language and possessed sufficient literary material to need a classification of the kind. In other words, the existence of Malayālam as a developed language before scholars in Kēraḷa thought of introducing Sanskrit words in it, is proclaimed by the work 'Lilātilakam', which cuts at the root of the theory that ascribes a Sanskritic origin to the Malayālam language.

### *Tamil Origin*

We will now proceed to examine the theory that Malayālam is an offshoot of the Tamil language. The copious Dravidian vocabulary found in Malayālam language forms the basis of this

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7. *Vide* for example his criticism of verbal nouns in which Sanskrit terminations were added to Malayālam roots.

8. This is written in Sanskrit with examples in Malayālam. This has been edited with a Malayālam translation and commentary by the famous scholar A. Kṛṣṇa Piṣārōṭi.

9. *Vide* appendix I for a summary of the work.

10. *Vide* appendix I for an enunciation of these rules.

11. *Vide* appendix I.

12. *Vide* page 16 of the work.

13. Two kinds of rhymes in Dravidian languages.

theory, which bears testimony to considerable confusion of thought on the part of scholars who have endeavoured to consider the problem. The affinities of the two languages in grammatical structure and form have been to a considerable extent responsible for the lack of clear thinking on the subject. The discovery of Rāmacaritam<sup>14</sup> and Rāmakathappāṭṭu<sup>15</sup> in S. Travancore and the Jewish grants<sup>16</sup>, which are predominantly Tamil in composition and tone have provided additional arguments to the protagonists of the theory. It is therefore necessary that the question should be gone into at length to see what are exactly the implications of the various arguments advanced in support of the theory. At the very outset one point has to be cleared. The term *Tamil* denotes not a single homogeneous tongue but a group of dialects or more or less closely allied varieties of Dravidian speech that were (and still are) current in the so-called Tamil or Cēra country, which according to tradition extends from Vengadam on the north to Comorin on the south. These dialects differed from one another about as much as did the various forms of Anglo-Saxon spoken in England and the Lowlands of Scotland before the Norman Conquest. Owing to circumstances unknown to us, one of them became the sole medium of higher literature among the Tamils, and hence underwent a process of increasing refinement which made it into the so-called Śen-damil or "correct Tamil", the classical language. The other varieties are called Koḍun-damil; native tradition asserts that they were spoken in 12 regions of the Tamil country, and regards them with some contempt. One of them, the speech of Vēṇaḍu and adjacent districts was the parent of Malayāḷam, which gradually evolved, receiving influences in course of time from both Śen-damil and Sanskrit, until it reached its present form. It is the only dialect of Koḍun-damil that has developed a polished literary form. Besides, as Mr. K. M. Paṅikkar<sup>17</sup> points out, the term Tamil denoted something more than what is understood by the expression in modern times. Ancient writers often used it in the sense of vernacular language or

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14 & 15. Two works of a bilingual character dealing with the events described in the Yuddha Kāṇḍa of Rāmāyaṇa.

16. Two documents in copper plate issued in the 8th century A.D. by Bhāskara Ravi Varma Perumal and Vīra Kēraḷa Cakravarti, the then ruling overlord of the west coast, granting monopoly of trade in certain articles to the Jews of Cranganore.

17. Indian Art and Letters, Vol. II, No. 2, page 81 (1927).

Bhāsa<sup>18</sup> as we often come across references like Pāṇḍi-Tamil, Kari-nāttu-Tamil in popular usage. The vocabulary of the language of Malabar is referred to as Tiśai-e-col<sup>18a</sup> by Tamil grammarians like Tolkāppia Muni<sup>19</sup>, whose work is the earliest complete grammar of Tamil that has survived. It is said that Malanāṭṭu-tamil is regarded as distinct from Śen-Tamil, and is classed as one variety of Koḍun-Tamil dialects. Evidence from Tamil classics has given room for difference of views about the extent of Tamilakam<sup>20</sup> in ancient times. No scholar has so far made any serious suggestion tracing Kanarese or Telugu to Tamil, and it is strange that an attempt of the kind is made in respect of Malayālam alone, which stands in the same sort of relationship to Tamil as those branches of the Dravidian family. Among western scholars whose views on the subject deserve every attention the names of Dr. Gundert<sup>21</sup> and Dr. Caldwell must be prominently mentioned. The former<sup>22</sup>, though he has often referred to Malayālam as a sister language, is inclined to the view that it is one of the Kodun-Tamil category, while the latter is more emphatic in his assertion that Malayālam is an offshoot of Tamil<sup>23</sup>. Both scholars have not examined the question in detail, and it is not possible to refer to any of their specific arguments for scrutiny and answer. The credit of having analysed the subject from the point of view of a grammarian and linguist goes to the late lamented Professor A. R. Rāja Rājavarma. The learned introduction to his monumental work entitled "Kēraḷa Pāṇinīyam" opens with the statement that the ancient form of Malayālam was Kodun-damil, which is based on the examination of important cognate words in both the languages such as Mūkku (മൂക്കു) Kaṇ (കണ്) Cevi (ചെവി) and

18 The word Bhāsa also has a similar story. In Malayālam it is often used in the sense 'Malayālam language' even from the time of the author of Līlātīlakam, who defines Manīpravālam as "Bhāsa-Samskr̥tayōgam".

18a. Vide Appendix V

19 The author of the ancient Tamil grammar Tolkāppiam. Page 26, Kēraḷa Bhāsa Sāhitya Caritram

20 Pages 12-14. The Tamils 1800 years ago by V. Kanakasabhai vide appendix II for a note on the subject.

21 The author of Malayālam English Dictionary, and Malayalam Grammar and several articles on Malayālam language.

"It has been found difficult to draw the line of demarcation between Malayālam and Tamil words. These two languages of old differed rather as dialects of the same member of the Dravidian family than as separate languages." Page 3 of the preface to the Dictionary.

22 Page 1 of his Malayālam grammar.

23 Comparative Dravidian Grammar, p. 10.

rules of grammar relating to gender and case. The same argument applies to other Dravidian languages, and its force as a special plea in favour of the Tamil origin theory is next to nothing. In the course of his arguments he is constrained to point out six distinctive features<sup>24</sup> of Malayālam which distinguish it from Tamil as an independent language, and which, he holds, Malayālam acquired in the course of its evolution after its separation from Tamil. This part of his discussion is of immense value, and in fact constitutes his main contribution to the problem. So long as the date of this separation is uncertain, the distinctive features pointed out by him can be also taken to prove the opposite view as the author of *Lilātilakam* pertinently asked six centuries ago. His argument about 'Khilōpasamgraham', literally (retention of old usages) amounts to an admission of the separation of Malayālam from the original Dravidian family before Sen-Tamil developed a literature of its own. In tracing the beginnings of a language, undue reliance on its literature is often misleading. The growth of literature is dependent on various factors, historical or otherwise, the absence of which may render it a mere medium for the exchange of uncultivated thought, a *patois*. Languages like Puṣṭu of Afghanistan and Tuḷu<sup>25</sup> of S. Kanara have not even developed an alphabet of their own. But there is no reason to doubt their antiquity on that ground, which is proved by the facts of history.

The evidence based on Rāmacaritam and the Jewish grants does not stand scrutiny, as materials<sup>26</sup> relating to the same period or even an earlier date available in north and central Kēraḷa show a different tendency. The personal endings of verbs which form a prominent feature of Tamil<sup>27</sup> are absent in them. Travancore

24. Vide Appendix III.

25. The language of the Bantas and Embrāns of S. Kanara. Though it has no alphabet, it seems to have developed a kind of literature. It has strong affinities with Kanarese, Malayālam and Tamil, and the alphabet of either of the former two is used by writers.

26. \* Veṭṭattu Swarūpam Ariyēdatendennāl:—Nammuṭe Swarūpattilēkku Varēndumtuka Iccaran Vakkal Kanni Nāyaril aṭakkēndiyirikkunnu.

Kēraḷa Bhāṣā Sāhitya Caritram by R. Nārāyaṇa Paṇikkar, Vol. I, page 10.

\* വെട്ടത്തുസ്വരൂപം അറിയേണ്ടതെന്തെന്നാൽ:—നമ്മുടെ സ്വരൂപത്തിലേക്കു വരേണ്ടതുക ഇപ്പോൾ വക്കൽ കന്നി ഞായറിൽ അടയ്ക്കേണ്ടിയിരിക്കുന്നു.

27. For example:—

Tamil  
Malayālam

=Avan Vandān തമിരം—അവൻ വന്തൻ  
=Avan Vannu മലയാളം—അവൻ വന്നു

history records repeated inroads into S. Travancore by Pāṇḍiyan Kings, and the territorial division south of Quilon was always under Tamilian influence. It has been bilingual<sup>28</sup> with a strong Tamilian bias in character. Both Rāmacaritam and Rāmakathappāṭṭu belong to this part of Travancore, and it is easy therefore to account for their Tamilian tone. The same argument applies to the semi-dramatic poems like *Kamsavadham*<sup>29</sup> and *Aivarnāṭakam*,<sup>30</sup> which bear a striking similarity in language and expression to Rāmacaritam and had their origin in the eastern borderlands of Malabar. The spoken tongue of Kasargode, S. Kanara, which was once a part of Malabar with its Kanarese bias, tells the same story. The literary document called *Payyannūr Paṭṭōla* if discovered may strengthen the argument. The Tamilian tone of the Jewish grants is due to the fact that it was granted by a Perumāḷ who was no doubt a Tamilian, and it was usual to use the ruler's language for all important public documents in those times. Besides, during the Perumāḷ period Tamil was the court language and the language of culture, as Sanskrit was in the period that followed. This fact explains why *Silappadikāram*, the famous Tamil classic ascribed to Iḷankōvaṭikaḷ, the brother of Śeran Cenkuṭṭuvan,<sup>31</sup> was written in Tamil and not in the language of the country.

The question of the personal endings of verbs raises a philological issue. It is still a matter of doubt, whether Malayāḷam dropped them after its separation from the original parental tongue or Tamil introduced them as a reform when its literature developed and strict grammatical principles came to be enforced by writers. The term *Śen-Tamil*, which like *Samskr̥tam* implies the pure Tamil as distinguished from the impure spoken Tamil or Koḍun-tamil, indicates the cleavage that once existed between the spoken and the written tongue. Malayāḷam has witnessed no such phenomenon. Philologists often assert that language in

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28. The language of ballads like *Iravi kutṭi pillai pōr pāṭṭu*, which are comparatively recent, will prove this fact.

29. The story of Kamsa rendered into songs for stage purposes. Its vocabulary and tone bear witness to Tamilian affinities. It is a popular entertainment in Cittūr and other villages of the Palghat Taluq, S. Malabar.

30. This deals with the story of the Pāṇḍavas. It is on a par with *Kamsavadham*.

31. The name of a Perumāḷ who ruled the Cēra Kingdom with Cranganore (Cochin State), as his headquarters.

its early stages is characterised by simplicity of construction and usage, and that in the course of its growth introduces numerous restrictions to preserve its purity and dignity from vulgar influences. If this view is to be accepted, it has to be assumed that personal endings of verbs are a subsequent innovation and their absence denotes an earlier stage. If on the other hand, it is held that personal endings of verbs are an unsafe guide to the development of a language and that they form only one of its peculiarities, the argument does not lead us to any positive conclusion.<sup>32</sup> On philological grounds, therefore, it is not easy to maintain, as often assumed by some, that Malayālam as a language came much later in point of time than Tamil inasmuch as the evidence available points to a parallel development of both.

The prevalence of the matriarchal system<sup>33</sup> of inheritance among the Nāyars and Tiyyas of Malabar is another factor to be reckoned with before we arrive at a definite conclusion on the issue. Sociologists<sup>34</sup> do not agree as to the priority of matriarchy to patriarchy. Some even regard both as independent developments arising out of the peculiar conditions under which they grew, but the majority seems to favour the view that matriarchy was an earlier phase in the evolution of society when it was in an unsettled state, and that Patriarchy synchronised with the dawn of the sense of stability and permanent relationship among the members of the primitive clan. In either case, the conclusion that one followed the other lacks sufficient evidence in its support and it seems reasonable to recognise the fundamental difference between the cultural background of both. Even supposing that a transition from one to the other took place in S. India, it must have been at a time unknown to recorded history. It may look strange that people who were separated only by a range of mountains differed so widely between themselves in general culture and social usages. Possibly this natural barrier once stood in the way of their mutual contact except on occasions when men of heroic mould seeking adventure crossed the mountains to meet their neighbours, not necessarily on friendly terms. Even if there had been constant contact, it is doubtful whether one system would have undergone material changes or merged into the other. Centuries of Perumāḷ rule governed by the patriarchal system of inheritance were follow-

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32. Dr. L. D. Barnett, the well known orientalist is of this view.

33. Vide Appendix IV.

34. (a) *Primitive Society*, by Hartland, Ch. I.

(b) See also *At Home with the Savage*, by P. H. Driberg, p. 76.

ed by the restoration of the original system (matriarchal) in respect of royal successions in Kēraḷa. This is a fact for the social historian to note and elucidate. Either the Malayāḷis and Tamilians remained without contact for centuries, developing their respective institutions, or they belonged to two distinct racial stocks that came in contact with each other in one stage of their evolution and retained some common features as a result thereof. Both clung to their systems of inheritance, though historical events forced them to live together for some time, without being deeply influenced one by the other from the earliest times to the present day.

Differences in cultural traditions are by no means an isolated phenomenon, as they extend their influence on other aspects of life also, particularly on the language of the people concerned, which constitutes the most significant factor in the evolution and growth of human society. Cultural and linguistic affinities are inseparable; where the existence of the one is doubtful it is theoretically unsound to assume the other.

These considerations form the basis of the position seriously assumed by scholars like Āttur Kṛṣṇa Piṣārōṭi,<sup>35</sup> C. N. Ananta Rāmayya Śāstri,<sup>36</sup> and R. Nārāyaṇa Paṅikkār<sup>37</sup> that Malayāḷam, though belonging to the Dravidian family, had an independent development subject to the influence of Tamil at one stage and that of Sanskrit at another. The large number of folk-songs—many of which still remain to be collected<sup>38</sup>—which contain no trace of TAMILIAN or Sanskrit influence strongly supports this contention. The changes which a literature often undergoes do not generally affect the spoken tongue, which is preserved in ballads and folk-songs in its unadulterated form, and in determining the linguistic tendencies of a language the folk songs are far better guides than literary productions. The group of songs known as

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35. The introductory portion of his work entitled *Sāhityacaritram* is devoted to a discussion of this theme.

36. Once Professor of Malayāḷam in the Arts College, Travancore. In his articles on the derivation of Dravidian words he expounds the theory of a parent language for all the current languages of S. India, from which Tamil, Telugu, Canarese and Malayāḷam grew later.

37. Pages 15-28 of his Kēraḷa bhāṣā *Sāhityacaritram*.

38. Page 3 of the introduction by Percy Macqueen, I.C.S., to *The Ballads of N. Malabar*, Vol. 1, by the author.

Vāṭakkan Pāṭṭukal,<sup>39</sup> *Cāveṛ* songs of S. Malabar,<sup>40</sup> and various other songs about the heroes in different parts of Kēraḷa, and the Tōrṛam Pāṭṭukal<sup>41</sup> constitute this variety of literature (which so far has not received the amount of recognition it deserves from scholars). It may be noted in passing that the desire to preserve the purity of the language and exhibit its innate worth and potentiality as a vehicle of literary expression, led some writers, especially poets,<sup>42</sup> in modern times to adopt a style called *Pacca Malayālam* (pure Malayālam), in which words other than pure Malayālam were deliberately rejected.

The foregoing discussion gives us an idea of the various influences at work in the shaping of the Malayālam language and literature at various stages of its history. In the earliest stage, ballads, folk songs, devotional songs and their innumerable varieties form the dominant feature. These had an uninterrupted growth till the beginning of the Perumāḷ period, when Tamil became the official language and scholars began to cultivate it. This period naturally left its mark on literature and official documents, which were predominantly Tamilian in tone and character. It should not be forgotten at the same time, that this change affected only the literature and not the spoken tongue, which found expression in ballads

39. Vide the author's *Ballads of N. Malabar*, Vol. I, Madras University Publication (1935).

40. Songs about the heroes who fought and died at the Māmānkam festival at Tirunāvāya on behalf of their Rāja of Waḷḷuvanād defying the authority of the Zamorin.

41. Religious devotional songs about Bhadrakālī, Ayyappan and Vēṭṭakaran, and other ancient deities of Malabar. The following is an extract from Dārukavadham:—

“Nālvēliyennaṭuppu kīri  
Poikkiṭāramenna vellikkiṭāramerri  
Māniyalum cōlayinnu nīr kōri  
Koṭuvannu . . . kañṇi veccu vāñṇi . . .  
Eḷu vaṭṭam kōri upajivikkattuṭaṇṇi . . .”

“നാൽവേലിയെന്നടുപ്പുകീറി  
പൊയ്ക്കിട്ടാരമെന്ന വെള്ളിക്കിട്ടാരമേറി  
മാനിയലും ചോലയിന്നു നീർകോരി  
കൊണ്ടുവന്നു.....കുഞ്ഞിവെച്ചുവാങ്ങി.....  
ഏഴുവട്ടംകോരി ഉപജീവിക്കത്തുടങ്ങി.....”

42. (a) *Nālu Bhāṣa Kāvyaṅṅal* by Kundūr Nārāyaṇa Menon.

(b) *Nērcā* by Mahākavi Uḷḷur S. Paramēśwara Aiyar are instances

in point.

(c) Essays like “Sama Sṛṣṭikal” in Rasikarañjini,

and composition of that kind, and continue to be the chief medium for the expression of popular emotions and ideas till comparatively modern times. The Tamilian influence lingered even after the end of the Perumāl period, which according to a majority of writers synchronised with the commencement of the Kollam era (825 A.D.). The exit of the Perumāls from the political stage was the signal for the leading communities—Nāyars and Nambūdiris, to step into their place and they through a common understanding wielded the secular and religious authority between themselves. Political power naturally went to the fighting Nāyars, while the Nambūdiris became custodians of religion. It was a time when religion had a firm hold on people and political authority often yielded to the dictation of religion. The Nambūdiris, owing to their peculiar position of alliance with the royal families and Nāyar aristocrats, exercised enormous influence on the politics of the day and took advantage of the situation to consolidate their position. They patronised Sanskrit and a systematic cultivation of that language<sup>43</sup> and literature became the fashion of the day among the upper classes. The tendency to introduce Sanskrit words into popular language and literature made its appearance for the first time during this period. The Vidūṣakan in 'Kūṭiyāṭṭam,'<sup>44</sup> who contributed the element of humour, had to cater to an audience consisting mostly of Nambūdiris and Nāyar aristocrats. To win their applause he had to exhibit his cleverness in the Sanskrit language. As all of them would not be equally conversant in that language, he was obliged to use a mixture of both Sanskrit and Malayālam. As he was keen more on humour than linguistic propriety, his mixture often verged on the ridiculous. When this device became a regular feature, such compositions grew in volume, making exception the rule. The result was the growth of a new style of composition called 'Maṇipravālam' in which Sanskritisms dominated. It appealed to a class of writers who produced a good number of maṇipravāla campus during the period. The merciless distortion of the language of the people under this process became so severe in certain cases that satirists like

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43. There is even now a custom among the Nambūdiri Brāhmins that their boys should speak Sanskrit during their Upanayanam period—the period when they receive instruction in the Vēdas, which extends up to the 16th year and are invested with the sacred thread. This became a mere formality in course of time, and a knowledge of half a dozen words relating to certain essential things often answered the purpose.

44. A kind of histrionic art which is exclusively practised by the Cākkīyār community in Kēraḷa. They staged only Sanskrit dramas, introducing many novel features in it. Ordinarily a performance lasts for eight days.

Tōlan were provoked to hold it up for ridicule.<sup>45</sup> While it must be conceded that this tendency among scholars resulted in the production of some first rate campus like Rāmāyaṇa Campu<sup>46</sup> by Punam and Bhāṣā Naiṣadha Campu<sup>47</sup> by Maṣamangalam and Sandēśa-kāvya like Uṇṇunīli Sandēśam,<sup>48</sup> it has also to be admitted that the original genius of the Malayāḷam language suffered considerably under this hybrid experiment. There were instances in which Sanskrit slōkas with not even a single Malayāḷam word appeared in these campus and passed for a bhāṣa composition.<sup>49</sup> Fortunately this development attracted only a limited class of writers. Poets like Kaṇṇaśśan<sup>50</sup> and Ceṟuśśēri<sup>51</sup> used Sanskrit words with Malayāḷam endings and preserved the individuality of their mother tongue. Their method tended only to enrich the Malayāḷam vocabulary but never interfered with its innate beauty. The other current, which reflected the indigenous elements and found expression in popular ballads and songs, showed the potentiality of the language. No bias of any kind disturbed its simple and dignified flow which was inspired by the country's natural beauty and the exploits of its heroes.

These developments existed as parallel currents and the style of a work depended upon the personal predilections of the author. Sanskritists usually chose the Campu style and the purists sang their 'native woodnotes wild'. Eminent writers like Kaṇṇaśśan and Ceṟuśśēri, who were the real inheritors of the genuine linguistic

45. Adding Sanskrit endings to Malayāḷam words was one of the devices of the Vidūṣakan in Kūṭiyāṭṭam. When that spread to literature, Tōlan is believed to have ridiculed it by compositions of the following kind:—

Mulaññasana srṣṭinkaḷ Vilāññum cērjalōcanē.

‘മുളഞ്ഞസനസൃഷ്ടികൾ വിളഞ്ഞും ചേർജ്ജലോചനം.’

Cēr = mud and jam is a derivative of the root ‘jan’ in Sanskrit to indicate the meaning ‘born of’—thus Cēr-ja = ‘mud-born’ (lotus).

46, 47 and 48. These are referred to in detail in the course of the chapter.

49. For example the slōka that begins with

“Vācam mē Sṛṇu Vallabhēti Vacane Vayyātyamāpadyatē.”

—In Naiṣadha Campu.

“വായം മേ ശൃണു വല്ലഭേതിവചനേ വൈയാത്യമാപദ്യതേ

ഘോരജനനിതിചേതഥാവിച പൃഥഗ്ഭാവോ മഹാനാപതേത്

മൽപ്രാണാണുതിയുക്തമേതദധുനാ കീരോക്തിവൽ ഭാസതേ

കഷ്ടം! കുരതരചേതനാ കഥമഹം സന്ദേഷ്ഠമദ്യാരഭേ.” (നൈഷധ ചമ്പു)

50. The author of Kaṇṇaśśa Rāmāyaṇam and the youngest member of the Niranam family.

51. The author of Kṛṣṇappāṭṭu, a classic in Malayāḷam literature.

and literary traditions, took into account the new tendencies and endeavoured to fuse the best elements of both. They aimed at the creation of a new literary style, which assumed definite shape with Eḷuttaccan, who by combining the charming beauty of the native tongue with the rich variety of the Sanskrit set the literary standard for all time. This general survey will be helpful in understanding the general tone and literary merits of typical works that appeared before Eḷuttaccan. I shall briefly notice them below.

### RĀMACARITAM AND RĀMAKATHAPPĀṬṬU<sup>52</sup> 10TH CENTURY A.D.

These two works are considered by Mahākavi Uḷḷūr and others to be the earliest literary works in Malayāḷam. Their style and the preponderance of genuine Tamil words contained therein and the place of their origin, however, belie this contention. The marked difference in language and the mode of expression noticeable in contemporary records found in other parts of Malabar confirm the suspicion aroused by their linguistic peculiarities. Another school<sup>53</sup> of literary criticism has definitely declared them to be bilingual productions. Their literary merit is beyond question, and on that ground they are no doubt assets to the Malayāḷam or Tamil literature, as the case may be. The "Yuddhakāṇḍa" of the Rāmāyaṇa story is the theme for both. The realistic description of the Rāma-Rāvaṇa war is undoubtedly a remarkable poetic achievement which has earned for the authors an undying fame and a permanent place in the world of letters. One of the Travancore Rājas is supposed to be the author of Rāmacaritam and Rāmakathappāṭṭu is assigned to one Ayyi Piḷḷaiāśān.

#### *Dārukavadham.*

This belongs to the category of Tōṟṟampāṭṭus,<sup>54</sup> which can be safely assigned to the period of Rāmacaritam if not earlier. There is no trace of Tamil influence in this. Its general tone and expression entitles it to be counted as the earliest literary production in genuine Malayāḷam. As it is meant to be sung at ceremonial rituals performed for the propitiation of the Mother (goddess Kāḷi) its

52. Vide Introduction to an edition of the work published by Mahākavi Uḷḷūr Paramēśwara Aiyar, M.A., B.L., under the title 'Prācīna Malayāḷa Mātrkakaḷ.'

53. Vide pages 163-180 of Kēraḷa Bhāṣā Sāhityacaritram, Vol. I.

54. Vide page 47, *Ibid.*

vivid description and effective narration couched in the most melodious language have a special appeal. The story of Kālī's encounter with Dāruka, well-known in Kēraḷa folklore and his heroic death at the hands of the Mother, that is told in this devotional poem has a majesty all its own. One has to hear it sung if its beauty is to be appreciated. When the scene changes from one of serenity to that of challenge and combat, the language and tune also vary to suit the occasion, which culminates in the riotous dance of the worshippers and the inspired utterance of the oracle, which gives the finishing touch to the performance. Though the popular name of the piece is Dārukavadham, the author has called it *Kālināṭakam*.<sup>55</sup> It is really a drama of dance and song preceded by ceremonial worship and its effect on the audience is tremendous. Straight narration in select words familiar to the average man, recited with an artistic eye to their effect and variety so as to suit the context, gives the song a tone and dignity at once admirable and unique. It is a pity that the people at large have lost touch with its poetic beauty, owing to the monopolistic tendency of a class of Kālī worshippers who buried its sacredness in superstition and concealed it from public gaze.

### *The Dravidian Period.*

The early period of Malayāḷam literature which we have hitherto surveyed may be said to have come to an end with the disappearance of the Perumāls, i.e., 825 A.D. although such arbitrary divisions in literary histories are often misleading. Literary influences take time to establish themselves and they disappear also gradually at the same time leaving some permanent traces of their contact. The period that followed may be termed, from the nature of its general tendencies, 'Dravidian,' as the language used in it was still relatively free from excessive Sanskritism. Though the political influence of the Perumāls no longer had any living force, the cultural traditions left by them had already borne fruit and begun to affect the literary outlook of the people. We have so far not found any poetical work of outstanding merit belonging to this period, which seems to have inclined more towards scholarship and erudition than creative endeavour. Such a tendency often favours the development of prose, which is essentially the medium of intellectual effort, while poetry is the language of imagination and intuition, which stimulate all original works of art. A Malayāḷam

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55. Literally 'the drama of Kālī.'

commentary of Kauṭilya's Arthaśāstra,<sup>56</sup> which bears a family resemblance to the language of the Jewish grants, is therefore, a typical work of the period. The Ms. contains only the commentary and not the original 'Sūtras.' The commentary is not in the nature of an explanation of the literal meaning, but elucidates, or discourses upon points raised by Kauṭilya, the author of the original work. The customs of Malabar are in many respects peculiar, and where Kauṭilya's theories do not apply, the commentator draws the attention of the reader to them. The archaism<sup>57</sup> of the language makes the commentary a hard nut for the modern Malayāli reader to crack. It is a remarkable work, throwing considerable light on the dark corners of Kauṭilya's theories, and is the only one of its kind in the South Indian languages. References to contemporary customs and manners, particularly about royal succession and Marumakkattāyam system are of particular interest to the social historian.

The copper plate grants issued by Bhāskara Ravi Varman and Virarāghavacakravarti also belong to this period. They are important documents for the political historian, as they give us an insight into the intricacies of Malabar polity in those times.<sup>58</sup> Its linguistic importance has already been discussed when dealing with the origin of the language.

An outstanding production of the period is the Malayālam rendering of Kamba-rāmāyaṇam used for Pāvakūttu<sup>59</sup> in Kāli temples. For a long time this remained in Ms. form in the custody of the professional conductors of the Pāvakūttu, who were unwilling to part with it lest their rivals should have access to it. The art maintained a guruśiṣya tradition, having different schools with prominent persons as founders for each. Each school has its own ver-

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56. A portion of this has been published recently by the Travancore Government. The Malayālam Department of the Madras University is now engaged on a critical edition of the work.

57. The Madras University edition which is being prepared contains explanatory notes for such expressions and usages.

58. Vide pages 34-36, *Malabar Gazetteer, Cochin State Manual*, pp. 37-38.

59. This is a kind of shadow-play conducted by two men who exhibit shadow characters on the screen and speak for them. The performance is regarded as sacred by the masses who attend it in the same spirit of devotion as they visit temples. Kamba-rāmāyaṇam is generally the literature followed by the conductors, who very often deviate into learned discussions on philosophical and literary subjects in the form of a dialogue. This is often done in a competitive spirit.

sion to suit its favourite theories on religion and philosophy. It is a privilege to listen to their discourses and the subtleties of their discussion, which are animated by competitive enthusiasm, and there is hardly any subject on which they have not something to say. The prose they use is a kind of "impassioned prose" with all the imageries and figures of speech with which we are familiar in poetry, and is entertaining to a degree. The very complex nature of the literature defied any attempt at standardisation; but the general framework on which the art is based is fundamentally the same throughout. The difference is in the detailed execution and the presentation of the theme. We find its counterpart in the 'Prabandhams' of Cākkyārs' of the succeeding age, who entertained the higher classes of society in the temples of Viṣṇu and Śiva.

The present writer has had access to two or three Mss. of this 'Kūttukavi', as it is called. Each varied considerably from the other, but there were substantial agreements too. If printed, they would run into two or three volumes of four hundred pages each. One volume was published a few years ago by a member of the profession.<sup>60</sup>

*The Sanskritic period—12th to 16th Century A.D. Uṇṇunīli Sandēsam.*

This period witnessed a good number of notable contributions to Malayālam literature, although a vast majority of them betray their hybrid character too glaringly. The interest of Malayālam writers seems to have centred on three main branches of Sanskrit literature, viz., the Sandēśa Kāvyaṃs, the Campus; and the Khanda Kāvyaṃs. Among the Sandēśa Kāvyaṃs Uṇṇunīli Sandēśam is pre-eminent. It takes its name from the heroine Uṇṇunīli of Vaṭakkankūr, in N. Travancore, and is written on the model of Kālidāśa's Mēghasandēśa (the cloud messenger). While Kālidāśa has employed the inanimate cloud<sup>61</sup> as messenger, his fourteenth century Malayālam imitator entrusts the message to a king whose name is Ādityavarman. The name of the hero is not mentioned,

60. *Kamba-rāmāyaṇa Caritam* by A. Rāman Pillai. He has only published the Kamba-rāmāyaṇa Story. The discourses that form the bulk of the literature have been omitted, perhaps for professional reasons.

61. Some prefer birds as messengers: for example:—*Śukasandēśam* by Lakṣmīdāsan Nambūdiri and *Kōkila Sandēśam* by Uddanḍa Sāstri of Tanjore. Both the works are in Sanskrit, and belong to this period. The scenes in both are laid in Malabar.

but he is believed to be a Raja.<sup>61a</sup> The poem opens with a description of the dawn at Trivandrum, where the hero was dropped by a Yakṣi,<sup>62</sup> who had carried him away while asleep from the bedroom of his beloved. By chance he sees there Ādityavarman, King of Tripapur, who is requested to deliver his message to his love, from whom he was mercilessly separated by the mischievous nymph. The route he is to take is described in detail. The descriptions of places possess considerable historical value, as they abound in referēces to contemporary royal personages, throwing light on the histories of their dynasties. The mention of Virakēraḷavarma, the Raja of Kollam, who seems to have extended his conquests beyond the Ghats to Madura and Tinnevely, is particularly important.

Lyrical fervour, enlivened by personal touches, constitutes the main charm of this piece of literature, in which love in its subjective aspect<sup>63</sup> is the dominant sentiment. There is also considerable scope for the poet to exhibit his descriptive power. As a Sandēśam Uṇṇunīli Sandēśam can hold its own against any other masterpiece of its kind in Sanskrit or other languages, and is decidedly one of the classics of Malayāḷam literature.

*The "Campus" and the "Prabandhams."*

Campu, as already noted, is a composition in mixed prose and verse. Its poetry follows the rules of Sanskrit prosody, but its prose is not ordinary prose. It has rhythmic flow, harmonious sound combinations, alliteration, and in certain places rhymes, too. The Ōṭṭan Tuḷḷal type of composition, which Kuncan Nambiyār popularised by his humorous works centuries later, has much in common, with the prose in campu. Maṇipravāḷam writers appear to have started this style of campu prose in imitation of the prose of Sanskrit campu, but their sense of music born of their familiarity with their own indigenous songs, induced them to introduce an element of rhythm into it and give it a character more suited to poetry than for prose. It runs on lines eminently fitted for narration. The percentage of Malayāḷam words which suited their

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61a. Scholars have raised a controversy on this, but the point is still unsettled. The status of the messenger suggests that another Rāja is the hero. There is also room for a fresh theory that both the author and the hero are the same and the events described are purely imaginary although the characters are real.

62. A celestial being that interferes in the love affairs of men.

63. Called Sṛṅgāra, in the technical language of Sanskrit rhetoricians.

style better than foreign words was naturally higher in prose than in the poetical parts. In descriptions the lines run on without stop as ideas are added like links to a chain. The monotony of the long-drawn stanzas written in Sanskrit metres is often relieved by the vigour and continuity of these lines, which carry the reader on the wings of their music and impress him with the virtues of variety. Episodes from the Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata, the inexhaustible store-house of oriental poetry and romance, usually form the themes of these compositions.<sup>64</sup> As these themes give no scope for originality in the plot or sequence of events in the story, the poets resort to various devices, viz. introduction of extraneous matter and attention to details. Reference to contemporary social usages or personalities is one of their favourite devices. This is often accompanied by satirical comments<sup>65</sup> implied rather than explicit. The figure of speech of Slēṣa is the medium that is usually used for these comments, and generally Campu writers are very skilful in it. It demands extraordinary poetic talent and marvellous command of language.

This species of literature was very much in demand among the Cākkyārs for their 'Kūttu'.<sup>66</sup> In fact it was the 'Kūttu' that created a demand for this special variety of composition. The Kūttu was an essential item during festivals in temples of Viṣṇu and Śiva, as was the Pāvakūttu in Kālī temples. The Harikathā Kālakṣēpam is its counterpart in the Tamil districts, but there is one notable difference between the two. Kālakṣēpams are devotional in their form and technique, and have music as an integral part, but in Cākkyār Kūttu music has no place, and humour is its dominant note. Devotion is left to the option of the performer, and is never a compulsory item. The privileges which the Cākkyār enjoyed at

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64. Cellūr Māhātmyam, Tenkailāsanāthodayam and Nārāyaṇīyam are exceptions to this rule. These deal with the legends about the temples of Cellūr, Trichūr and Tripūnītura.

65. Nambiyār cultivated it as an art.

66. This is one of the most interesting and cultural institutions in Kēraḷa. It consists of humorous narration of Purānic stories by Cākkyārs (professional actors and reciters) for the edification of the worshippers during festival seasons. The Cākkyārs' humour and power of satire are proverbial. He cleverly introduces contemporary events and personalities into his narration, and his comments become all the more biting and severe in tone when the persons concerned are present, and had a salutary effect on society. Royalty and aristocracy usually were the victims of his satire. As there was no other means of ventilating public grievances in those days, Cākkyārs were considered to be the spokesmen of the people.

these performances bear ample testimony to the importance of his role in the general scheme of society in those days. He was licensed, so to speak, to laugh at the whole world, excluding himself of course. Even kings were not free from the wide range of his satire.<sup>67</sup> The convention that a Cākkyār should not be disturbed during his discourse by questions or answers to his comments and that he should make his own selection of the topic for his performance is even now adhered to. This arrangement gave him every freedom and facility to choose a suitable theme into which the events or personalities he wanted to comment upon could be conveniently introduced. The demand which grew in course of time for a similar institution outside the temple indicates its immense popularity and the realisation of its advantages by the people at large. It led to the creation of a new venture called "Pāṭhakam," which had none of the ceremonial formalities of 'Cākkyār-kūttu' but retained all its cultural features with the further advantage that there was a wider public to enjoy it. While the Cākkyār-kūttu should never be performed outside the temple precincts, the Pāṭhakam could be conducted in any decent house of the locality. The new institution found a new class of professionals called 'Nambiyārs' as its custodians, who occupied a slightly lower scale in the social sphere than the Cākkyārs.<sup>68</sup>

The literature which falls into the category of the 'Campus' and the 'Prabandhams' is indeed prodigious in bulk. It no doubt belongs to the Maṇipravāḷa variety, and is highly Sanskritic in tone and character. There is considerable scope for individual talent. Neither the Cākkyār nor the Nambiyār is bound by the literature that is supplied to him, nor it is his chief inspiration. He generally takes up a most typical passage, the meaning of which he interprets or elucidates. It is the method of his interpretation that calls for the display of his personal talent, which by the way is the most entertaining part of his performance. In the course of his exposition every conceivable topic will be brought in. Each

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67. One King of Cochin who is known in history as 'Saktan Rāja' when he was subjected to severe criticism by a Cākkyār took objection to his remarks and killed him on the spot. This is the only instance of its kind in the annals of the institution.

68. Both communities are considered to be Nambūdiri outcastes. Whether the institutions of Cākkyār-kūttu and Pāṭhakam owed their existence to these respective communities, or whether they later created the respective institutions associated with them is a matter not free from doubt. They are however mutually inseparable.

Cākkyār or Nambiyār handles a situation in his own way, which infuses freshness into an otherwise monotonous puranic episode. Their interpretations appear to be extempore, but have a genuine literary background, as they are generally good scholars trained by able teachers that have preceded them in the line. Though themes were more or less identical, variety in the method formed the soul of the institution, which naturally produced in course of time different schools of thought, each having its own group of writers to help them with the materials they were in need of.

The very nature of the institutions and their requirements rendered the literature that sprang out of it highly varied in details but having a uniformity in general outline. The writers in the early stage were anonymous, which led to confusion as to the identity of the authors. Different readings, repetitions, borrowings are therefore, a common feature of this branch of literature; and the most essential and interesting part of it is still in the custody of the professionals and is a sealed book to outsiders. What has been published so far is only the material which has been supplied to the professionals by eminent writers at various stages.

### *Punam.*

Among this class of writers Punam is decidedly the outstanding figure.

Two slōkas<sup>69</sup> make Punam a contemporary of one Māna vikraman, a Zamorin of Calicut, and the well-known but conceited scholar poet Uddaṇḍa Śāstrikaḷ of Tanjore. The two are connected

69. (a) The Slōka that begins with:—

Tārilttanvikaṭāksāñcala . . .

“താരിൽത്തന്നീകടാക്ഷാഞ്ചലമധുപകലാരമ, രാമാജനാനം  
നീരിൽത്താൻബാണ, വൈരകരനികരതമോമണ്ഡലീചണ്ഡഭാനോ,  
നേരത്തോരോരു നീയം തൊടുകറി കളയായ്ക്കുന്നമേക്ഷ കളിക്കും  
നേരത്തിന്നിപ്പറം വിക്രമനവര, ധരാഹന്ത! കല്പാന്തതോയേ.”

This is ascribed to Punam.

(b) The Slōka that begins with:—

Adhikēraḷamagyagirah

“അധികേരളമഗ്രഗിരഃ കവയഃ  
കവയന്തു വയന്തു ന താൻ വിനമഃ  
പുളകോഭ്ഗമകരീവചഃ പ്രസരം  
പുനമേവ പുനഃ പുനരസ്തമഹേ.”

This is ascribed to Uddaṇḍan.

with the famous literary academy, founded by one of the Zamorins. It consisted of 18½ select poets and scholars of the period. The eighteen were sanskrit poets, and the appellation of 'half-poet' was given to the Malayālam poet Punam. The tradition gives us an idea of the dominant influence of Sanskrit in the court of the Zamorins in those days ; but it does only scant justice to the Malayālam poet whose reputation has survived till to-day, while a good many of his so-called superior contemporaries have been clean forgotten.

Who exactly was the Zamorin who presided over this literary academy<sup>70</sup> is not easy to determine, as the particulars available are confusing. In one of the ślōkas referred to, the Zamorin is praised for his valour and is described as the 'Sun that dispels the darkness of his enemies' ; and it is believed that this epithet refers to a Śaktan<sup>70a</sup> Zamorin. There are three Śaktan Zamorins known to Kēraḷa history. The first was the founder of the dynasty of Zamorins who extended the bounds of his small kingdom of Ernāḍ by conquering the neighbouring principalities of Pōlanāḍ, Kōḻikkōṭu, etc., in the 10th Century A.D. The other<sup>71</sup> lived in the 15th century A.D. and conquered Cochin in 1498 A.D. The third belongs to the 17th century A.D. and is believed to be the author of Mānavēda-campu. As the name of the third is Mānavēdan he may be eliminated from the list as the Ślōka under reference mentions a Mānavikraman.<sup>72</sup> The probabilities are that Punam belonged to the academy of the 2nd Śaktan (1498-1504). His reference to people wearing *parangi*<sup>73</sup> caps among the crowd that assembled to witness the coronation of Rāma supports this view.

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70. Literary and philosophical discussions used to be conducted under the auspices of this academy and a prize called 'Paṭattānam' was awarded as prize to the scholar who vanquished other scholars in the discourse. The story is that Uddaṇḍan carried away this prize for 12 consecutive years.

70a. Literally means strong man.

71. Who received Vascode Gama and resisted the Portuguese interference on the West Coast.

72. Mr. R. Nārāyaṇa Paṅikkar's assumption that Mānavikraman is the only family name of the Zamorins is not correct. They are known by three distinct names, 'Mānavikraman,' 'Mānavēdan,' and 'Sri Virarāyan.' (Bhāṣāsāhitya caritram, p. 358, Vol. I).

73. 'Parangi' corrupted from Hindustani 'Feringhi,' itself a corruption from 'Franks,' is the name by which the Portuguese and their descendants are known in Malabar.

The authorship of Campus, as I have already observed, is very often a thorny question, owing to the fact that they were handled for professional purposes by Cākkyārs who were often guilty of addition and subtraction and plagiarisms. An incredibly large number of campus which form the majority of this class of literature are assigned to Punam. He is indisputably the author of Rāmāyaṇa Campu, in which the whole story has been divided into a number of episodes.<sup>74</sup> Sīta Swayamvaram is the most typical. Descriptions of marriages are the most suitable themes for the poets and Cākkyārs to introduce contemporary life, and we find all sorts of fantastic imageries and anachronisms in them. Punam's method shows that he was under the influence of Sanskrit kāvyas and converts the epic solemnity of a purāṇic marriage hall into the light-hearted atmosphere of a comedy theatre. It opens with the description of the arrival of the various sovereigns with all their paraphernalia; and the readers are then led to that part of the spacious hall where people at large congregate to witness the ceremony. The Nambūdiris, especially the younger generation, the magicians,<sup>75</sup> the astrologers and the physicians of Malabar find a place there. The appearance of the bride, whose beauty is treated to a detailed description, follows as the next item. One of her senior maids of honour introduces to her the various Rājas who have assembled there to seek her hand. The poet is more concerned with their unedifying behaviour,<sup>76</sup> in which they unconsciously find themselves, in order to appear at their best when Sīta approaches them. The situation created by the attempts of various princes to break the celebrated bow of Śiva and the failure of the many in the ordeal, claims his attention next. He concludes by giving us a picture of the tumult and chaos that ensued when Rāma broke the bow and established his right to the fair hand of Sīta, as the event excited the jealousy of other princes, who even challenged him to a fight.

Neither in Vālmiki's work<sup>77</sup> nor in Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa does the episode take a turn like the one which the Campu writer has

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74. Eleven have been published so far. These do not include the events described in the third to sixth Kāṇḍa of Rāmāyaṇa.

75. The poet is particularly severe on them.

76. One Rāja grew so desperate that he had to drink the juice of a tender coconut to be at ease. How the tender coconut, which is available only in Malabar happened to be at Janaka's court, is a matter for historical investigation.

77. In Vālmiki's poem there is only the mention by Janaka that many

given it. He has no doubt, made it more dramatic, but at the same time deprived it of its grandeur and majesty. His description of the gathering at the marriage durbar gives us the impression that it is not a solemn occasion but a sporting event.

The poet's wonderful command of language and his power of caricature, relieved now and then by his imaginative flights and poetic fancies, however, entertain the reader throughout the work which is never dull. In fact, these features form the chief merit of campus, in which one finds scarcely any profound thought or lofty sentiment.

*Mazamangalam—Naiṣadha campu.*

Next in importance, though in quality equal to Punam, if not superior, is Maṣamangalam,<sup>78</sup> also a Nambūdiri.<sup>79</sup> His name also is linked with one of the Zamorins, by name Mānavēdan (1563 A.D.), who is believed to be the author of the famous campu in Sanskrit that is named after him.<sup>79a</sup> The internal evidence available in his commentary on Muhūrtapadavi<sup>80</sup> indicates that he belongs to a much earlier period (1449 A.D.). The confusion is due to the fact that the literary academy started by one of the Zamorins was continued by his successors, and there was a series of scholars and poets admitted to it by different Zamorins at different times. His reference to Valayādhīswari<sup>81</sup> in his Naiṣadha campu however, makes us hesitate to ignore the theory associating him with a Zamorin. The historical fact that the Rāja of Cochin and the Zamorin were at the period not on friendly terms and the

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princes failed to break the bow before Rāma appeared and they even harassed him for having refused Sita's hand to them. Page 271, Vol. I. The Rāmāyan of Vālmiki. (Griffith's Translation).

78. The house name. Nambūdiris are generally known by their house (Illom) names in Malabar.

79. The tradition is that he belonged to that section among them who have no right to study Vedas, but can perform 'Sandhyas' reciting Gāyatri.

79a. History of Malayālam Language and Literature by P. Govinda Pillay, Pages 246, 247.

80. A work on Astrology by his Guru, Paramēswaranppōrri (Chengannūr).

81. Scholars are of opinion that this refers to the deity of Ūrakam temple near Peruvanam, Cochin State. Valayam means a circle or bangle, but the famous temple of the Zamorins is also called Tiruvalayanāḍ temple, in which the word 'Valayam' occurs in an unmistakable form.

assumption that a subject of the former would not think of rallying himself to the banner of the latter on that account, are not sufficiently valid arguments against the theory. A careful study of the history of Kēraḷa will convince us that the rivalries between royal families never affected their subjects except the fighting classes, and the Nambūdiris as priests could have access to the various palaces irrespective of the question of their domicile. Instances of their service as peace-makers between the fighting Rājas were also not uncommon<sup>82</sup>. Besides, we do not hear of a literary academy in Cochin at the time, and it is not unlikely that the poet who had no politics of his own sought connection with an institution that gave him due recognition. The expression 'Valayādhīswari', which could apply to the Zamorin's family deity as well as his own, might also be taken as an instance of his ingenuity. One thing is certain. He cannot be separated far from Punam, whose tradition he maintains with all the liveliness of a personal contact, although in the matter of execution he very often excels his model.

His well-known Malayāḷam work is Naiṣadha Campu.<sup>83</sup> The story of Naḷa and Damayanti is its theme. It is divided into two parts, the first part ending with the marriage of the hero and the heroine. Following the method of campu writers, the subject is introduced as being addressed to a third person called *tōzan* (a friend) and straightaway readers are given an elaborate description of the beauty and prosperity that reigned in Naḷa's palace. With the interview between the king and the hamsa the story takes a really romantic turn and our poet lingers long over it. He is no doubt a master in the field of romantic love, and his delineation of

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82. Foreign travellers like Varthema bear testimony to this fact. K. P. Padmanabha Menon, *History of Kēraḷa*, Part II, page 391.

83. He is considered to be the author of several works in Sanskrit, particularly in rituals and astrology, such as *Aśaucam*, *Kāladīpam*, etc. His interest in rituals is supposed to be the outcome of the stigma attached to his clan, which prevented him from learning Vēda in Malabar and consequently drove him to the Eastern districts, whence he returned as an authority on the subject. People who once turned him out of a Yāga hall had to instal his memory there later by placing a stool in front of the place of ceremony and mentioning his name. The custom is followed even at the present day. Some ascribe to him 'Candrōtsavam,' a Maṇipravāla Kāvya, with the life of a prostitute as its theme. It is cleverly written, but the subject matter is unreadably obscene and is entirely devoid of dignity which is Maṣamangalam's chief feature.

it is superb and dignified. He makes a clear distinction between love and lust, and it must be said to his credit that where other poets have descended to obscenity he has risen to a height that never offends one's moral sense. The letter which Damayanti addresses to her lover, of whom she has only heard, is a masterpiece of sustained emotion<sup>84</sup> that speaks volumes for the wide culture and high sense of decency of which it is the offspring. Before this the author has already given a life-like picture of the heroine developing as a child of beauty to be the paragon of loveliness and virtue. As usual the marriage hall is subjected to a detailed description. His own community comes in for a good deal of criticism therein. When Damayanti appears with the 'Garland of Selection'<sup>85</sup>, the poet attempts another description of her personal charm which exceeds the expectation of the princes assembled and drives them to forget their dignity and status. In fact the poet is never tired of describing his heroine.

After giving the readers a fine picture of the days of enjoyment that followed the marriage of Naḷa and Damayanti, the poet takes them to the second part of the story, which is full of pathos. After a game of dice Naḷa lost his kingdom and went into exile with his beloved wife. While in the forest his sorrow overpowered his reason and he left her helpless himself wandering about till he reached the court of R̥tuparṇa (Oudh). Situations like Naḷa's leaving his kingdom and Damayanti's lamentations after her husband had left her in the forest give plenty of scope for a talented poet and have been handled by Maḷamangalam in a manner that has been equalled only by Unnāyi Vāriyar (two centuries later) in his famous Kathakali work on the same theme; but he has never been surpassed before or after. As a poet, I am inclined to rank him as superior to Punam, who however excels him in satirical powers. Both are decidedly two shining stars in the campu horizon, which has

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84. The sense of the first śloka may be freely rendered thus:—

If I address you as Vallabha (husband), and claim your attention the term does not sound proper.

If I say Oh Rāja! I am only exercising a right which all (your subjects) have in common.

It is appropriate if I address you as 'my life' but in that I am only repeating like a parrot what a number of other women have said before.

I am thus in a terrible uncertainty as to how I should begin my message to you.

85. Swayamvaramāla.

brought within its fold a good number of adherents<sup>86</sup>. A vast majority of them are clever imitators, and it is not easy to distinguish their contributions from one another, owing to the uniformity in style, diction and method.

### *Bhārata Campu.*

Another writer who deserves notice in this connection is the author of *Bhārata Campu*<sup>87</sup>, which follows the plan of Punam in his works on the *Rāmāyaṇam*. The most popular of this series, is *Pāncālīswayamvaram* in which the features of Punam's *Sīta Swayamvaram* and *Maṣamangalam's Damayanti Swayamvaram* have been faithfully reproduced. I have even heard of some *Cākkyārs* quoting from *Rāmāyaṇa Campu* and *Naiṣadha Campu* when performing *Pāncālī Swayamvaram*. To me the whole series of *Bhārata campu* appears like a clever imitation of Punam's work punctuated by occasional brilliant flights here and there.

### *Nārāyaṇīyam.*

Another work ascribed to the author of *Bh : campu*, who is believed to be one *Nārāyaṇan*,<sup>88</sup> is *Nārāyaṇīyam*, which deals with the legend about the *Tripūṇittura* temple. The story has a striking resemblance to the *Santānagōpalam* episode of the *Bhāgavatam*, together with an additional story of the gift of an image of *Viṣṇu* presented by the god himself which *Arjuna* instals at the above place. It is strange that the author does not refer this episode to the *Bhāgavatam*, in spite of the obvious similarity between both. The identity of the author is rendered uncertain by a passage<sup>89</sup> in another *Campu* entitled *Tenkailāsanāthōdayam*, in which it is stated that the author of that work had already com-

86. According to some there are nearly two hundred works in this branch; only one-fourth of the number has been published so far.

87. 10 pieces from this have been published in the pages of "*Kavanō-dayam*."

88. Some think it is the famous *Meppattur* whose *Subhadrāharāṇa Campu* is well-known. One who is acquainted with the general level of *Meppattur's* productions, which are in pure *Sanskrit*, will reject this suggestion.

89. The stanza that begins with the line—

"*Vidyāvallabha Nilakaṇṭha sukave.*"

"വിദ്യാവല്ലഭ, നീലകണ്ഠ സുകവേ, ചെല്ലുരനാഥോദയം  
 ഹൃദയം പണ്ടു കൃതം പുനശ്ച രചിതം നാരായണീയം രചയാ  
 അദ്വൈതാരത്നം ഗീര മമ ഭവാനു കൈകൈലാസനാഥോദയം  
 പ്രത്യഗ്രഹ്യകലൻ ബന്ധുരഗുണം ബന്ധുപ്രബന്ധോത്തമം."

posed the Nārāyaṇīyam and Cellūrnāthōdayam, and that his name was Nilakaṇṭhan. This Nilakaṇṭhan is often identified with another of the same name who was a contemporary of Mēppattūr and was believed to be one of the gurus of Eḷuttaccan. A discussion of his identity and notices of his works will be more appropriate in the Chapter on Eḷuttaccan's contemporaries; and we propose to conclude our comments on the campu with an estimate of the nature of their contributions to the development of Malayāḷam Literature.

As I have already observed, the campu has been the product of Sanskritic influence; and in general outline and scope it is a faithful reproduction of the original. But in the matter of detail two elements have been introduced, the element of satire, and a further development of the poetic prose. The former was necessitated by the institution of Cākkyār Kūttu, which inspired this sort of literature and in which satirical comments on contemporary events and personalities formed the dominant feature. This aspect also led the writers to look upon their themes, though taken from Rāmāyaṇa or Mahābhārata, as distinct entities and not as parts of a larger scheme of stories. For instance, Bhōja Campu in Sanskrit is also divided into six kāṇḍas, following the plan of Vālmiki; while Rāmāyaṇa Campu in Malayāḷam includes ten separate episodes discovered so far and several more to be discovered hereafter. It will be thus seen that the originality and the poetic talents which campu writers exhibit have been due to the novel feature introduced in its composition. This is the first time that writers in Malayāḷam took liberty with classical themes, which had been hitherto narrated in a methodical way that did not seriously interfere with their time-honoured trend. The deviations in which anachronisms abound and which sometimes offend the orthodox sense of propriety, however, brought literature within the reach of people whose life it sometimes reflected. In other words, the society of Malabar and its institutions began to influence the literature and the shape it was to assume. This is no doubt a sign of growth. If the literature of a country is not inspired by the life of the people, for whose edification and enjoyment it is intended, it does not last long for lack of nourishment and vitality, which can be supplied only by the ever-growing sensations and experiences which life provides. The history of classical literatures abundantly illustrates this fact. The moment they lost touch with the people and the factors that regulated their progress and outlook, they ceased to grow and

remained as treasures to which only a privileged few could have access.

The life of adventure and romance which Nambūdiris and Nāyar aristocrats led in those days had so much of vanity and energy in it that these features found their way into all the mental and physical activities of the period. Literature could not escape them, for the Nāyars and Nambūdiris themselves were its patrons. Insipid narration of purāṇic stories never appealed to them. They wanted to have their own life reflected in poetry, and we have already seen that the institution of the Kūttu and the Campu or Prabandham Literature was a direct offspring of this universal desire. What campu writers have started we find Kuncan Nambiyār taking up again three centuries later, giving it a purely Malayālam garb in his Tuḷḷals. With him social satire reached its highest water-mark.

### *Popular Ballads*

Cākkyār Kūttu and Campu reached only a few classes of the Kēraḷa Society, owing to various restrictions and limitations involved in the institution. The temple was their stage, and only those who possessed the right of entry into it could enjoy the performance. The lower orders below the Nāyars continued the tradition of ballads and folk-songs, which remained their chief source of entertainment. Exploits and romances of heroes constitute the main theme of these ballads. Two families of N. Malabar, Pūttūr<sup>90</sup> and Taccōḷi<sup>91</sup> bulk large in them. On the other hand, in South Malabar the Cāvēr Paṇikkars<sup>92</sup> fight at the Māmāṅkam<sup>92a</sup> formed the chief source of inspiration. Men and women working

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90. To this belong (a) Arōmalcēvakar the Iḻava hero who fought the historic Ankam fight (duel) for seniority between two brothers of a family at Veṭṭattunāḍ and died as a result of foul play on the part of his adversary. The song throws considerable light on the polity and society of Kēraḷa when popular assemblies through their executives conducted the administration. It is a thrilling story of revenge and intrigue; (b) Unyārca, the sister of the above. Her encounter with a band of Jōnakas who were defeated by her single-handed is narrated in another noted ballad.

91. This family is famous for the Nāyar heroes, Odēnan, Candu and Kōman.

The exploits of Odēnan are innumerable. The present writer's collection of songs concerning his adventures comprises fifty; Mr. Macqueen's collection consists of thrice that number. The other two were his nephews.

92. The author's collection of these songs contain a dozen songs, of which those relating to Vaṭṭōḷi Kaṇḍar Mēnon and Canduṇṇi are the most thrilling.

92a. Vide Chapter II for further particulars on the subject.

in the fields or engaged in other occupations sang and enjoyed these songs, which relieved the monotony of their work and made them forget their weariness. The authors of these songs preferred to be anonymous. They no doubt sprang from the more cultured of the masses, although possibly their irresistible appeal might have attracted some budding poet from the higher classes too. In any case, the romantic mould in which they are cast and the moving narration which forms their uniform feature have a simple charm all their own, so that one feels the throb of popular emotions in every line of them.

They are absolutely free from foreign literary influence except for some stray words due to contact of outsiders for diplomatic or commercial purposes. Their form and subject-matter are thoroughly indigenous. It is a pity that the literary giants of Malabar never felt their appeal or made use of the materials that abound in them in their ventures till comparatively recent times.

#### *Niraṇam Poets.*

Though according to accepted chronology the poets that are known by the above general appellation and Ceruśseri belong to the age prior to the period in which Campu literature flourished, I have reserved a review of their works to the last section of this chapter, for the reason that they faithfully represent various stages in the genuine development of native Malayālam literature, in which campu came in as an interlude, and that Eḷuttaccan was the true heir and promoter of the tradition which they cultivated and perpetuated through their memorable works. The arrangement will also give a more comprehensive idea of the continuity of the literary development which I have attempted to sketch in the foregoing pages.

Niraṇam is a place in Tiruvalla (Central Travancore), where the plot of ground known as "Kaṇṇaśśan parambu", like the Tuñjan Parambu of British Malabar, preserves the tradition about these Niraṇam poets. Their works are known by the common name Kaṇṇaśśan Pāṭṭus, while the metre they used in common is called Niraṇa-vṛttam.<sup>93</sup> Fortunately, these terms are based upon something more substantial than legends. The author of Kaṇṇaśśa Rāmāyaṇam at the end of Uttararāmāyaṇam<sup>94</sup> gives us a genealogy

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93. Niraṇam is the place name and Kaṇṇaśśan is undoubtedly the name or title of a person.

94. In the last three stanzas.

of his family that existed at Niraṇam. The name of one 'Karunēśan'<sup>95</sup> is mentioned as the founder of the family. He is called 'Ubhayakaviśwaraṇ', a poet in two languages, in Malayālam and probably in Sanskrit and referred to as having renounced the world having lived a saintly life for a long time. His family consisted of two sons and three daughters, the youngest of whom was the mother of Rāman, the author of the Rāmāyaṇam, who was born after the demise of his grandfather Karunēśan. The name of the founder was given to the family, whose members added the qualification Kaṇṇaśśan to their names, and were called Kaṇṇaśśa Paṇikkars, while their works are known as Kaṇṇaśśan Pāṭṭus. So far these data are reliable, and there is also no doubt about the name<sup>96</sup> of the poet who composed the Rāmāyaṇam. The names of his uncles have not been mentioned. But we know from Kaṇṇaśśa Gīta and Kaṇṇaśśa Bhāratam that they were written by Mādhan and Sankaran respectively. Whether these two were the uncles referred to by Raman in his work is a matter left to conjecture. The mention of the two uncles who were on the testimony of the nephew great scholars also suggests such a probability. The metre they all use in common also lends support to this view. We can only leave it at that for the time being.

If Mādhan, the author of Bhagavadgīta is taken to be the uncle<sup>97</sup> of Rāman, his production must be the earliest of Niraṇam works. The Gīta of Mādhan is no doubt a remarkable work in many respects. In it an attempt has been made by the author not to give a literal translation<sup>98</sup> of the original, which contains 700 stanzas, while the Malayālam version has only 328, but an excellent clear exposition of the doctrines of the Gīta with original

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95. Of which the name Kannaśśan is supposed to be a contraction. The word can also be derived from Kaṇṇan and Accan. It is also probable that this Malayālam name was Sanskritised into Karunēśan, as has been done with many place names of Malabar.

96. His name is Rāman.

97. But there is one difficulty that stands in the way of this inference. In all the other works of the group the deity of Niraṇam temple is invoked, while in the Gīta it is the Mother of Malayinkīz temple near Trivandrum that is mentioned. As an explanation of this fact it has been suggested that the family of these poets was believed to be related through its founder to the Pōrriś of Niraṇam, who had properties and lands in Malayinkīz; this however needs closer investigation.

98. The author himself admits (8 in Ch. 42) that he has given only a summary.

views<sup>99</sup> in further elucidation thereof. This fact by itself speaks eloquently for the author's confidence in his knowledge of the subject he is handling and the high position he held among religious scholars of the day; else he would not have dared to take any liberty with a work of the magnitude and importance of the Gīta, which is considered to be the quintessence of Hindu philosophic thought. Some of his verses are based upon the commentary of Śankara.<sup>100</sup> In many places exact reproductions are also to be found. The work is the outcome of mature reflection on the philosophy of the Gīta, which only a close and prolonged study of it could give, and the style in which it is written is not the style of an ordinary poet who finds difficulty in giving proper equivalents in his mother tongue to the Sanskrit words, but is that of a master who has words at his command and who can use them with discretion so as to have the desired effect in expounding a highly difficult and intricate subject. Nor is the language in which it is written insufficiently developed, or at a stage in which its literary usages and borrowings are not regularised. It looks like the fruit of a young plant flourishing on firm roots. Technical and philosophical terms of Sanskrit are freely used, but only with Malayāḷam suffixes. Some of them are introduced in the same form<sup>101</sup> and others in tadbhava form,<sup>102</sup> in which traces of Tamil influence linger. But these are few and far between, and the linguistic forms in general bear testimony to a deep-rooted indigenous tradition which is steadily gaining ground. This consideration naturally gives us a clue as to its age. We have as a landmark the Līlātilakam, in which foreign borrowings, particularly of a Sanskritic character, were subjected to a searching analysis with a view to bring them under certain definite rules and reject those that did not conform to the genius of the language.

Excessive use of Sanskritic forms and suffixes, which the Līlātilakam condemns does not find a place in K. Gīta, and none of its lines has been quoted as examples of Pāṭṭu in Līlātilakam. Either the work was not known to the author of Līlātilakam, or the latter preceded it. In any case both from a linguistic and literary point of view Mādhavan's Gīta is an outstanding production of the language, not equalled either before and after. There were

99. 6 in Ch. II; 6 in Ch. III; 6 in Ch. VII.

100. 4 in Ch. VII, 5 in Ch. IX, 2 in Ch. XV, etc.

101. Udbhavam, Adwaitam.

102. Such as Darīšana for Darśana, Nāna for Jñāna.

several attempts to render the Gita into Malayālam after him, but no instance of an earlier venture is known.<sup>103</sup>

*Sankara Paṇikkar.*

It is generally supposed that Sankara Paṇikkar is one of the uncles referred to by Rāma Paṇikkar in his work. The work *Bhārata Māla*, which is also written in *Niraṇamvṛttam*, certainly belongs to this school of poetry; and at the end of it the poet has himself mentioned his name as Sankaran.<sup>104</sup> *Bhāratamāla* has not been published in full, and it is not easy to determine the quality of his work without seeing the whole of it. The portions of *Bhārata Māla* published so far only show that the author was a close student of the Kaṇṇaśśan School of poetry and that he has endeavoured to attain to its general level. The creative genius of a first-rate poet which is manifest in *K. Gīta* and *K. Rāmāyaṇam* is however not so pronounced in *Bhārata Māla*. The most outstanding member of the group is decidedly the author of *Rāmāyaṇam*, whose name, as already noted, is Rāma Paṇikkar. Both in quality and quantity he is unrivalled by any in his age. In quality the author of the *Gīta*, it must be observed, presents equal claims,<sup>105</sup> while in quantity only *Ezuttaccan* is his equal.

*Rāma Paṇikkar—his date and family.*

The author of *K. Rāmāyaṇam* has considerably helped speculation on the subject of his name by mentioning it at the end of his *Uttara Rāmāyaṇam*, to which reference has already been made. His description of his family is not so definite. Critics are divided in their views regarding the founder,<sup>106</sup> *Karuṇēśan*

103. It seems to be the first and pioneer attempt in the languages of S. India.

104. (a) Mahābhārata Katha 'Sankaran' ampōṭu.

“മഹാഭാരതകഥ ശങ്കരനമ്പൊടു  
ചൊന്നതുവെഴുവതെഴുവതെന്നും  
ശൈകമൊഴിഞ്ഞവന്നതസുഖത്തെ”

(b) There are a number of Sankarans in the literary hierarchy of Kēraḷa. Sankara Kavi of Uddandan's time, the Guru of Kottārakara Tampurān, the great Kathakalī author, the author of *Naiśadha Campu*, etc.

105. The theme of *Bhagavadgīta* is more philosophic than poetic. His original touches here and there give us a glimpse of his genius, which seems to have felt the theme a handicap for the true expression of his poetic gifts.

106. Mr. Uḷḷūr S. Paramēśwara Iyer (vide the introduction to his edition E.--5

mentioned by him, whose scholarship and poetical talents in two languages are however beyond question. Karuṇēśan's sons are not referred to as poets, but only as scholars.<sup>107</sup> The doubt whether Karuṇēśan is a personal name or a title confuses the issue further. Rāma Paṇikkar mentions the name of the founder with great reverence, and he also alludes to his ascetic life. If Karuṇēśan were the author of Bhagavad Gīta, whose theme no doubt suits admirably a man of his character and attainments, Rāman would have taken care to draw attention to that also. His silence on that point is significant, and Karuṇēśan's authorship of the Gīta cannot be established on solid grounds. To me he represents the traditional scholastic ascetism of Kēraḷa founded by Sankara, and occupies a position similar to that of Eḷuttaccan's brother a century later. Such men sought to mould and inspire the life of the people with whom they came into contact as teachers and remained as fountain-heads of vast knowledge, which was imparted free to all who sought it. Poetry in those days formed a part of the equipment of a scholar and a saint, and poet-scholars and poet-saints were more common than in modern times, when poets do not necessarily practise the doctrines they preach. Speculations so far have been directed towards assigning to the founder one work, particularly the Gīta, out of the various productions that exist in the name of this school. Rāma Paṇikkar's list contains the names of four poets, while the works so far reveal unmistakably only the names of three. In the circumstances the uncertainty<sup>108</sup> about one which is expressed by the renowned Professor Nantyaṛ Viṭṭil K. Paramēśwaran Pillai, M.A., is a real one till more facts are available on the subject. If Karuṇēśan, as I have suggested, is taken as founder of the family and also of the school which regarded him as Kūtastha<sup>109</sup> and the prime source of inspiration, and not as an author, the difficulty is partially solved, and the question can only be left at that until we possess more authentic information.

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of K. Bhagavadgīta) thinks that the founder and the author of the Gīta are one and the same person. While Mr. Attur Kṛṣṇa Piṣārōṭi (in the introduction to *Lilātilakam*) expresses the view that they are different and that Kaṇṇaśan (Karuṇēśan) is the founder of the family and one of his sons is the author of the Gīta.

107. The term used is 'Vidyādhipar'—Master of Vidyas—which can be taken to mean 'Vidwans' (Scholars) in modern phraseology.

108. Page 4 of his Introduction to his edition of *Kaṇṇaśsa Gīta*.

109. The original founder.

I have already indicated that *Lilātilakam* does not say anything about the *Kaṇṇaśśan Pāṭṭus*, which bear distinctive characteristics of their own and mark a definite stage in the development of the Malayālam language; and its author could have hardly omitted to mention them if they were known to him or existed in his day. There is a reason to think that Rāma Paṇikkar had seen the definition of *Pattus* in that work, as he generally conforms to the rules enunciated therein, particularly the *Yatuka*.<sup>110</sup> The author of *Kēraḷa Bhāṣa Sāhitya caritram*<sup>111</sup> says that a manuscript of *Kaṇṇaśśa Rāmāyaṇam* copied in 702 M.E. (1528 A.D.) was in his possession; and Mr. Govinda Pillay speaks of another copy of the same work dated 614 M.E. (1440 A.D.), which Mr. R. N. Paṇikkar has seen. These facts proclaim that the work existed before that date. There is also the testimony of the transcriber of the latter that the copy was prepared with Rāma Paṇikkar's permission. Whether he refers to the author, or to a member of the *Kaṇṇaśśan* family, it is not clear. If the first inference is correct, the author was alive at the time of its preparation. If the second alternative suggestion is to be accepted, Paṇikkar's date may be pushed back a generation earlier, leaving a reasonable margin of time for a work to become widely known and create a demand for its copies.<sup>112</sup> I have not heard of any Mss., of *Kaṇṇaśśan Pattus* existing in the central or northern part of *Kēraḷa*. The fact that *Ezuttaccan's* works, which commanded a wider popularity, superseded them a century later must be taken as a probable cause of their disappearance in other parts of *Kēraḷa* and of the restriction of their circulation to their place of origin or neighbouring localities. But there can be no doubt that *Kaṇṇaśśan* and his school must have dominated the literary field before *Ezuttaccan* and his works have been available in Mss. form all over *Kēraḷa*.

Certain passages in *Ezuttaccan's Adh: Rāmāyaṇam* reminds us of *Kaṇṇaśśan's* influence, and we might well conclude that the

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110. The system of rhyme as represented by the *Dvitiyaṇprāsam* of the *Kaṇṇaśśan* school.

111. Page 281, Vol. I of the work.

112. If the possessors of these Ms. copies of the *K. Rāmāyaṇam* had stated the places where the Mss. were originally kept, we should have had a better insight into the popularity of *Kaṇṇaśśan's* works, on which so far very little light has been thrown. The literary world knew little or nothing about it till Mr. Vargese Māpiḷa published it for the first time in 1895.

poet-saint was familiar with his works. The stories that have gathered round the two personalities have a striking similarity. Tradition assigns both to the clan of oil-mongers among the Nāyars, and brings in a Brahman to bless the career of Kaṇṇaśśan.<sup>113</sup> The authors of these stories forgot the genealogy (given by himself) of Kaṇṇaśśan, as they did in the case of Eḷuttaccan too—which was good enough to produce a poet of his standing and eminence. As usual, these legends betray a lack of historical sense. In this particular instance they have dared to make the two poets contemporaries, ignoring a century that lay between them. It is quite probable that the great guru of Tuñjattu referred to in Adh. Rāmāyaṇam might have established contact with the well-known family of Kaṇṇaśśan, whose ideals resembled his own, and paid his respects to its founder by a personal visit. Once the contact was established, his brother, the poet-saint could very well be trusted to continue it, as he sincerely believed in such relationships. It is quite likely that he paid courtesy visits to the place several times during his lifetime, leaving some traces of his association. The continuity of the connection might have led their followers years later to invent a story establishing their contact in the form in which it is preserved in the legend. One thing is clear. Both Kaṇṇaśśan and Eḷuttaccan have one feature in common, and that is their unique personalities, by which they influenced and enriched Malayālam literature. Their works were stamped with the impress of their individuality and greatness, and the method and style which they chose according to their personal predilections were best suited to the genius of the language. They fully utilised their knowledge of other languages, particularly Sanskrit and Tamil, in order to infuse fresh vigour and vitality into their own language by giving it sufficient stamina to stand on its own legs, and they have remained ever since the two guiding milestones at different stages of its onward march. The precedent set by Kaṇṇaśśan inspired Eḷuttaccan to greater efforts in the same direction; and the

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113. This is the story. A brahman who was witnessing a Kūttu performance threw the end of a betel leaf on a stone pillar, which made a mark on it. This attracted the attention of Kaṇṇaśśan, who was also present there. He followed the Brahman after the performance and requested him to bless him. The brahman did so with the gift of a plantain fruit which transformed the poor Kaṇṇaśśan into a great poet. Kaṇṇaśśan is however free from the imputation of illegitimacy to which Eḷuttaccan was exposed, thanks to the generosity of the legend-mongers.

later attempt was crowned with more abiding results, having had the benefit of the earlier one. In the execution of their mission and in the actual details of workmanship each is as different from the other as two individuals can be. But in their devotion to their mother-tongue and their whole-hearted endeavour to enrich it through their epoch-making contributions they agree in fundamentals, and as pioneers they occupy distinct pedestals of their own.

In the total output also the two masters resemble each other. Rāma Paṅikkar's known works are, besides the one we have already noticed, Bhāratam, Bhāgavatam, and Sāvitrīmāhātmyam. These works<sup>114</sup> have been published only in parts, which invariably bear the stamp of his genius and personal note. The name of their author (Rāma) is mentioned in all of them, and their style and presentation have the unmistakable marks of his poetry. There is no need, therefore, to doubt their authenticity or indulge in any speculation on their authorship.

A perfect balance of thought and expression is the dominant feature of Kaṇṇaśśan's poetry. His words are properly weighed, and never wasted or extravagantly used. As occasion demands, the words come to him in appropriate combinations; and master of language as he is, he gives them proper places. In his rendering of Rāmāyaṇam and other works he never believed in a literal translation, but always took care to reproduce faithfully in his mother-tongue the ideas of the original. If the idea is obscure, he takes trouble to elucidate it, adding his own personal views. If the original picture is not sufficiently clear and lifelike, Kaṇṇaśśan's genius enriches its poetic beauty by original touches.<sup>115</sup>

His eye for poetic beauty and sense of discretion give his presentation an entertaining flavour, and we enjoy it all the more as we enjoy a flower with its fragrance. This aspect of his personality sometimes makes him insert a line of his own and leave the original to take care of itself.<sup>116</sup> Such deviations,

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114. Ezuttaccan's important works are Adh: Rāmāyaṇam, and Bhāratam besides a good number of minor works.

115. His description of Rāma's attempt to break the bow at Janaka's court is, among others, a remarkable instance of this feature.

116. The following examples may be noted:—(a) Vālmiki in giving the strange story of the bow makes only a brief reference in one slōka to Dakṣa's sacrifice, while Kaṇṇaśśan narrates the episode in all its details in 8 stanzas. The story illustrates the importance of the Mother goddess, in whom people

which are numerous, show the true genius of Kaṇṇaśśan, who by handling a theme similar to that of Vālmiki and taking the latter's work as the basis, produced an independent work in his own language, which occupies as eminent a place in it as Vālmiki's poem does in Sanskrit.

Besides, Kaṇṇaśśan's works reveal traces of the later vaiṣṇava revival in medieval times, when poets could not look upon Rāma as a mere epic hero, but only as an incarnation of Viṣṇu, the supreme deity of the Viśiṣṭadwaita school. In Kaṇṇaśśan's Rāmāyaṇam the Devas who approach Viṣṇu to present their petition of sorrow prelude it with a stōtra which we do not find in Vālmiki. But Paṇikkar, a typical Malayāli, is not partial to Viṣṇu. He has a similar hymn in praise of Śiva ready for Viśvāmitra at the commencement of his vigorous penance to attain the position of a Brahmarṣi.<sup>117</sup> Both the occasions are unique, and the stōtras which Vālmiki did not care to compose appear quite appropriate. We notice here the small beginnings of the Bhakti movement, which reached the height of its fervour under Eḷuttaccan's championship.

### *Ceruśśēri.*

The scene now shifts to the north of Malabar, which was ruled by the Rājas of Kōlattiri, the traditional title of the kings of Kōlattunāḍ,<sup>118</sup> one of whom was the patron of the famous Nam-būdiri poet familiarly known as Ceruśśēri. The latter is the author of the well-known classic Kṛṣṇappāṭṭu, which deals with the story of Kṛṣṇa, who attracted innumerable herds-women by the sound of his magic flute. It is of course based upon the 10th chapter (Deśamam) of Bhāgavatapurāṇa. But his indebtedness to that Purāṇa is but nominal. As a work of art Ceruśśēri's work stands on its own merits. The well-known incidents of the story relating to the flute-player God are presented by Ceruśśēri in his

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of Malabar have immense faith, which might have induced the poet to describe it in full.

(b) When Dasaratha and Janaka meet for the marriage of their children they recall the past history of the two royal families. Vālmiki takes 3 chapters to describe these, and it reads like a Grandmother's story; Kaṇṇaśśan dismisses it in one line.

117. An ascetic who is considered equal to Brahma, the Creator. His rival Vasiṣṭha, who through his spiritual powers disgraced him in a fight, also occupies the status of Brahmarṣi.

118. That portion of Br. Malabar which has S. Kanara as its boundary on the North and Kōṭṭayam on the South

own felicitous form. The cowherd boy, and his amorous adventures with the charming maidens of Ambāḍi<sup>119</sup> impress Ceṛuṣṣēri more as a poetic conception than a religious idea;<sup>120</sup> and we find the whole work dominated by this outlook and its attendant features. He is attracted by the aesthetic aspect of Vaiṣṇavism, which no doubt received a fresh impetus at his hands and which in Malabar inspired the fine arts more than religious life. The author's treatment of Rāsa Kṛiḍa reads like an expert treatise on erotics, and is on a par with Jayadēva's Gīta Gōvindam without the self-surrendering emotional fervour of the latter.<sup>121</sup> In Ceṛuṣṣēri the poet suppresses the devotee, while in Jayadeva the two combine admirably. The dominant note in Kṛṣṇappāṭṭu does not seem to be the result of an accident, but the outcome of deliberate design. The poet occasionally remembers the popular attitude towards Kṛṣṇa, and reminds his readers of the divinity of his hero. But the next moment he reverts to the realm of poetry, with which he is primarily concerned.

Ceṛuṣṣēri is the house-name of the author of Kṛṣṇappāṭṭu. His real name and personality<sup>122</sup> are still shrouded in obscurity. His date also is equally uncertain. The literary assembly of the Zamorins does not seem to have owned him, as no trace of his connection with it has survived. Whether the assembly was started since his days or whether he was deliberately excluded from it,<sup>123</sup> it is not possible to say with any degree of certainty. In any case, in view of the peculiar conditions of the Malabar polity it is unsafe to rely too much on such uncertain data. The internal evidence available in his work only testifies that he was connected with the court of the Kōlattiris and that his famous

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119. The village of the cowherd chief Nandagōpa, the foster-father of the boy Kṛṣṇa.

120. He seems to have thought of the God only at the end of his work, which he concludes in praise of Kṛṣṇa.

121. It must also be noted that Ceṛuṣṣēri makes no mention of Rādha, who is the heroine of Jayadēva's work.

122. The attempt on the part of some scholars to identify him with Punam has been proved to be without any foundation.

123. History and tradition record that the territorial ambitions of the Zamorins since their assumption of the Māmānkam chair often brought them into conflict with Kōlattiri, and we find the latter at the beginning of the 16th Cent. actively encouraging Portuguese captains in their pepper trade, while the Zamorins in those days were fighting them.

work was composed at the instance of one of them<sup>123a</sup> whose name was Udayavarman. The usual difficulty which the royal names and titles of Malabar present, faces us here also. Udayavarman is a common name which a number of Kōlattiris have borne, and the identification of the particular King who was the patron of Ceṟuśśēri is not solved thereby. Nor is the poet over-enthusiastic about his favourite deity, whom the poets of Malabar, in keeping with the tradition of India, invoke at the beginning of their works. He only seeks the blessings of the Lord of Pālāzi,<sup>124</sup> who is basking in the moonshine of the smile of his consort, the goddess Indira.<sup>125</sup> This leads us nowhere. The family deity of the Kōlattiri Rājas' is Kaḷarivādukkal Bhagavati.<sup>126</sup> The author of Kṛṣṇappāṭṭu is evidently no devotee of that goddess, which again is an unusual phenomenon. Generally the poets that are attached to a particular king are devoted to the family deity of that King, unless they have a deity of their own. In the case of Ceṟuśśēri his devotion is shared by neither. The poet has taken care not to leave any marks of his identity in his work except those of his patron, who is also not entirely released from obscurity by them.

The charge of obscurity that is associated with the person of the author does not however apply to his work which has definite and pronounced characteristics claiming for him complete supremacy in the literary world of Malayālam after the age of Kaṇṇāśśan and before that of Eḷuttaccan. Ceṟuśśēri by virtue of his unique production has become a household name all over Kēraḷa: and its popularity<sup>127</sup> among the womenfolk is un-

123a. Kōladhināthanudayavarman—Ajñayeceikayal.

“പരലാഴിമാതൃതൻ പാലിപ്പുപോരുന്ന  
കോലാധിനഗമനഭയവർമ്മൻ  
ആജ്ഞയെച്ചെയ്ത യാലജ്ഞനായുള്ള ഞാൻ  
പ്രാജ്ഞനെന്നിങ്ങനെ ഭാവിച്ചിപ്പോൾ  
ദേവകീന്ദുരവായ് മേവിനീന്നിടുന്ന  
കേവലൻ തന്നെ ലീലചാരവൻ  
ആവതല്ലെങ്കിലു മാശതൻ ചൊല്ലയാൽ  
ആരംഭിച്ചിടുന്നെന്നായവണ്ണം.”

124. The sea of milk, which is the mythological abode of the God Viṣṇu.

125. The Goddess of Wealth and prosperity.

126. Literally the Goddess that guards the entrance of the Kaḷari, the school for military training.

127. Till recent years women of Malabar used to devote the month of Ciñham, the month of their Ōṇam festival, for recitation of Kṛṣṇappāṭṭu, both as a religious duty and a labour of love.

precedented. The usual attraction which the story of the divine cowherd boy has for people of Vaiṣṇavic faith is not the only reason for the immense popularity of Ceṟuṣṣēri's work. It is founded on the classic simplicity of his diction, the charming music of his poetry and his remarkable poetic sensibility. His vividly poetic description of the boyhood of Kṛṣṇa and his childish pranks, in which the herdswomen figure largely, creating an atmosphere of pure romance, which has always an irresistible charm for the human mind, is not the least important of its attractions.

#### *Ceṟuṣṣēri's date.*

Ceṟuṣṣēri is generally assigned to the 7th Cen. M.E. (15th Century A.D.)<sup>128</sup>. As I have already stated, no definite data are available to set against the traditional date of the poet. The language of the K. Pāṭṭu shows more flexibility and vigour than that of Kaṇṇaśśan, and as such can be taken to represent the next stage in the development of the Malayāḷam tongue. The style also is different. The preponderance of archaic Malayāḷam words<sup>129</sup> is another feature of this great work. The poet has no preference to Sanskrit words; his selection of them is confined to those that had become current in popular usage, and there is hardly any instance of the use of Sanskrit suffixes throughout the poem. He handles Sanskrit words in the same way as he would deal with Malayāḷam words. The concluding portion of the work, to which an appendix in the form of a stōtra is added, marks him out as equally efficient in Sanskrit, in which he has a good command of the vocabulary. But he loves his mother-tongue more and is keen on proving its potentiality for literary purposes. The pen-pictures he draws with genuine Malayāḷam words are gems of the language, and the high literary beauty which he attains, is an invaluable asset to it. His individuality in this respect is equalled only by the freedom with which he handles his theme. Both in design and workmanship he is a master artist. His style and presentation reveal an ease and originality which could be only the fruit of the inherent strength and full-grown vitality of the language.

Like Kaṇṇaśśan and Eḷuttaccan later, Ceṟuṣṣēri's<sup>130</sup> name also is associated with a metre called " Gātha " <sup>131</sup> or Pāṭṭu in Malayāḷam.

128. The History of Malayāḷam Literature by P. Govinda Pillai, p. 149; Bhāṣā Sāhitya Caritram by R. Nārāyaṇa Paṅikkar, p. 310.

129. Such as *naṇṇi* = (thought) *māṇpu* = beauty.

130. The theory started by Kundūr Nārāyaṇa Mēnon to make this the name of the metre and not of the house of the poet is hardly tenable, though it is ingenious.

131. He uses a few other metres also, but Gātha dominates his work.

It is one of the few Malayālam metres that are capable of considerable variations in tune and rhythm. It can be recited in the ordinary way or sung and adapted to dance-music, having a rhythm of its own without serious changes in the sound-values of letters used in their compositions. Its adaptability has made it a favourite of later poets, particularly of those who were the composers of Kaikoṭṭikkaḷippāṭṭus.<sup>132</sup> With modern poets it has become a passion, as the facility and ease with which it can be composed are typical of the spirit of freedom that is surging all over the country. Its popularity is an indication of its antiquity. No poet who knows his vocation will take the trouble of writing a poem in a new metre which is not known to the people at large. Much less would he think of inventing a metre. What he generally does is to take a popular tune or metre and give it a literary tone and dignity stamping it with his vigorous personality. There seems to be no doubt that Ceṟuśśēri also must have done likewise. His personal taste ofcourse must have influenced his selection out of the various tunes used for ballads and folk-songs. The fact of its being used for a serious literary work gives it a distinction which inevitably gets mixed up with the name of its author who had already attained a reputation of his own. Later literary developments affected its popularity a bit and the people having lost touch with the adaptability of the Gātha even accused Ceṟuśśēri for having written a long poem in one monotonous metre. The blame should be laid at the door of the Sanskritists, who showed a preference for Sanskrit metres in their Malayālam works and neglected indigenous metrical devices, which could be mastered only by those who had a keen ear for music.

It is a mistake to regard Ceṟuśśēri as an isolated phenomenon of his age. Though we have not heard of a literary academy under the patronage of the Kōḷattiris, great poets like Ceṟuśśēri are bound to radiate their influence over the society in which they live, and to produce some admirers. The examples of Kaṇṇaśśan and Eḷuttaccan suggest such a possibility. The publication of Bhāratagātha, which is ascribed to Ceṟuśśēri without sufficient reason points to a circle of imitators of the Ceṟuśśēri's style. There must have been some notable contributions inspired by Ceṟuśśēri's work. Perhaps they are lurking in the corners of the huge Mss. libraries of Kōḷattiris and Kaḍattanāḍ without having a

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132. The songs used for a kind of popular dance called Kai-Koṭṭi-Kkaḷi (dance accompanied by clapping of hands).

chance of enjoying the patronage of these princes owing to transfer of loyalties or some unforeseen political upheaval. The fountain of literary activity often records a continuous flow when once it springs up, till it spends itself in uncongenial environments. The ancient Payyanūr Paṭṭōla, which nobody has seen but of which the memory has survived many a change hails from that part of Malabar, and the rise of a star like Ceruśśēri after several centuries are like sparks from a continuous current that had run underground for some reason or other. In the field of folklore North Malabar has to its credit the most magnificent contribution, extending over several centuries and presenting a remarkable continuity of output. There is no apparent reason why in the realm of letters there should not have been a similar tradition.

### *Ceruśśēri's poetry*

The natural charm of Ceruśśēri's poetry lies in the familiarity with which he takes his readers into his confidence. There is no ambiguity in his expressions except where he attempts a double meaning or Ślēṣa, and he is never obscure. When one goes on reading his work, even the archaic expressions present no difficulty. The reader gets the sense of the passage at the first reading. If he is musically inclined, he is tempted to recite the lines in various tunes to which they are adapted. Their music makes him linger over them for the mere love of it. The poet's imagination is a store-house of metaphors and implied similes, which come to him quite naturally, and which are rendered more spicy by his sense of humour that is typical of the community to which he belongs. His humour sometimes gives the impression that he is wanting in human sympathy. His description of Kucēla is a notable instance of this trait. As an embodiment of poverty and purity the mythical brahman excites sympathy verging on pathos; but his figure, looking like a skeleton wrapped in skin, is an object of fun for our poet.<sup>133</sup> When he describes the interview between Subhadra and Arjuna, his humorous touches are really entertaining.<sup>134</sup>

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133. Ceruśśēri makes the servants of Kṛṣṇa's Court laugh at his figure, which, they describe from head to foot. His stomach is represented as so hollow as Pātālam. Kṛṣṇa Pāṭṭu, p. 277.

134. Arjuna visits Dwāraka, Kṛṣṇa's abode, in the guise of an ascetic to woo Subhadra, Kṛṣṇa's sister, who is asked to look after his needs. When she offers him fruits, he is so completely absorbed in looking at her

Among his pen-pictures his descriptions of the seasons deserve the foremost rank. He may be called the poet of the seasons, which have drawn from him the most beautiful imageries. The boy Kṛṣṇa's amours with Gōpīs in different seasons give him ample scope for description of natural scenes and seasons. In fact this part of the story has the lion's share in his version of Kṛṣṇa's life.<sup>135</sup> In South India, Malabar presents a magnificent variety of seasons with pronounced characteristics. The commencement of the rainy season witnesses terrific thunder, lightning and storm. But the season has no horrors for the poet who is attracted only by its beauties.<sup>136</sup> He is not less enchanted by the summer<sup>137</sup> and the spring<sup>138</sup>.

As a poet who revelled in sensuous beauty and aimed at realistic presentation of its delicate sensations, Ceruśśēri stands unrivalled in Malayalam poetry. Maḥamangalam, whom we have already noticed, is another exponent of the Sṛṅgāra sentiment; but he stands on a pedestal of his own. His method of approach is more intellectual, as he recognises only the cultured few as his prospective readers. He therefore attempted a kind of classic dignity in his treatment, which as an intellectual achievement is superb. There is again the author of Chandrōtsavam<sup>139</sup>, who sees love at its lowest depths, and who is unable to distinguish it from lust. In his picture of love and its intricacies Ceruśśēri adopts the 'golden mean' which could be enjoyed by the literate and the illiterate without being the worse for it. The romantic flavour which his poetry breathes has a perennial charm, as it is like that of the best love-lyrics of other languages based on the common experience of mankind.

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and enjoying her beauty that he eats the rind instead of the pulp, K. P. p. 296.

135. The book covers the whole life of Kṛṣṇa from his infancy to his attainment of heaven (Swargārōhaṇam). More than half of it is devoted to the description of Rāsa Kṛīda.

136. He compares the rain-cloud to a blue canopy spread over the country, with cranes that fly to their nest as its white draperies. K. P., p. 67-69.

137. K. P., p. 66-67.

138. K. P., p. 70-72.

139. The theme of this work is the life of a woman devoted to pleasure, which for her constituted the end and aim of life. The very nature of the theme suggests that it is an imaginary picture, as the society of Kēraḷa never encouraged a life of that kind.

## CHAPTER II

### A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

#### *Introductory.*

Great men like meteors appear in the horizon but seldom. But they do not leave it like them without making an impression. They come with a specific mission and a message which they fulfil and deliver to the lasting benefit of mankind. Ežuttaccan, the epic poet and philosopher-saint of Malabar belongs to this rare and distinguished galaxy of men whose life was one of service and sacrifice and who made the world better and wiser than they found it.

Since the days of the Great Sankara<sup>1</sup> the adwaitist philosopher, Malabar had to wait for several centuries to welcome a similar outstanding personality who commanded universal admiration and reverence. In the case of Ežuttaccan his fame could not travel beyond the boundaries of the Malayālam-speaking area as his works were chiefly in Malayālam. But in the esteem and regard which are associated with his name he is equalled only by Sankara. An admiring public raised him to the status of a *Gandharva*<sup>2</sup> who in his previous birth was an eye witness to the Mahābhārata war fought between the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas at the field of Kurukṣētra. The Goddess of learning<sup>3</sup> was believed to be at his service and

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1. Malabar claims him as one of her eminent sons and Kālaḍi (North Travancore) is considered to be his birth place.

2. This has reference to the following passage in Ežuttaccan's Mahābhāratam, Nālāmatānatan vālumariññiṭṭu Kōlāhalattōṭu vannitu bānavum ("after cutting the tail of the elephant the arrow reached back with all its glory"). Bhagadatta's elephant threw Bhīma up into the sky and turned its tusks upwards to catch him falling. At this critical moment Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna appeared on the scene. Arjuna immediately aimed an arrow at the elephant, which cut not only its neck, but also Bhagadatta, his bow and the tail of the elephant. In the picture drawn by Ežuttaccan, the tail of the elephant is an addition which is ascribed to his supernatural knowledge as Gandharva to whose divine vision the fight in all its detail was as clear as daylight. It may also be stated in this connection that Ežuttaccan's description is more true to nature, as elephants often lift their tails when they are infuriated.

3. 'Saraswati.' The story is that an incomplete manuscript of Dēvi Māhātmyam was given to Ežuttaccan to fill up the missing portion. Soon

even the miraculous power of endowing the monkey<sup>4</sup> with the gift of speech was regarded as one of his assets that marked him out as a superman. There was no branch of human knowledge which his all-comprehensive intellect could not grasp. He was equally at home with the muse of poetry as well as the dry details of history or medical science.<sup>5</sup> His services were very often requisitioned by the Kings and notable men of his age. The Rāja of Ambalappuṣa requested him to decipher a Telugu manuscript on *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇam*,<sup>6</sup> and the Zamorin of Calicut sought his blessings to remove the gloom of despondency that possessed him and his kingdom at the time through the performance of a *Śāktēya Pūja*.<sup>7</sup> Even as a baby in arms he seems to have had an intuitive knowledge of the Vēdas and corrected the Brāhmins at Trkkaṇṭi-yūr temple,<sup>8</sup> where they were chanting Vēdic hymns.

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after that he fell into a trance when the Goddess Saraswati appeared and wrote it out for him.

4. Among the innumerable legends that have sprung round the personality of Eḷuttaccan there is one about a monkey that was caught by the poet on his way to the tank for his bath. He tied the monkey to a 'Kāññira' tree leaving a piece of butter in its right hand asking it to keep it till he returned after his bath. It was during summer and the butter melted soon owing to the extreme heat of the sun. When he returned Eḷuttaccan asked the monkey about the butter and he naturally could not explain what happened to it; but Eḷuttaccan by a magic touch of his hand made the monkey say that the butter melted. This story is often quoted as evidence of Eḷuttaccan's extraordinary power of transforming even the dullest boy into a prodigy by his teaching.

5. Tradition ascribes the authorship of a work on 'Aṣṭāṅga ḥṛdayam' (Medical work) and a treatise on Kerala history entitled 'Kēraḷa Nāṭakam' to Eḷuttaccan. No definite information is available on either.

6. This will be dealt with in the chapter on *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa*.

7. A ritual of Tāntric Worship in which 'Śakti', the feminine aspect of primeval energy, is propitiated. It would appear that he predicted that the Zamorin's family would lose their ruling rights in the third generation after that. According to some it is Sūryanārāyaṇan who predicted the downfall of the Zamorins.

8. This temple is about half a mile from the Tirur Railway Station (Ponnāni Taluq, S. Malabar) and is near Eḷuttaccan's home. The incident referred to is believed to have taken place when the boy Eḷuttaccan visited the temple with his mother and he called out to the Brāhmins there—Kāḍu—(mistake). They grew uneasy about the infant prodigy and by way of curbing his intellectual power gave him some plantains which were subjected to the influence of black magic, to eat, and as a result thereof the boy lost his gift of speech. To counteract this, the story adds, Eḷuttaccan's father gave him toddy which was also subjected to the same influence, and the boy thereafter had his speech restored to him.

Strange are the ways of men who are anxious to pay homage to their heroes, and it often happens in the case of great men that a regular network of fables and legends sometimes mutually contradictory, is woven round their hallowed name and personality. As the legacy of our fore-fathers whose esteem and regard for their poet-saint was by far greater than ours, we are unwilling to reject or accept them *in toto*. But the interests of research, in which truth is the guiding principle, demand that these stories should be subjected to critical analysis with a view to separate the chaff from the grain. Apart from this legendary story there is still the solid fact, which can be verified even at the present day that the monumental works which were presented to the world by the Great Bard of Kerala, and which still remain the priceless possessions of the Malayālam language and literature, are looked upon with great reverence and devotion by our orthodox brethren. The practice which enjoins on the people the reading of Eḷuttaccan's Rāmāyaṇa every day as a matter of obligatory religious duty still lingers in the nooks and corners of Malabar, in spite of the temptations of critical thought. The *Guru-Maṭham*<sup>9</sup> at Chittur (Cochin State) the small shrine at *Trikkaṅṅiyūr*<sup>10</sup> built on the ruins of his house, one family at *Āmakkāvū*<sup>11</sup> ten miles N. E. of Guruvāyūr, and another at *Perumāngōḍ* (Cōziath House, S. Malabar)<sup>12</sup> still

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Popular tradition believes that Eḷuttaccan was addicted to drink, and this incident is often regarded as a justification for that habit by his admirers who are unable to reconcile his greatness with a vice of the kind which by the way has no authentic evidence in its support.

9. This is the place where Eḷuttaccan is believed to have attained Samādhi.' Dr. Burnell, who visited this place, has written an interesting account of this institution which is looked upon by the people of the locality with great reverence and enjoys the sanctity of a temple with daily Pūja.

10. The sand from the compound where the house of Eḷuttaccan stood once is even now taken by the neighbours to be used when children are to be initiated in letters in the belief that they will learn quicker. It is a traditional custom in Malabar to practice the art of writing in the beginning on the sand with the first finger. Writing on the palm leaf manuscript is the second stage. In modern times paper has taken the place of the palm leaf.

11. This family according to tradition is that of Eḷuttaccan's wife. Whether Eḷuttaccan had a wife or not is still a disputed point.

12. The members of this family are well known 'Śāktēyis' and look upon Eḷuttaccan as their first guru who according to their family tradition settled down there in his second incarnation. There seems to be a confusion of identity in this story. Eḷuttaccan's first disciple was famous for his tāntrik knowledge and practice. By second incarnation probably the second guru of the line is meant.

cherish the memory of this great poet-saint. The living representative of the pedigree which is maintained by the Gurumatham performs the Śrāddha ceremony of Ežuttaccan on the Utram day in the month of Dhanu (the Malayālam month that begins from the 14th of December), and the celebration has become an annual function of the institution. The professional village teachers of S. Malabar claim direct descent from Ežuttaccan and invoke his blessings on the 'Vidyārambham' day.<sup>13</sup> It is not possible to harmonise the bewildering mass of legends about Ežuttaccan, which are often mutually contradictory but at the same time give the impression that a complex personality which defied analysis and wielded tremendous influence on contemporary life, lurks in them. The name of Ežuttaccan is even now a source of living inspiration to the people of Kēraḷa, and its magic effect still remains a mystery. He was a pioneer in more fields than one, literature, philosophy, religion, and a form of t̄antric cult, and he seems to have founded a school of his own in each. His followers fall into two clear-cut divisions, one adhering to the method of teaching which was his contribution to the realm of education and the other practising the t̄antric art of which he was the guiding spirit. In the field of literature he was the model for several centuries and even now reigns supreme in all his glory. Other minor stars have come and gone, but the sun of Ežuttaccan shines for all ages.

The study of such a complex personality that has become an integral part of the culture of Kēraḷa is no doubt an education by itself.

There is therefore, nothing surprising in the fact that when once the deification was accomplished popular imagination embellished the imagery by additional details in the shape of stories rendering the task of the future biographer more difficult. The monumental literary productions of Ežuttaccan are always before the public as living embodiments of his greatness, and their fancy seems to have run riot in their enthusiasm to honour their great poet, each generation adding its own quota to the general stock of stories. The biographer is thus confronted with a rich legacy of legend which gives him enough material for reflection and discrimi-

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13. 'Vidyārambham' literally means the beginning of learning and is performed as a ritual on the day after 'Navami' during Dusserah Season.

nation. The vastness of the material also threatens to baffle him ; but that is no excuse for giving up the attempt.

*Legendary account of Eḷuttaccan's Life.*

Eḷuttaccan was born in a poor family called Tuṅcattu at Tṛk-kaṇṭiyūr, a mile away from the Tirur Railway Station (S. Mala-bar). As a child he seems to have exhibited uncommon intelligence, which tradition says, excited the jealousy of the local Nambūdiri Brāhmans, who in consequence bore illwill towards the talented boy and created difficulties in his way. Mr. F. W. Ellis writes as follows about this aspect of the poet's life :—

“ The difficulties with which he had to trouble gave him an energy of character which it is probable he would not have possessed had his caste been without blemish.<sup>14</sup> The Brahmins envied his genius and learning and are said to have seduced him by the art of sorcery into the habit of inebriety wishing to overshadow the mental powers which they feared. The poet, however, triumphed over his habits, though he could not abandon them, and in revenge against those whom he considered the cause of his debasement he opposed himself openly to the prejudice and intolerance of the Brahmins. The mode of vengeance he chose was the exaltation of the Malayālam tongue, declaring his intention to raise this inferior dialect of Tamil (?) to an equality with the sacred language of the Gods and Ṛṣis, i.e. Sanskrit. In the prosecution of this purpose he enriched Malayālam with the translations I have mentioned ”.<sup>15</sup>

After receiving his early education in the traditional way he is believed to have travelled in the other parts of India and acquired a mastery of Sanskrit and Dravidian languages. He returned home after some years and settled down as a teacher, continuing

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14. Eḷuttaccan according to tradition belonged to Cakkāla Nāyar clan (Oil Mongers) one of the subdivisions of the Nāyar community ; on this point the author of the Malabar Manual adds the following footnote :—

“Mr. Ellis supposed him to be the illegitimate son of a Brahmin woman, but there is nothing to support this, and on the contrary tradition says he was a Sudra (Nāyar?).” Mr. Ellis may have confounded the tradition about the great Sankarācārya with the tradition about him.”

Both Messrs. Logan and Ellis have misquoted the tradition which makes Eḷuttaccan the son of a Nambūdiri born of a nāyar woman.

15. Malabar Manual by Mr. William Logan (1887), Vol. I, p. 92-94.

his literary pursuits and giving free instruction to his disciples. His genius soon won recognition, and great literary men of the day like Mēppattūr Bhaṭṭatiri<sup>16</sup> sought his friendship, which again gave rise to a good number of stories.<sup>17</sup> The friendship was fruitful on either side. Bhaṭṭatiri is supposed to have been responsible for introducing Eḷuttaccan to the Ambalappuḷa Rāja<sup>18</sup> at whose instance he wrote Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇam, and Aḷuvāncēri Tamprākkaḷ.<sup>19</sup> His great works "Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇam" and "Mahābhārata"<sup>20</sup> were written in this period. Eḷuttaccan's fame and character attracted disciples from various parts of the province; and ere long a new school in literature, art and philosophy, with Bhakti (devotion) as the cardinal principle came into being under his inspiring guidance. The system of village education introduced by him was accepted throughout N. Kēraḷa, and it lingers even now in some remote corners. He lived the life of a saint,<sup>21</sup> which made his devotees look upon his works with an amount of reverence which no other work in Malayālam ever enjoyed either before or after. A visit from him was considered a rare honour by every Malabār household, and the palm leaf mss.<sup>22</sup> of his works and other relics of his are still preserved as sacred souvenirs in various houses of Malabār. He seems to have

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16. Author of Nārāyaṇyam, a famous Sanskrit work. See below next page. He also hails from the same place where Eḷuttaccan was born.

17. One of these relates to the advice given by Eḷuttaccan to Mēppattūr to write his "Nārāyaṇyam" in Sanskrit, which is based on Bhāgavata Purāna describing the ten incarnations of Viṣṇu. It is in the nature of a devotional poem addressed to the Lord of Guruvāyūr temple (S. Malabar) whom he identifies with Lord Viṣṇu.

18. Ambalappuḷa is in N. Travancore. The story is that this Raja asked Eḷuttaccan to transcribe into Malayālam script an Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa written in Telugu script. When doing this the poet wrote his Kiḷippāṭṭu.

19. The famous Nambūdiri Priest, who held many titles conferred upon him by the then reigning kings of Kēraḷa, whose coronations were consecrated by him. The reference at the end of Brahmāṇḍa Purāna to Nētranārāyaṇa, according to some critics, relates to Tamprākkaḷ.

20. Vide the chapters 3 and 4 for further particulars about these works.

21. The Poet had a daughter according to one account and according to another a niece.

22. A Nambūdiri family at Camravaṭṭam not far from his birth-place still preserves a palm leaf Ms. of Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa which is believed to be in his own handwriting and has been presented to them by the author. An iron pencil supposed to have been presented by Eḷuttaccan is kept in the Cerukāla family (Nāyar) at Chowghat.

spent his last days in Chittūr<sup>23</sup> (Cochin State) and attained "Samādhi" at the "Gurumaṭham"<sup>24</sup> which still exists as his memorial. The name of Eḷuttaccan later on became a synonym for preceptor or guru, and the various saints who succeeded the founder as presidents of the Maṭham assumed that title. Four important names, Sūryanārāyaṇan, Karuṇākaran, Dēvaguru, and Gōpālan, are mentioned in the genealogy or Guruparampara of the institution.

### *His birth and family.*

It is a pity that reliable accounts of Eḷuttaccan's parentage are not available and that people of Malabar who deified him did not think it worth while to write the biography of such an eminent personality. Had it not been for the material handed down to us by tradition, which by its very nature cannot be considered authentic, we should have been absolutely in the dark about his life or the various factors that went to its making. To begin with, we are confronted with a story relating to his birth which bristles with improbabilities. It opens with the arrival of a Nambūdiri Brāhman who is on his way back home from Trivandrum after the Muṛajapam<sup>25</sup> ceremony at a Nāyar house at Veṭṭattunāḍ one evening. He seeks shelter there for the night. He is given a bed in the portico of the house but instead of sleeping he walks in the courtyard, occasionally looking at the stars. A Nāyar virgin who happened to be awake at the time observes the restlessness of the guest through the window of her room and enquires the reason. He informs her that he is an astrologer and that he is sorry that a good "Muhūrtam" (auspicious hour) which if used for a union will lead to the birth of a great soul, is passing away. The innocent girl requests that the favour be conferred upon her, and the generous-minded nambūdiri gives her his company for the night. Eḷuttaccan is supposed to have been born as a result of this union.

The fertile brain that invented this story has neither sense of time nor proportion. He speaks of the 'Muṛajapam' that was

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23. There is a difference of opinion as to the exact founder of the institution. The matter is discussed at length in the course of the chapter.

24. Literally the maṭham (sacred residence) of the guru (the great teacher).

25. A religious ceremony conducted by Brāhmins lasting for 41 days. It was started by Mārttāṇḍa Varma, the great ruler of Travancore who brought the whole province under his sway, as a means of expiation of the sins committed by him during his conquest.

instituted by Mārttāṇḍavarma, who was a contemporary of Kun-  
 can Nambiyār, who lived at least a hundred years after Eḷuttaccan.  
 It does not stand to reason that the Brāhman astrologer who  
 thought of an auspicious hour for a union and who was sorry that  
 he could not reach his home in time could not find it out earlier  
 with the help of his knowledge of astrology and make an honest  
 attempt to be with his people at the so called auspicious hour and  
 give them the benefit thereof. The generosity that prompted  
 him to present an extraordinary child to a stranger is incredible  
 indeed. Even supposing that the Nāyar woman happened to be  
 awake to notice his sleep-walking tendency, the question why he  
 selected a Nāyar house for his night's rest when there were in the  
 neighbourhood many houses of Brāhmanas who would have with  
 pleasure and with profit too, welcomed a guest of his attainments  
 calls for an answer. Besides, what happened to the male members  
 of the family at the time? Were there none? It is the custom in  
 Malabār joint-families that men guests generally sleep either in  
 the spacious verandah of the house or in outhouses along with  
 the male members of the family. The story gives us the picture  
 of a family where there were only two souls—probably  
 mother and daughter—living, and where they were in the habit of  
 receiving guests for the night. As against this we have it on the  
 authority of Eḷuttaccan himself that he had an elder brother,<sup>26</sup>  
 by name Rāman, who was himself a scholar of repute with a good  
 number of disciples around him. A woman of such a family that  
 enjoyed a status which could be the envy of any household in  
 Malabār hardly fits in as the heroine of a story of the kind. Any-  
 one who went to Rāman's house would have regarded as an honour  
 the personal acquaintance of the renowned scholar who presided  
 over its destinies. It is no disgrace to be poor. If on the other  
 hand one born of poor parentage works his way up to a position of  
 material prosperity and fame it is all the more creditable to him.  
 Happily in the case of Eḷuttaccan it is the other way round. By

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26. Agrajanmamasatām ..... Uḷkurunninkal Vāzka  
 Rāmanā-mācaryanum'.....

“അഗ്രജൻ മമ സതം വിദ്യാമഗ്രസരൻ  
 മൽഗുരനഥനന്ദനകരന്തവസി കരളോടും  
 ഉദാകരണിജൻ വാഴ്വരമനാമാചാര്യനും.”  
 മുഖ്യന്മാരായ ഗുരുജ്ഞന്മാർ മറുഭജ്യന്മാരും.

“May my brother, by name Rāman, foremost among scholars, and  
 my own guru reside with his innumerable disciples in my heart (Bless me)  
 along with other preceptors of mine.”

the accident of his birth he inherited a tradition of scholarship of a very high order, which he by his literary achievements enriched and illuminated. The stigma of illegitimacy and obscurity sought to be created by an improbable story is evidently the result of an interested propaganda started by a section of the people who were jealous of his reputation and unique position in the literary field. Some readers are inclined to read a personal note in the general observation<sup>27</sup> which Eṣuttaccan makes in his Bhāratam in the course Viduravākyam. The justification for the suggestion is that the sentiment does not find a place in the original Mahābhārata ; but there are numerous instances of such original ideas in Eṣuttaccan's works that we cannot attach any undue significance to the passage in question. Further, even without a suggestion of the kind the observation is quite appropriate in the epic, in which the lives of great men<sup>28</sup> whose origin was not in keeping with the greatness they achieved later are described. As Mr. P. K. Nārāyaṇa Piḷḷai pertinently remarks :<sup>29</sup> The sooner the story is forgotten the better for the fair name of the great poet-saint and the self-respect of the people of Malabar! It is interesting to note in this connection that similar stories are current about Kannaśśa Paṇikkar<sup>30</sup> and Kuncan Nambiyār.<sup>31</sup> Either Brāhman blessing or Brahman parentage was considered essential for the greatness of any man who did not belong to that sacred fraternity. It seems highly probable that there was subtle propaganda behind these stories.

*His name.*

The term Eṣuttaccan as has already been indicated, is derived from two words Eṣuttu=letters, and Accan=leader or father. It sounds more like a title than a name. The expression ' Tuṅjattu ' is

27. Tāpasanmāruṭṭeyum Vāhini-māruṭṭeyum . . .

"It is unnecessary to enquire into the genesis of hermits, rivers, and great men."

“താപസന്മാരുടെയും വാഹിനിമാരുടെയും ശോഭതേടീടും മഹാത്മാക്കൾ വംശത്തിന്റേറയും ഉത്ഭവസ്ഥാനമന്വേഷിക്കേണ്ട ഭിദ്യന്മാർക്കി-ല്ലാപത്തിമോഷമെന്നതോർക്കണം നരപരതേ.”

28. Vyāsa and the Pāṇḍavas for instance.

29. His treatise on Eṣuttaccan p. 11.

30. Vide Chapter I.

31. The well known satirist and poet of Malabar whose genius is responsible for the branch in Malayālam literature called Tuḷḷal.

no doubt the family name which usually the people of Malabār prefix to their personal name. Naturally therefore, scholars became interested in knowing the real name of the poet, and various suggestions as a result of speculations on the subject have been put forward. Mr. P. Govinda Pillay<sup>32</sup> suggests 'Śankaran' as a probability and 'Rāmānujan' as a possibility after the poet's tour in the eastern districts, where he is reported to have come into contact with the disciples of the celebrated Vaiṣṇavācārya Rāmānuja<sup>33</sup> and learned his philosophy from them. Mr. Govinda Pillay does not take readers into his confidence and tell them how he arrived at his conclusions. How the name 'Śankaran' occurred to him is a mystery, as we do not find the slightest hint to that effect in any of Eḷuttaccan's well known works. As to the adopted name 'Rāmānujan,' it is still open to doubt whether Eḷuttaccan was a close student of the theory of Viśiṣṭādwaita which Rāmānuja formulated in his teachings and works. Mr. R. Nārāyaṇa Paṇikkar<sup>34</sup> is inclined to accept Mr. Govinda Pillay's suggestion regarding Rāmānujan and advances an ingenious reason in support of his contention. He is at the same time unwilling to concede that the poet assumed the name of his guru, a practice which is against Hindu tradition. He argues that since Eḷuttaccan was a devotee of Rāma he was anxious to associate his name with that of the hero of Rāmāyaṇa and was at the same time afraid lest the adoption of the hero's name, as in the case of the Guru's name, would be regarded as presumptuous. The name of Lakṣmaṇa, the dutiful brother of Rāmā, seemed to be the next alternative, and the pseudonym 'Rāmānujan' was therefore decided upon. Mr. Paṇikkar forgets that the word 'Rāmānujan' applies with equal force to all the younger brothers of Rāma and not exclusively to Lakṣmaṇa and in the case of an adopted name which is generally resorted to for a specific purpose, no one would like to leave its implication in doubt. While Mr. Paṇikkar's ingenuity and the wealth of material which he usually brings in are admirable, his reasoning is not equally acceptable in this case. Mr. P. K. Nārāyaṇa Pillay, the well known scholar and critic, has another theory.<sup>35</sup> Mr. Sanka-

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32. The author of the History of Malayālam language and literature—vide p. 176 of Vol. 1 of his work.

33. Some go to the length of asserting that Eḷuttaccan was a disciple of Rāmānuja himself. Those who believe in this have no idea of chronology, as the famous philosopher lived in the 11th Century A.D.

34. Kēraḷabhāṣā-Sāhityacaritram. Page 285-286, Vol. II.

35. Pages 4-12 of his work on T. Eḷuttaccan.

ran Ežuttaccan<sup>36</sup> in his work on T. Ežuttaccan quotes a ślōka<sup>37</sup> which is chanted by the gurumaṭham sanyāsins during their daily prayers and in which the following names of Gurus or Ācāryas occur :—

- |                        |                     |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Tuñjattu Śrī Guru.  | 4. Śrī Dēva Guru.   |
| 2. Śrī Karuṇākaran.    | 5. Śrī Gōpāla Guru. |
| 3. Śrī Sūryanārāyaṇan. |                     |

In this list the first Guru is not mentioned by any specific name. If it refers to Rāman, the elder brother of Ežuttaccan, whose benediction he invokes at the commencement of his Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa, Mr. P. K. thinks the second name, viz., Karuṇākaran, must have been that of the poet. There is one difficulty in accepting the position assumed by Mr. P. K. It is not clear from the ślōka quoted with whom the guruparampara originated. If it began with Rāman (the elder brother of the poet), the question arises why his name was not specifically mentioned. The probabilities are that the reference had nothing to do with him. As Mr. P. K. himself suggests, the ślōka in question was composed by some representative of the line long after the demise of the gurus mentioned therein and long after the Maṭham was founded. Besides, persistent tradition and belief point to the inference that it is the name of the author of A. R. and M. BH. who in his varied capacity as poet, preceptor and saint achieved greater fame than his elder brother, with which the ‘Guru Maṭham’ is associated. Mr. P. K.’s assumption that the first name in the ślōka refers to Ežuttaccan’s brother would lead us to the conclusion that the Maṭham was first founded as a memorial to the elder brother of the poet and not to the celebrated poet himself. This contention is hardly tenable. Except for the reference in A. R., M.BH. and Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa we hear nothing about this Rāman, whose importance evidently lies in the fact that he was a great scholar himself and he was our poet’s guru. It is nowhere

36. Page 5 of his book.

37. Vande.....Tuñjattežum Srīgurum

Vande.....Karuṇākaranca.....

Srīsūryanārāyaṇam.....

Vande Dēvagurum.....Gōpālakasrīgurum.

Gurumaṭham pamphlet No. 1, p. 8.

“വന്ദേഹം ഗുര സമ്പ്രദായമനിശം തുഞ്ചത്തേഴും ശ്രീഗുരും  
 വന്ദേ ശ്രീകരുണാകരഞ്ച പരമം ശ്രീ സൂര്യനാരായണം  
 വന്ദേ ദേവഗുരും പരാപരഗുരും ഗോപാലക ശ്രീഗുരും  
 വന്ദേ നിത്യമനന്തപൂണ്ണമമലം വന്ദേ സമസ്താനം ഗുരൂൻ.”

mentioned that he was an author. He was no doubt a local celebrity whose position as a teacher and eminent scholar commanded reverence and regard from his disciples. Far be it from me to suggest that he should be deprived of the greatness which is his by virtue of his unique position in his own field. What I want to emphasise is that his disciple and brother by his unrivalled eminence in the teaching world, the realm of letters, and the society of Kēraḷa acquired a status which was not by the very nature of the case, within the reach of his elder brother ; and it is therefore more reasonable to assume that the people of Kēraḷa thought of a memorial to him and not to the elder brother. The fact that he was known better by his title than by his name lends additional weight to the argument. When the people of a country confer a title on one of their distinguished citizens it is generally done as a mark of their respect, regard and gratitude for the services rendered by him ; and they would naturally prefer to call their hero by the title which they respectfully bestowed on him and which has some direct reference to the chief characteristics of his personality instead of by his name, which is useful only for the purpose of identification. We do not find the title 'Ezuttaccan' conferred upon any other distinguished son of Kēraḷa before the author of A. R. and the first person who received the title was known as 'the Ezuttaccan of the Tuñjattu family.' This explains why the first guru in the ślōka quoted was referred to as only 'the guru' and not by any specific name. The traditional practice in Kēraḷa also justifies this omission. It is a common Maḷayāli custom to prefix the name of the house to the name of an individual : if that person by any personal distinction acquires a title that generally replaces the name. Many well known men of Kēraḷa are designated thus :—Vilwamangalattu Swāmiyār,<sup>38</sup> Pāzūr Kaṇiyān,<sup>39</sup> Mangāṭṭaccan,<sup>40</sup> Pāliyattaccan,<sup>41</sup> Kavaḷappāra

38. The famous Nambūdiri saint who as a brahmacāri fell in love with a woman contrary to the tradition of his vocation and who became a sanyāsin as a result of her advice. Vilwamangalam is the name of his illom (house). Swāmiyār is the common term for a saint.

39. The great astrologer of Kēraḷa, who is believed to be inspired when making astrological predictions. Pāzūr = house name. Kaṇiyān = astrologer. His descendants still continue the profession and retain their traditional prestige.

40. The Prime Ministers of the Zamorin and Cochin Maharaja respectively.

Mangāṭṭ  
and  
Pāliyatt

} House names—accan=leader or protector.

41. 'Ibid.'

Nāyar<sup>42</sup> are instances in point. In all these cases, and the number can be easily increased, it is only the house-name and the title that are mentioned. It is therefore safe to conclude that the people of Kēraḷa conferred the title of Eḷuttaccan on the author of the two epics and loved to call and know him by that as a token of their regard and esteem for him, and not by his real name, which naturally after some time was dropped and forgotten. As the title was unknown before, there was no need to distinguish the poet-saint, the first holder of the title, from other Eḷuttaccans. The fact that the real name of the great teacher and poet is not known is therefore no discredit either to himself or to the people of Malabar, who, on the contrary, honoured their idol and themselves by a distinctive title which signified at once the extent of their homage and his greatness.

Those who followed his footsteps in literature and the profession of teaching were also by courtesy called by the same title Eḷuttaccan, which in course of time became a general appellation for teachers.

*Eḷuttaccan's date. Views of European scholars.*

When we come to the question of Eḷuttaccan's date we are fortunately on more certain grounds, although no absolute precision can yet be attained. The first European scholar to take an interest in the great poet of Kēraḷa was Dr. Burnell. He published a note on Eḷuttaccan in one of the numbers of Trübner's American and Oriental Literary Record<sup>43</sup>. It is interesting in many respects, and I reproduce it *in extenso* below.

“Some five years ago when I was residing at Palghat in Malabar I had occasion to pass through the Chittur Taluq of the Cochin State and took the opportunity of visiting an Agrahāram or Brahmin Village there which is remarkable in the history of Malabar. It was founded by Eḷuttaccan the author of all the popular versions in Malayālam of sanskrit purāṇas and epic poems and made over to a few Brāhmin families on condition of their preserving always in a house there mss. of his works copied by his daughter to which daily reverence was to be paid. Tuñjatteḷuttaccan was by no means of high caste but he must have been a man

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42. The feudal chieftain of Kavalappāra. His name is that of the place as well as the house.

43. January Number 1871 page 78.

of great talents. Before his time the characters used for writing Malayālam was the imperfect alphabet<sup>44</sup> we find in the famous inscriptions in the possession of the Jews and the Syrians of Cochin. He managed to learn Sanskrit though as his translations prove in a very superficial way—and translated the Rāmāyaṇa, Bhāgavata (Mahābhārata ? ?) and some other works and introduced the use of Ārya alphabet now used for writing Malayālam but which before his time was appropriated to the sacred Sanskrit and known only to the Nambūdiris and Brāhmins. I found that the house at the end of the south side of the street was devoted to the preservation of the mss. and with a little persuasion, the Brahmin who attended to it allowed me to enter. I found the mss. on a copper tray placed on a stool and smeared with sandal paste and flowers thrown over them. There was only one of the original mss. left, a beautifully written copy of the vernacular Bhāgavata on about 200 talipat leaves. Many of the leaves were broken, but at the end I found the title deed of the village which proved that Tuñjattežuttaccan lived at the end of the 17th Century A.D. This is corroborated by the succession of teachers beginning with him. His history is however completely overlaid with fables and even his real name (Tuñjattu is the house name and Ežuttaccan the name of the caste) is quite unknown. The other mss. in the house were put there to replace the originals which had been burned in a fire about 30 years before and were perfectly worthless (??) In the neighbourhood the legendary localities of the Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata have been localised and are thoroughly believed in. Before the 17th Century there seems to have been but little vernacular literature in Malabar<sup>45</sup>. Dr. Gundert discovered some old songs but they are quite Hindu in their tone.”

We are at present concerned only with the title deed and its date. The other issues raised in the above extract will be subjected to a closer analysis when Ežuttaccan's position in Malayālam literature is discussed in the course of this work. It evidently relates to the date of the founding of the Gurumaṭham of Chittūr. As already indicated, opinion among scholars as to the real founder of the maṭham is not unanimous, although local tradition ascribes it to Ežuttaccan himself. It is extremely unlikely that a man of Ežuttaccan's eminence, who studiously avoids personal references

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44. Perhaps the author refers to Vaṭṭežuttu and Kōležuttu.

45. Chapter 1 disproves this statement.

in his works except when praising his favourite deity Viṣṇu or others, his brother for instance, ever thought of a memorial for himself. The author of the *Malabar Manual*<sup>46</sup> gives a different version of the story. Says he—"It is said as Eḷuttaccan lay on his deathbed he told his daughter (?) that at a particular hour on a particular day in a certain month and a certain year which he named a youth would come to his house. His daughter was directed to have his house swept and garnished as for a distinguished guest and his directions were that to his visitor his sandals and his books should be given. On the appointed day and at the appointed hour came one Sūryanārāyaṇa Eḷuttaccan, then a youth of sixteen years and of the *Tarakan Caste*.<sup>47</sup> He received the sandals and the books and went his way. This Sūryanārāyaṇa became 'Gurunāthan' (Teacher or tutor) to the Zamorin and afterwards set out on a pilgrimage to Benares and other places, wandering about and leading a holy life till he was thirty two years old. He then returned to Malabar and was directed in a vision thrice repeated to settle on a river bank, then a jungle place, at what is now called Chittūr Tekkē Grāmam in Cochin territory east of Palghat. He then bought some ground and, helped by the Zamorin and others, built in one of the streets a row of houses for the Brāhmins and in the middle on the opposite side one for himself. He next invited some Brāhman families to settle there, which they did, attracted by the holiness of Sūryanārāyaṇa Eḷuttaccan's life and character. He never married, but lived and died a Sannyāsin (ascetic) and Tuñjatteḷuttaccan's relics were, it is said, there sacredly preserved and worshipped till with one exception they were destroyed by fire 30 or 40 years ago. The stool and the staff mentioned by Dr. Burnell in his *S. Indian Palaeography* belonged, it is said, to the ascetic and not to the father of modern Malayālam, and another fire it is believed destroyed these relics since Dr. Burnell's visit and also probably the Bhāgavatham, the only thing saved from the previous conflagration. Tuñjatteḷuttaccan's memory however, is not likely to die down, for relics thus lost are easily replaced and the sacred honours paid to them are easily paid to the substitutes." Both these accounts, though apparently contradictory, agree on one

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46. Pages 92, 94, Vol. 1.

47. This caste is to be distinguished from the Tarakans of Travancore, who are Christians. The Tarakans of S. Malabar are Hindus following trade as their vocation. They unlike the Nāyars follow the paternal system of inheritance and their marriage customs resemble those of the East Coast. Originally they must have been brokers, as "taraku" means brokerage.

point. There seems to be unanimity of opinion between them regarding the founder of the gurumaṭham. It is evident from Dr. Burnell's note that he saw at the gurumaṭham only the mss. copy of the Malayālam Bhāgavatam, and his observations on Eḷuttaccan's standing in the literary world of Kēraḷa are based on that only. A comparative study of A. R. and Mahābhāratam and Bhāgavatam will make anyone hesitate to accept the view that ascribes the authorship of Bhāgavatam to the master mind that produced the other two epics, as the former in all respects is a third rate work. Even as a translation its merits are not beyond question, as there are a good many passages, particularly in the Ēkādaśam, which show that the exact implications of the original have been either imperfectly understood or wrongly reproduced in the translation. It is the unanimous opinion of scholars that the only portion in it which possesses any literary merit is the Deśamam, which on that account is believed to be the result of Eḷuttaccan's master touch. It is highly probable therefore, that Sūryanārāyaṇa Eḷuttaccan, who from all accounts was more a saint than a poet, is the author of this Bhāgavatam. The reverence with which the work is regarded is perhaps part of the homage paid by the people of Kēraḷa to his saintly character. Besides, Bhāgavata Purāṇa being the mainstay of Vaiṣṇavic philosophy, the translation was welcomed by those belonging to the school as a solid contribution to their creed. As Eḷuttaccan was the founder of the school, his disciple quite possibly shared the glory of his guru through the medium of this work. With the passage of time the memories of the two Saints, having certain features in common, were mixed up in tradition and could not be easily separated. This fact, I am inclined to believe, also accounts for the uncertainty regarding the founder of the Maṭham. The version given by the author of the Malabar Manual has therefore to be preferred in point of authenticity. Dr. Burnell also supports this view indirectly.

If Sūryanārāyaṇa Eḷuttaccan is accepted as the founder of the gurumaṭham<sup>48</sup> and if he is assigned on the authority of Dr. Burnell to the latter half of the 17th century, the date of 'the Eḷuttaccan', who appears as first and Sūryanārāyaṇan as the third in the genealogy maintained by the Gurumaṭham, must be pushed back two generations earlier.

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48. The author of the Gurumaṭham pamphlet No. 1 is also of this view (p. 3).

*The views of Malabar Scholars.*

Mr. Govinda Pillay, the author of the History of Malayālam Literature, makes a passing reference<sup>49</sup> to the views of Kōvunṇi Nedungāḍi,<sup>50</sup> Dr. Burnell, Dr. Gundert, and Mr. Logan. Nedungāḍi assigns Eḷuttaccan to the 7th Century M.E. (15th Century A.D.) while others bring him down to the 17th century. Mr. Govinda Pillay prefers a *via media*, as he thinks Nedungāḍi's date is too early and that proposed by the others too late, and he is inclined to fix the latter half of the 15th century or the first half of the 16th century A.D. as Eḷuttaccan's date. He does not argue out the point, but seems to have tumbled upon the truth by instinct. He cites the Kali chronogram 'Āyurārōgya Saukhyam' that appears at the end of the Nārāyaṇyam of Mēppattūr, whom he regards as a contemporary of our poet, and also sponsors a statement that Eḷuttaccan was middle-aged when Bhaṭṭatiri was young. He leaves us absolutely in the dark as to the authority on which he relies for the view.

In the introduction to the Malayālam edition<sup>51</sup> (1878) of A. R. Kaṭṭayāṭṭu Govinda Menon, the last prime minister of the Zamorin draws attention to another chronogram "Pavitramparam Saukhyam" (Sūrya) which he thinks has reference to Eḷuttaccan's Samādhī. The same is quoted by the Gurumaṭham authorities also. Here again we have no idea of the source. The appearance of Sūryah in another version of the same chronogram makes us pause before we accept it without any reservations. It is on a par with the oft-quoted chronogram about the great Śankara, viz., Ācāryavāgabhēdya, which by its very isolation is of suspicious authenticity. It was usual with Sanskrit writers of the age, and also with Malayālam writers who knew Sanskrit, to frame a chronogram at the end of their works to denote the dates of their completion. The one under discussion is not associated with any notable work, and it is not safe to build too much on such a shaky foundation.

Mr. R. Nārāyaṇa Paṇikkar<sup>52</sup> supports Mr. Govinda Pillay in his attempt to establish Eḷuttaccan's contemporaneity with Mēppattūr,

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49. The history of Malayālam Literature, p. 174-175, Vol. 1.

50. The author of "Kēraḷa Kaumudī" a treatise on Malayālam Grammar and Rhetoric.

51. This is an edition in Malayālam characters of the original Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇam.

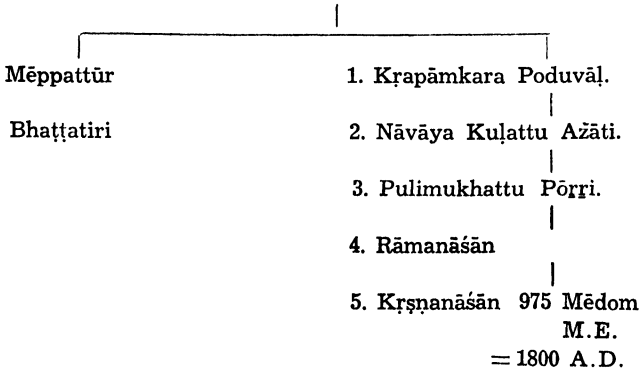
52. Kēraḷa Bhāṣā Sāhitya Caritram, Vol. II, p. 270-276.

and introduces Acyuta Piṣārōṭi, the legendary guru of Mēppattūr, into the discussion. He produces a genealogy of Piṣārōṭi<sup>53</sup> and his disciples which takes us five generations down, ending with Neḍumpurayil Kṛṣṇanāśān, whose chronicle records the specific dates of Mēppattūr Bhaṭṭatiri's birth and death—birth 735 M.E. (1531 A.D.), death 841 M.E. (1637 A.D.). As these dates generally agree with those given in chronograms in the famous works of Mēppattūr (it may be observed in passing that the author of the Nārāyaṇīyam lived 106 years), the date of Bhaṭṭatiri can be accepted beyond doubt. But it must be stated at the same time that irrefutable evidence of the kind is not available in proof of Eḷuttaccan's contemporaneity with Mēppattūr Bhaṭṭatiri, on which the whole theory is based and which even now is hanging loosely on tradition. Till such is forthcoming no final verdict can be pronounced on the subject.

There is another argument which Mr. Paṇikkar advances. This is suggested by a reference to a guru by name 'Nilakaṇṭhan' in the Harināmakīrttanam, a poem in stōtra style, which is generally assigned to Eḷuttaccan. Mr. Paṇikkar identifies this 'Nilakaṇṭhan', who is presumed to be a Nambūdiri, with the author of Tenkailāsanāthōdayam<sup>54</sup> and Cellūr Māhātmyam,<sup>55</sup> whose dates are ascertained to be 776 M.E. and 740 M.E. respectively. This

53. Piṣārōṭi was a famous astrologer, who hailed like Eḷuttaccan and Mēppattūr from Veṭṭattunāḍ and was a teacher of that Science.

#### ACYUTA PIṢĀRŌṬI.



54. and 55. Two Maṇipravāḷa Champus (compositions in mixed verse and prose), dealing with the importance of Trichur and Chittur temples in Cochin State.

theory raises a number of other issues which have to be elucidated. The reference<sup>56</sup> in question does not make it quite clear that this Nilakaṇṭhan was a Nambūdiri, although the name is more commonly used by the members of that community. Even assuming for argument's sake that it relates to a Nambūdiri, there was another Nilakaṇṭhan<sup>57</sup> who belonged to Trkkaṇṭhiyūr itself and is better known as a scholar and Tāntrikan and who being a neighbour stands a better chance of being Eḷuttaccan's guru. Even if the identity of Nilakaṇṭhan is established, there is no absolute certainty about the authorship of Harināmakīrttanam which by the way has a better claim to be regarded as Eḷuttaccan's work than Mahābhāgavatam.

*Mr. P. K. Nārāyaṇa Piḷḷay's Views.*

Mr. P. K. opens the discussion by recalling the kali date (Nākasyānyūnasaukhyam)<sup>58</sup> contained in the śloka relating to the founding of the Gurumaṭham of Chittūr, which according to this evidence took place on the 11th Tulām 720 M.E. (1555 A.D.).<sup>59</sup> There is no need to examine this point further, except to note that the śloka in question declares unmistakably Sūryanāyaṇan to be the founder of the Gurumaṭham, which had been in existence in the latter half of the 16th century A.D. In this connection Mr. P. K. suggests the probability of Sūryanārāyaṇan being the name of Eḷuttaccan himself, which is however not warranted by the passage<sup>60</sup> he quotes from 'Kaivalyanavanītam', in which Tuñjatācāryan and Sūryanārāyaṇācāryan are separately mentioned.

In examining the theory about the identity of 'Nilakaṇṭhan' Mr. P. K. is inclined to associate the name with the well-known author of Tantra Sangraham<sup>61</sup> and Ārya Bhaṭṭiyam<sup>62</sup> who belonged

56. Ampēnamenmanasi Srinilakanṭh guru.....

“അമ്പേണമെൻമനസി ശ്രീനീലകണ്ഠഗുരു  
 അംഭേരഹരക്ഷമിഹ വാഴൂന്നു ഞാനമിഹ  
 അവതാരരക്ഷരവു മോരോന്നിതെരമെഴിയി  
 ലവ്യേദുചേർക്കു ഹരി നാരായണായ നമഃ”

57. Mr. P. K. Nārāyaṇa Piḷḷay refers to this person: vide his work on Eḷuttaccan, p. 21.

58. Gurumaṭham pamphlet No. 1, p. 6.

59. This being the only evidence now available about the date of the foundation of Gurumaṭham it is not clear how Dr. Burnell assigns it to the 17th century.

60. P. K.'s T. Eḷuttaccan. Page 17.

61. An authoritative work on Tāntric cult.

62. A standard work on astrology.

to Trkkaṇṭiyūr, the birth place of Eḷuttaccan. The date of Tantra Samgraham, according to the internal evidence of the work, is 676 M.E. (1502 A.D.), which is 53 years earlier than the Gurumaṭham date. Mr. P. K.'s identification of Nilakaṇṭhan has some support from the fact that there exists a coterie of people following the Tantric cult in S. Malabar, of which Cōḷiyatt Eḷuttaccan's family (of Kaṭampaḷipuram S. Malabar) already referred to, is a notable example, claiming direct descent from Eḷuttaccan. It is probable that Eḷuttaccan learned the practice of the secret cult from this Nilakaṇṭhan.

But there is still the question of the authorship of Harināma Kīrtanam, in which the mention of Nilakaṇṭhan occurs staring us in the face. As I have already observed, it does not stand comparison with Eḷuttaccan's masterpieces, although I am prepared to admit that all the works of the same author cannot be expected to attain the same standard of excellence. I am at the same time, sure that scholars who have examined the work of a great writer will be able to discern traces of the master hand even in his second rate productions. The spontaneity and richness of expression and a charming effortless felicity of diction which are the outstanding characteristics of Eḷuttaccan's poetry are absent in Harināma Kīrtanam, which at the same time bears the stamp of the Eḷuttaccan-school in its profundity of thought, terseness of expression and Vaiṣṇavic bias. The doubt as to its authorship, however, is not groundless.

#### *A New Theory.*

With the above tentative conclusions about the age of Eḷuttaccan we will now proceed to view the question from another angle. There is one aspect of the subject raised by his insistence on the cult of Bhakti which so far has either escaped the attention of the scholars or received insufficient recognition at their hands. No student of Eḷuttaccan can fail to notice the extraordinary emphasis he lays on the doctrine of Bhakti and its efficacy as a stepping stone to salvation. Mēppattūr<sup>63</sup> and Pūntānam,<sup>64</sup> who lived in the same age also have the same dominant

63. His work 'Nārāyaṇīyam' embodies the outpourings of his devotion to the Lord of Guruvāyūr (Kṛṣṇa).

64. He sings:—

ഉണ്ണികൃഷ്ണൻ മനസ്സിൽ കളിക്കുമ്പോൾ ഉണ്ണികൾ മറെറുവേണമോ മക്കളായ്.  
 "When the boy Kṛṣṇa plays in the mind why should there be another boy as one's off-spring" in his Jñānappāna.

note in their works. It is worth while to enquire how far the social and political conditions of the day stood in need of a message of the kind which they were at pains to present to their contemporaries.

The following lines occurring in the prologue of A. R. deserve special notice in this connection.

<sup>65</sup> Those who are not devoted to me fall into the pitfalls of science in good faith and lose themselves.

<sup>66</sup> A hundred thousand births will not bring supreme knowledge and salvation to those devoid of Bhakti.

These sentiments are put in the mouth of Sīta, who at the instance of Rāma explains the inner significance of spiritual life and Rāma's incarnation to Hanumān, who is the supreme example of Bhakti (devotion to God). The doctrine of Bhakti<sup>67</sup> presupposes a favourite deity to whom the devotee surrenders or dedicates his or her life or service. Before we understand why the importance of selfless devotion to God was proclaimed to a race of warriors (Nāyars) that once worshipped self as a deity and strength as a virtue, paying no attention to the soul or its struggles, we must peep into their past history.

The year 825 A.D., which saw the commencement of the Kollam Era,<sup>68</sup> is in every way remarkable in the history of Malabar. It marked the end of the Perumāḷ period, in which generally peace and prosperity prevailed, and the dawn of a new epoch which converted Kēraḷa into a hot-bed of internal dissension, disorder and warfare. The removal of a single central authority that for long

65. Malbhaktivimukhanmār.....

66. Bhaktihīnanmārku.....

“മതഭക്തിവിമുഖന്മാർ ശാസ്ത്രഗാന്തങ്ങളുംതോറും  
സൽഭാവംകൊണ്ടു ചാടിവീണ മോഹിച്ചിടുന്നു  
ഭക്തിഹീനന്മാർക്കു ആറായിരം ജന്മംകൊണ്ടും  
സിദ്ധിക്കയില്ല തത്ത്വജ്ഞാനവും കൈവലുവും.”

67. Writers like Romain Rolland prefer the word 'dedication' as self-surrender is the cardinal principle of the cult.

68. There are various theories about the Kollam Era. Some believe that it commemorates the partitions of Malabar into small principalities under different chieftains by Cēramān Perumāḷ. Others associate it with the death of the famous philosopher Sankara. The astrologers look upon it as the date on which the astrological calculations based on the movements of the moon gave place to those of the sun.

had bound together the various warring elements at least for political purposes, was the signal for a general revolt on the part of the different Nāyar chieftains, who saw in it an opportunity to declare their independence and consolidate their position. The dominant class of Nāyars, consisting of ruling chiefs, the army and leading commoners, first turned their attention to the village assemblies, which from ancient times virtually controlled the administration, settled disputes, and formed the back-bone of Malabar polity.<sup>69</sup>

### *Nāṭuvāzis.*

The so called Nāṭuvāzis were only the executive authorities of these assemblies and carried out their orders. They consisted of the representatives of the people, and by their very structure were opposed to any attempt at personal aggrandisement, managing the affairs of the state with a view to secure the general welfare of the people. The chieftains found in them a serious obstacle to their ambitions, and therefore endeavoured to undermine their authority gradually. The assemblies were not suppressed immediately. They continued to function as before; but the war-lords, who had the man-power of the state under their control, began to dictate terms to them.<sup>70</sup> A systematic policy of the kind pursued for some time resulted in the loss of their decisive voice in matters of State, which was secured by the chieftains, to whom the assemblies began to be subordinate. Having consolidated their position thus by converting the assemblies into mere advisory bodies, the chieftains, who had by this time assumed the title of Rāja embarked upon more ambitious ventures.<sup>71</sup> The Perumāḷ rule, with its paramount power over the whole of Kērala, still remained their ideal; and the glamour of the Māmānkam<sup>72</sup> festival, which conferred the suzer-

69. Malabar Manual by Logan, Vol. I, p. 88, 89. History of Kērala by K. P. Padmanābha Menon, Vol. I, p. 250-269.

70. Modern Europe affords ample illustrations of democratic countries yielding to dictators during critical times.

71. The position is analogous to that of 'Vairājya' described in Ait. Brāhmana VIII—14, p. 203.

जनपदा उत्तरकुरव उत्तरमद्रा इति वैराज्यायैव ते ऽभिषिच्यन्ते

Vide also "Corporate Organisation in Ancient India" by Majumdar,

p 89.

72. The festival that was celebrated once in 12 years in front of the Tirunāvāy Temple (Ponnāni Taluq, S. Malabar). It was presided by one of the

ainty on the Perumāl, the chieftain who presided over the function, developed a spirit of competition among the different chiefs who coveted the honour. Since the days of the Perumāl the presidential chair of the festival was occupied for a long time by the Vaḷḷuvanāḍ Rāja by common consent. The first formidable rival who challenged this position was the Zamorin of Calicut, who mustered his forces and dealt the final blow to the occupant of the Māmānkam chair in 925 A.D. (100 M.E.).<sup>73</sup> Before this feat was accomplished the Zamorins had to their credit a series of victories and conquests, the most important of them being of the Pōlanāḍ and Veṭṭattunāḍ. They had by this time assumed the title of *Kunnala Kōn*,<sup>74</sup> literally king of the hills and the waves and become the most powerful and wealthy potentate of the West Coast, enjoying the monopoly of an extensive trade with Arabia<sup>75</sup> and other countries of the West. They had in their wars of aggrandisement the active support of Arab merchants, who had by this time grown to be an influential community in Calicut and were known by the name Māppiḷas.<sup>76</sup> As sailors and merchants they were supreme in the Arabian Sea. Their resources were always at the disposal of the Zamorin, who was the first to welcome them to the West Coast, and their loyalty to their patron was in every way remarkable. The part played by one Arab merchant, by name Kōya,<sup>77</sup>

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Chieftains of Malabar who was for the time acknowledged to be the overlord of Kēraḷa. Owing to rivalries between different parties, men from outside who were above party politics were also chosen and the selection was from the Royal families of Cēras or Cōlas or Pāṇḍyas. They were called Perumāḷs. The festival was significant in many ways. A large assembly representing the various political units of Kēraḷa sat in Session then and decided questions of an all-Kēraḷa character. There were also Committees appointed to decide and award prizes to men for distinction in various arts and sciences, including the art of theft. The last Māmānkam was held in 786 M. E. Mithunam 22 (1612 A.D.).

73. Kēraḷa Caritram by K. Kṛṣṇanunni Nāyar, Chapter 14.

74. Kunnu=hill, ala=wave, Kōn=a king.

75. Kēraḷa Caritram by K. K. Nāyar, p. 14.

76. The meaning of this word is not properly understood by many. Some confuse this with a Tamil word Māpīla which means son-in-law, and others ingeniously derive it from Mahā-Pillai, Big son. The proper derivation seems to be from the Arabic word Māfil, which means congregational worship which distinguishes other religionists from the Hindus. The term is used for Christians also in Travancore who also follow the same method of worship.

77. Kōya seems a corruption of the Persian word Khōja=a gentleman. Kōya is a title of distinction among the Māppiḷas of Malabar. Āṅrukkōyat-tāngaḷ of Ponani and Calicut are the most prominent of such title-holders.

in the Zamorin's triumph at Tirunāvāy is one of the many instances in which the Arab merchants exhibited their readiness to co-operate with the Zamorin in his career of conquest. But the assumption of the Māmānkam Chair was only the beginning of a protracted struggle.<sup>78</sup> At every Māmānkam festival after this event the Vaḷḷuvanāḍ Rāja sent one hundred soldiers<sup>79</sup> to contest 'the chair of honour' on his behalf. They put up a desperate fight against odds (sometimes 50,000 men), and every one of them died on the spot. The superior might of the Zamorin was not shaken by these impressive exhibitions of valour, which at the same time had the effect of keeping alive the fire of hostility between the two Royal families, which not infrequently extended beyond the grounds of the Māmānkam.<sup>80</sup> Gradually annexation by force of territories<sup>81</sup> belonging to the Vaḷḷuvanāḍ Rāja by the Zamorin became a regular feature of this rivalry, which entailed continuous warfare for several centuries, throwing the whole of S. Malabar, comprising Veṭṭattunāḍ, Ernāḍ, Vaḷḷuvanāḍ, and Nedunganāḍ, into a condition of devastation and decay. The Zamorin's dealings in Veṭṭattunāḍ brought him into conflict with the Royal family of Perumpaṭappu (Cochin), whose relations with Veṭṭattunāḍ were always friendly. Very often members of the Veṭṭattunāḍ family were adopted by Perumpaṭappu.<sup>82</sup> The wars carried on by successive Zamorins had most disastrous effects upon the people and the country at large. Bloodthirsty ruffians posing as the guardians of peace seized upon the slightest excuse to pounce upon their neighbours and plunder their property, and the atmosphere was surcharged with mutual disgust and despair, resulting in a general sense of insecurity and fear. The war mentality, sedulously nurtured by constant conflict reduced humane

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78. The vanquished kingdoms of Pōlanāḍ and Veṭṭattunāḍ never missed an opportunity afforded by the Zamorin's preoccupation elsewhere to put up a strenuous fight to regain their lost position.

It must be remembered that the convention of the age demanded that the President at Tirunāvāy should never interfere with the internal administration of the principalities which paid him nominal homage. Trouble naturally arose when the Zamorin defied this time-honoured practice.

79. These soldiers were called cāvērs (vide note 92, Chapter 1).

80. Vide Hamilton's account of the Māmānkam quoted by Logan—Malabar Manual, Vol. I, pp. 162-163.

81. The acquisition of Neḍunganāḍ, which was then under the chieftain named Neḍunganāḍtīripāḍ, who previously owed allegiance to the Vaḷḷuvanāḍ Rāja, was the most notable event of the period.

82. Malabar Gazetteer, p. 44.

considerations to the lowest ebb, and wild display of human strength became the fashion of the day. Neither fear nor love of God which generally tempers the militant and ferocious aspect of man found any place in the general scheme of things. An intensification of the military training and discipline,<sup>83</sup> with no cultural advancement to ensure the morals of the army, was the result. The preoccupations of the ruling and the fighting classes in aggressive warfare enabled the priestly class (Nambūdiri Brāhmanas), "who like the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages constituted a supra-national body owing but shadowy allegiance to the temporal power,"<sup>84</sup> to strengthen their sectarian organisations, which accentuated the distinctions already existing in other communities and affected their solidarity and free development. The temples, which had by this time come under their absolute control and the landed properties attached to them constituted their main source of influence over the masses. The people who cultivated the lands as tenants had to part with a considerable proportion of the produce by way of rent and periodical offerings to the temple deity; and the pūjāri or śāntikkāran<sup>85</sup> by the powers he exercised loomed larger in importance than the deity.<sup>86</sup> A society which was thus a helpless prey to the physical persecutions of the Nāyar soldiers on one side, and the priestly exactions of the sacredotal caste on the other, could hardly be expected to be happy and contented.

83. The Cāvēr songs and Taccōli Pāṭṭus illustrate this mentality.

84. Malabar and the Portuguese by K. M. Panikkar, p. 12.

85. The priest in charge of the temple.

86. The following ślōka of unknown authorship gives us a picture of the priest of the day :—

Śāntidvijapprakurute 'bahudipaśāntim'  
 Pakvājyapāyasaguleir 'jaṭharāgniśāntim'  
 Tatṛṭyabālavaniṭā 'madanāgñiśāntim'  
 Kālakramēṇa 'Paramēśwaraśaktiśāntim'

“ശാന്തിഭവിജഃ പ്രകൃതതേ ഖണ്ഡഭീപശാന്തിം  
 പകപാജ്യപായസഗുളൈർജ്ജരംരംഗിശാന്തിം  
 തത്രത്യഖാലവനിതാമദനംഗിശാന്തിം  
 കഠലകൃമേണ പരമേശ്വരശക്തിശാന്തിം.”

'Śānti in Malayālam means temple service, i.e., Pūja. It also means the final stage or contentment. The author of this stanza uses this in its double sense. The Śānti Brāhman, he says, first performs the Śānti (annihilation) of lamps. By means of fruits and puddings he performs the Śānti (annihilation) of the fire of his stomach. With the women servants of the temple he quenches the fire of lust; and in course of time he accomplishes the destruction of the deity too.'

By the end of the 15th century the Zamorin was able to suppress the powers against whom he had been fighting for centuries and establish authority from Cannanore to Quilon. To quote Mr. Paṅikkar again, "Undoubtedly, the course of Malabar history during the two centuries previous to the arrival of the Portuguese was in the direction of an increase of the Zamorin's power and the establishment of a Malabar confederation under his authority. But this very process gave rise to jealousies and feuds."<sup>87</sup> The success of the Zamorin would have ushered in a new era of peace and plenty, but the arrival of the Portuguese at this critical juncture added fresh complications to the situation. They insisted on direct dealings with the rulers, ignoring the intermediary Nāyar officers, and often resorted to intrigue, which led to violent vengeance and retaliation on either side. The internal confusion was therefore intensified by the Western intruders, who unlike the Arab merchants<sup>88</sup> played the dangerous game of purchasing the King by offering him costly presents and similar gifts<sup>89</sup> and estranging his officers. The history of Malabar in the 16th Century is thus the history of Portuguese intrigue to capture the pepper monopoly from the Arab merchants who had the support of the Nāyar administrators and militia, and thereby to undermine their power and prestige. This policy had a very demoralising effect on the officers and the people at large, who, scared by the foreigners and their new weapons of warfare, were driven to despair and inhuman conduct.

The crisis was without parallel in the history of the West Coast, and the very foundations of the structure of Kēraḷa Society threatened to shake by the new menace to its solidarity. There was a general cry for peace and renewed confidence in life.

The occasion called for the resources of an all-round genius for its solution, and the people found their saviour in Eḷuttaccan, who appeared on the scene with his message of hope when the tragic drama reached its climax in the early part of the 16th century, which witnessed the mass massacre organised by Vasco de Gama and Marshall Alfonso de Albuquerque.<sup>90</sup> His vision saw

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87. Malabar and the Portuguese, p. 25.

88. They concentrated on their sea trade and never troubled about the politics of the country.

89. Malabar and the Portuguese, p. 53.

90. Indies Adventure—by Elaine Sanceau, vide p. 98-100.

Malabar and the Portuguese, p. 51, 52. Kēraḷa Pazāma, p. 30.

the danger ahead that awaited his countrymen, who had been reduced by the lack of a common bond and centuries of petty quarrels into innumerable small units, admirable in themselves but unable to resist the organised and disciplined invasion of a mighty foe whose unlimited resources and strange weapons baffled them. Their guns introduced a new factor, against which the West Coast could offer no effective resistance. It was a fight between the old and new weapons of warfare, in which the latter were at a decided advantage. The people had become tired of war, corruption, and conspiracies, which were only leading them further down the road of degradation and were in a fit condition to look inward and receive a spiritual message.<sup>91</sup> The Vaiṣṇavic movement, that entered upon a new phase on the disappearance of Timur and of his "bloodstained horsemen"<sup>92</sup> in the beginning of the 14th century, and gathered fresh momentum from the devotional fervour infused into it by Caitanya in Bengal (1485 A.D.),<sup>93</sup> Mirābāi in Mēwār (15th cen.)<sup>94</sup> aroused a distant echo in the West Coast also, which had had a foretaste of it through the teachings of the Āḷvars<sup>95</sup> (8th Cen.) and Rāmānujācārya (11th Cen.)<sup>96</sup> and the immortal songs of *Jayadēva*<sup>97</sup> (12th Cen.). The works of Kaṇṇaśśan and Ceṟuśśēri, forerunners of Eḷuttaccan in the literary field, had already sown the seed of the cult, which was only waiting for the magic touch of the poet-saint to blossom and yield fruit. To such a people the cult of Bhakti, which in the words of Dr. L. D. Barnett "is Godward love in utter self-surrender,"<sup>98</sup> has a special appeal. In the case of the warlike Nāyars of Malabar it was only a case of transferring their devotion from the war-god

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91. Swāmi Vivēkānanda advocates Bhakti for a country of fighting races. (Prophets of the New India by Romain Rolland, translated by E. F. Malcolm-Smith, p. 335, n. 23).

92. Literary History of India by Dr. Fraser, p. 345.

93. An outline of the Religious Literature of India. By J. N. Farquhar, p. 306.

94. Ibid, p. 307.

95. 'Ibid.', p. 187, Kulaśēkharālvār one of the shining lights of these sacred luminaries, belongs to Kēraḷa. (Studies in Tamil literature. By V. R. Ramachandra Dikshitar, p. 106).

96. Ibid, p. 245.

97. Ibid, p. 238. These songs are very popular in Malabar, and are sung in Visnu temples like Guruvāyūr (S. Malabar) during pūja. The first 2 songs used to be sung by the women of Malabar as morning prayer till recent years.

98. The Heart of India, p. 43.

to the God Viṣṇu. Besides, the human mind in a state of exhaustion will easily accept a single concrete idea which the doctrine of Bhakti embodies, and has no patience with metaphysical speculations. The message of Bhakti<sup>99</sup> which inspired every line of poetry that emanated from Ežuttaccan like an irresistible stream possessed an inherent sanctity from his own personality, as he himself was a perfect example of the precepts he preached. His preference for and insistence on Bhakti as the short cut to salvation seems therefore the outcome of a premeditated attempt suggested by the political and social decadence of the society of his time, and was intended as an effective step for the spiritual and cultural redemption of his people, which he willingly undertook as his life mission. The events already narrated show that the occasion for a gigantic venture of the kind arose in Malabar at the beginning of the 16th cen. or a few years earlier,<sup>100</sup> and the conclusion seems quite probable that Tuñjattežuttaccan lived and gave his message at this critical period. His disciples followed his example with ever increasing enthusiasm for the mission of their master, with the result that a prodigious quantity of quasi-religious literature began to be poured out for nearly a century. It is only in the fitness of things that the sacred memory of such a saviour is cherished to this day.

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99. Vide Chapter V.

100. Dr. Gundert also to a certain extent seems to favour this view although he is not very specific. (South Indian Palaeography 1878 note 4, p. 42).

## CHAPTER III

### ADHYĀTMA RĀMĀYAṆAM

#### *Introductory*

As the Rāmāyaṇa and its innumerable versions in the various languages of India have become an integral part of the culture of India, it is not often that an attempt at a critical analysis of it is understood in the right spirit. Rāma is not only the hero of the epic poem, but also a God worshipped throughout the length and breadth of India. Gods are above criticism and comment, which according to popular belief emanates from a lack of faith in them. But when they enter the domain of letters the critic has to deal with them in the same manner as he handles others. His task, therefore, is bound to be necessarily embarrassing, as Hindu thinkers have mixed up religion and letters, and the criticism that aims at one affects the other too. If the hero of the great epic is treated as other epic heroes, the sentiments of the ultra-religious will not be at ease, as in their eyes the very attempt is reprehensible. If he is raised to the skies without minding what the poet has made of him, aesthetic criticism loses much of its value, in as much as it declines to help the proper appreciation of the epic which is its main function. The critics so far have left the field open, and we find as a result, frantic attempts made presumably in the name of religion to justify certain acts of Rāma, which would have called for the severest condemnation in the case of mortals.

There is evidence to think that Rāma was once an ordinary mortal, and it took several centuries before he was raised to the level of a God. An examination of the opening portions of the Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa and Adh : Rāmāyaṇa will make the point clear. Vālmiki, the author of the great epic, asks Nārada, the celestial sage, who was the best of Kings ; and Nārada, giving the palm to Rāma, narrates his story, which the poet-hermit weaves into an epic.<sup>1</sup> Vālmiki wanted only an ideal man as hero for his epic.

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1. To Sainted Nārada . . .

The good Vālmiki, first and best of hermit-saints, these words addressed—

“In all this world, I pray thee, who  
Is virtuous, heroic, true,

*The influence of Vaiṣṇavism*

A dialogue between Pārṇvati and Śiva forms the prelude to the A. R. Both the questioner and the person who gives the answer are divine beings. Pārṇvati, who knew about Rāma, asks her lord to unfold to her the mystery underlying the greatness of Rāma and tell her his story. In Ezuttaccan's epic there is a reference to a previous episode in Vālmiki's life.<sup>2</sup> He lived the life of a hunter and robber, and once waylaid the 'Seven Sages'.<sup>3</sup> They asked him what he wanted, and his answer was: "I have to support my family, and I rob people of their belongings for that". The Sages enquired further whether he realised that robbery was a sin, and whether his family would share with him the punishment which his action entailed. He referred the matter to his wife and children, who unhesitatingly declared that, while they were quite willing to enjoy the benefits accruing from his evil actions they were not prepared to share any responsibility for them which he must bear himself. The sages, when informed of this reply, pointed out the folly of his action, which would bring him only degradation and ultimately lead him to hell. He then asked them to advise as to how he could

Firm in his vows, of grateful mind  
To every creature good and kind  
Bounteous and holy just and wise  
Alone most fair to all men's eyes—  
Who may with Sun and Moon compare  
With Indra, Viṣṇu, Fire and Air  
Great Saint divine, this boon I ask—  
If such a man breathe here below :"

—Page 3, canto I, R. T. Griffith's translation of Vālmiki Rāmāyana—1870.

“ഇപ്പോളിപ്പാഠിചരരണ, ഗുണവാനാ,ത വീര്യവൻ ?  
കൃതജ്ഞൻ ധർമ്മദിവേൻ, നേരേതുന്നേൻ ദൃഢപ്രതൻ,  
മയ്യുടക്കരനാരാ,ത സമൃക്രതത്തിനം ഹിതൻ?  
ആരു വിചാനം,ർ മിടക്കൻ, ആരു കാഴ്ചയ്ക്കു നല്ലവൻ?”

2. (a) Rāmanāmathe Japiccōru Kāṭṭālanmunnam—Māmunipravarānāy—  
Vannatu Kaṇḍu Dhāta—Bhūmiyilulla Jantukkaḷkku Mōkṣārthamini—Śrī  
Mahārāmāyaṇam camekkennaruḷcaitu.

“രമനാമത്തെ ജപിച്ഛാര കട്ടാളൻ മൂന്നം  
മാമുനിപ്രവരനായ് വന്നതു കണ്ടു ധാരതാ  
ക്രമിച്ചിലുള്ള ഇന്ദ്രക്കരക്കു മോക്ഷാർത്ഥമിനി  
ശ്രീമഹാരാമായണം ചമയ്ക്കുന്നരുടെചയ്യു.”

(b) This is based upon the original.

3. Marīci, Angīras, Vasiṣṭha. Pulastya, Pulaha, Kṛatu, and Atri.

reform himself. The sacred name of Rāma was then mentioned to him, and he was asked to repeat it till he should be blessed with the inner light. The magic power of the name of Rāma transformed him into a saint<sup>4</sup> with the gift of poetry. Brahma, knowing this, asked him to write the story of Rāma for the benefit of mankind. The Goddess of learning blessed him, and the epic was the result.<sup>5</sup> This legend is no doubt of later origin, as we hear it for the first<sup>6</sup> time with the appearance of A. R., which is a fact significant in itself. A long period must have intervened between A.R. and Vālmiki's immortal work, witnessing many a change in the religious conceptions of the Hindus. The Vedic gods Indra, Rudra, and the Sun gradually gave place to Siva and Viṣṇu, whose glories were sung in Upaniṣads and later ritualistic literature. When the Bhagavadgīta established the importance of the cult of Viṣṇu—Rāma on a synthetic basis, it attained the vigour and status of a new creed, proving a serious rival to the cult of Śiva. A rehabilitation or a remodelling of the epic themes was therefore found necessary to give the new creed undisputed authority. The ancient folk-tale that forms the basis of the Rāma-legend was later, in the words of Dr. Barnett, "re-adapted and fitted on to an historical Rāma<sup>7</sup> who further underwent a process of deification."<sup>8</sup> He found a place in the cycle of Viṣṇu's ten incarnations. A literary document as a lasting monument to the deification that was proceeding apace soon appeared with its new philosophy identifying Rāma with the supreme Ātma or Paramātmā. Vālmiki's original conception of the ideal King lost its significance, although as a creation of the poetic art it held its sway in the literary field.<sup>9</sup> The

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4. The name Vālmiki is derived from 'Valmikam' ant-hill. The story is that as he sat muttering the name of Rāma for ages, an ant-hill rose round him. The sacred name of Rāma preserved his life and he rose out of it a Saint.

5. The Malayāli version of the legend adds another interesting detail. The illiterate robber could not pronounce the word Rāma well. So he was asked to begin by pronouncing the words 'Ā Mara (that tree) ī Mara (this tree), which if repeated quickly sound like Rāma. The word Mara which is a pure Dravidian word raises the question of Vālmiki's nationality. The inventors of such stories are not as a rule bothered with such considerations.

6. Theatre of the Hindus, Prof. Wilson. Vol. I, p. 313.

7. Hindu Gods and Heroes, Page 101.

8. This tendency is noticeable even in the later recensions of the Epic, as is pointed out by Prof. Jacobi and Prof. Macdonell. (A History of Sanskrit Literature by A. A. Macdonell, p. 304, 305).

9. The tradition ascribing A.R. to Viśwāmitra need not be taken as an

author of the A. R. never misses an opportunity to impress his readers with the divinity of his hero. Nay, he even makes in the prelude to his work the rival God Śiva<sup>10</sup> give his willing testimony to Rāma's divine attributes, which places his view beyond question. Pārvati, Śiva's consort, is anxious to know the mystery that surrounds the holy name of Rāma, and she requests her lord to narrate the story of the great king of the Solar line who is held in high esteem by the God of Kailāsa.<sup>11</sup> In complying with the request of Pārvati, Śiva brings home to her mind and to that of the readers that even the very desire to know the story of Rāma is a noble end in itself, which only exceptionally privileged souls would have the chance to achieve. The author of A.R. reduced the God Śiva to a pathetic figure, who is not only obliged to praise another god but is forced to rest content with a subordinate position. We may congratulate ourselves that a worse treatment was not meted out to the God who terrorised the whole world in Vēdic times, and who certainly stood in need of some toning down. But he is hardly responsible for the change. He has only shared the fate of other gods of the Hindu pantheon, who are often victims of the poet's fancy and the devotion of their followers<sup>12</sup> who can make or mar them. This accounts for the different roles, sometimes self-contradictory, which Hindu Gods play in Purāṇas. Śaivaites return the compliment sometimes with redoubled effect.<sup>13</sup>

There is another episode in the beginning of the work in which Rāmagīta is introduced. Rāma himself reveals his divine character to Hanūman. After the death of Rāvaṇa, Rāma returns to Ayōdhya and performs the usual coronation ceremony to proclaim his accession. At the end of the ceremony he calls aside Hanūman and asks Sīta to give him the sacred message containing the secrets of his incarnation, as the monkey-chief by his devotion and life-long celibacy has established his claims for this distinction. The monkey-chief is also warned not to divulge the secret to those who do not believe in Rāma. The author seems to be feeling ner-

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argument against this view, as there is no evidence in its support, and as such scholars have never taken it seriously.

10. The rivalry between the two cults is not a myth but a living faith even now.

11. The abode of Śiva.

12. Hindu Gods and Heroes by Dr. L. D. Barnett. p. 120.

13. Viṣṇu is often represented as lying on his snake-bed with his right hand in the act of putting a Vilwa-leaf on a Śivalingam. There is also the story of Brahma and Viṣṇu going round Siva to measure his stature.

vous about the new doctrine or knowledge that he is giving to the world through his version of the epic story.

The motives behind these two digressions are quite apparent. The story is being given a new garb as a piece of religious propaganda ; and the author takes care that the new interpretation shall be emphasised at the very commencement, lest readers should miss it in the course of the narration.<sup>14</sup> Apart from this new conception of Rāma's character and omissions of a few episodes<sup>15</sup> in Bāla-kāṇḍa, the main incidents of the story of Rāma are the same in Vālmiki's epic and A. R. An examination of the original materials out of which Vālmiki constructed his immortal work and the extent of his contribution to the legends concerning the personality of Rāma do not come within the scope of our survey.<sup>16</sup> Scholars<sup>17</sup> have proved that it is possible to discover differences between the form which the epic had in the beginning and the form it ultimately assumed by a comparison of the different recensions of the epic available in various parts of India and a close scrutiny of the obvious interpolations in it. The history of the evolution of the epic thus throws light upon the influence of popular conceptions on its nature and the alterations it underwent from time to time. With the radical change in the conception of the hero, a new attempt at the representation of the story was inevitable, and the appearance of the A. R. was therefore quite in keeping with the tradition which Rāma-lore maintained throughout.

*The theory of the Āryan invasion of S. India.*

A few observations about the background of the story, which apply to all versions including the A. R. will not be out of place

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14. A Buddhist version of the story by the name Daśaratha Jātaka which by the way alters it considerably, is another instance of the need felt by the champions of that faith to make use of the legend for their own propaganda.

15. The episode that Viśwāmitra relates to Rāma and his brother about Bhāgīratha's Gangāvataraṇa, which indirectly testifies to Śiva's importance, finds a place in A.R. only in the form of a casual reference by Rāma to Kaikeyi. Śatānanda's narration of Viśwāmitra's adventures in penance and Janaka's narration of his pedigree have been omitted.

16. It is not possible to conceive that the story is a pure invention of Vālmiki. He drew, no doubt, his materials from the popular legends current in his days in the form of bardic lays. (The legacy of India. The article on Language and literature by F. W. Thomas. p. 65).

17. Professor Jacobi. (History of Sanskrit literature. By A. A. Macdonnell. p. 304, 305).

in this connection. Two points of view have been expressed on this subject even at the dawn of critical investigation. According to one school, the epic reflects an historical event,<sup>18</sup> "a war of two hostile races differing in origin, civilisation and worship!!" The adherents of this view developed it later into a picture of the Āryan invasion of S. India and Ceylon.<sup>19</sup> There is still another school, led by Prof. Weber, who rejects the historical hypothesis and holds that the principal characters who figure in Rāmāyaṇa are not historical personages at all but mere personifications of certain events and circumstances.<sup>20</sup> Sita (the furrow), whose name occurs in the Rigvēda (R.V. IV, 57-6) and in the Gṛhya ritual as an object of worship, according to him represents "the Āryan agriculture, while he regards Rāma as ploughman personified." The Rāmāyaṇa has only, he thinks, an historical character in so far as it refers to an actual occurrence, the diffusion of Āryan civilisation into the South of the peninsula.<sup>21</sup>

The two schools, though they differ in details, however, are inclined to take the Aryan invasion of S. India as an historical fact. Apparently they have ignored an important point, namely the absence of any evidence to prove that Aryans penetrated in to S. India by the land route which was followed by Rāma according to Vālmīki. Dr. Barnett on the other hand is convinced that the "Āryan immigration to S. India and Lanka was by sea from Bombay and Bengal and not by land."<sup>22</sup> From Rāmāyaṇa itself we know that the tract of lands between the Vindhya Mountains and Cape Comorin was a huge forest impenetrable in many respects. He also raises the question of the army of Rāma, which consisted of monkeys, whom nobody has, so far identified with Āryans, and not of Aryans, which ought to have been the case if Rāma was on a campaign of conquest. Even these monkeys, whose help was virtually necessary to him in his contest against Rāvaṇa, were enlisted by means not very creditable to an Āryan hero who was out to conquer. Besides, as Macdonell points out, it is nowhere indicated that Rāma was founding an Āryan realm

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18. Gorresio's view quoted by Griffith, p. xiv in his introduction to his Rāmāyan of Vālmīki (1870).

19. Lassen quoted by A. A. Macdonell, History of Sanskrit Literature, p. 310-311.

20. Muir's Sanskrit texts, Vol. II, p. 438.

21. R. V., Introduction to Griffith's translation, p. xv.

22. Hindu Gods and Heroes. p. 102.

in the Dekhan, nor is any such intention on his part suggested anywhere in the epic. The theory is full of absurdities, as according to Vālmiki the territory beyond the Vindhya mountains was, except for a few hermits, inhabited by Rākṣasas and various fabulous creatures, of which he gives fantastic descriptions which betray lack of personal knowledge. Even supposing for argument's sake Vālmiki's work to be an allegorical representation of this kind, it is only a negative evidence and one-sided. What about the positive side ?

Recent researches in Tamil and other S. Indian languages and the excavations at Mohenjo-Dāro and elsewhere have revealed the existence of a pre-Āryan civilisation in the Indus valley which may possibly be connected with that of the South. It is necessary to examine in detail the evidence which the investigations on non-Āryan elements in Indian culture have disclosed in recent times. It cuts at the very root of the theory of the Āryan invasion of the South. It looks as if the promoters of the theory have pounced upon the epic for want of any other reliable evidence as a basis for their fanciful idea and have deliberately ignored the other side of the question on which considerable positive evidence exists in Tamil and other prominent S. Indian Languages. I shall therefore attempt to review briefly the materials available in them and suggest the conclusions to which they lead.

The theory that the Rāmāyaṇa is an allegorical representation of the Aryan invasion of S. India is based on the assumption that there was an Aryan invasion of the South, which has never been proved beyond doubt as an historical fact nor can it be maintained on the basis of Vālmiki's epic, as his account of S. India appears fanciful in the light of S. Indian tradition and literary evidence. The age of the epic again is a disputed point. The views of Scholars,<sup>23</sup> European and Indian, who have gone into the question range from 500 B.C., to 200 B.C., a period which covers the date of the other epic (Mahābhārata) also. If we take Vālmiki's account of S. India as a true picture of the period, we have to assume (as we have already seen) that it consisted mostly of uncivilised forest

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23. Prof. A. B. Keith puts it between 400 and 200 B.C. A History of Sanskrit Literature, p. 43.

Prof. Rapson assigns it to 400 B.C.; Ancient India, p. 71-72.

Prof. Macdonell assigns it to 500 B.C.; History of Sanskrit Literature, p. 285.

tribes, and that no ordered government and society was to be found except in Lanka, which was ruled by Rāvaṇa, the enemy of Rāma. As against this we have the testimony of Rāmāyaṇa itself, in which we find Sugrīva arranging to send envoys to countries like Āndhras,<sup>24</sup> Pundras, the Cōlas, the Pāṇḍyas and the Kēraḷas in search of Sita. If this is an interpolation, it does not stand alone but has its counterpart in the Mahābhārata as well, which according to scholars is separated from Vālmiki's epic only by a century or two, and in which Sahadēva interviews Kings of the Puḷindas, Pāṇḍyas,<sup>25</sup> Kēraḷas<sup>26</sup> and Cōlas,<sup>27</sup> whom he could not conquer in battle and whose acquiescence had to be won through diplomatic channels as a preliminary to Rājasūya. It is strange that Rāma does not meet any of these in his wanderings in the South, which were by no means solitary sojourns. Aśōka's edicts, the historical value of which is beyond question, proclaim the existence of these kingdoms.<sup>28</sup> It is inconceivable that a country immersed in barbarism achieved this progress in the course of two centuries, which according to the human method of calculation would have taken several centuries to accomplish. Vālmiki's picture thus stands uncorroborated by any other sources. The director of the excavations at Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa seems inclined from a study of the finds discovered, to the view that they represent a high stage of civilisation, and its affinities to the Dravidian culture are striking. He is even led to think that "there are linguistic reasons for believing that it was by way of Baluchistan that the Dravidian races entered India." The relics of Siva worship and Mother-Cult found among the deposits are significant in view of the fact that S. India preserves a continuous tradition of both the cults from

24. "Tathaivandhrāmsca Pundrāmsca Cōlān Pāṇḍyāmsca Kēraḷān"—*Kiṣkindā Kāṇḍa*, 41-42.

“അന്ധ്രന്മാരും പാണ്ഡ്യന്മാരും  
കേരളന്മാരും ചോളന്മാരും  
പുലിന്ദന്മാരും മലയാളന്മാരും  
ഉണിയും സഹൃദൈലവും.”

25. In *Ādiparva* a Pāṇḍyan King appears as one of Draupadi's suitors. *History of the Tamils*, by P. T. S. Iyengar, p. 89.

26. *Mahābhārata*, *Sabhā parva*, Mal. translation (K.K.T.). p. 287, BK. I.

27. In *Sabhā parva* Cōlas and Pāṇḍyas are referred to as carrying sandal oil in golden jars.

28. Aśōka's Rock edict (II The Shahbazgarhi version)—*Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. II, p. 466, quoted in the *Chronology of Early Tamils* p. 168.

remote times to this day<sup>29</sup> and that the two are generally accepted to be of Dravidian origin.<sup>30</sup> This civilisation is roughly assigned to a period between 3000 and 5000 B.C. The excavations at Ādichanallūr<sup>31</sup> (Tinnevely Dt., S. India), Chitaldrug Dt.<sup>32</sup> (Mysore State) and Coimbatore reveal a similar story. According to the author of 'Dravidian India', "The Mohenjo-Dāro and Harappa culture agrees with that of Ādichanallūr in burying the dead in a crouching position in Terra-cotta coffins and in placing food, drink, wearing apparel and weapons ready for their service when they reached another world."<sup>33</sup> We need not go into the question of the identity of these civilisations revealed in N. and S. India. Suffice it to note for our purpose that sufficient evidence is now available to show that the conditions of India, and S. India in particular, were not such as are described by Vālmiki even centuries before the Āryans came to India. After their advent Southern civilisation could not have declined, and the Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmiki is no doubt a product of Āryan culture when it was flourishing on Indian soil. Even at the time of Solomon (C. 975 B.C.) South India maintained commercial connections with the Mediterranean countries and Babylonia, and there was a regular demand from them for her teak, sandal, pearls, muslins, peacocks and pepper which were exported from *Ophir*<sup>34</sup> and supplied to the West by Phoenicians.

Peacocks and pepper went from Malabar through its ancient seaport Koduññallūr, which is identified with *Musiris* of the Greeks. A race that carried on such an extensive trade with the far West in ancient times could not have been strangers to civilisation and culture. Before these unimpeachable evidences Vālmiki's picture of S. India can hardly be credited with any historical value, and must be regarded as a figment of the poet's imagination and the outcome of his readiness to credit fantastic stories, which he shared with ancient Indian writers.

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29. Introduction to 'Mohenjo-Dāro and Indus Civilisation' by Sir John Marshall; page vii.

It is noteworthy that the picture of the Mother-Goddess revealed by the finds agrees in every detail with the traditional description of Kāli preserved in religious songs and ritual practices of Malabar (vide p. 50. Ibid).

30. Introduction to the History of Indian and Indonesian Art, (A. K. Coomaraswamy). p. 5.

31. Dravidian India, by T. R. Sessa Iyengar, p. 34.

32. Chronology of Early Tamils by T. N. Siva Raja Pillai, p. 6, ch.

33. Dravidian India, p. 52.

34. Identified with Supra near Bombay or Bepur near Calicut.

Coming to the evidence available in the languages of S. India we may take Tamil, whose literature in point of antiquity and extent has precedence over those of others. If there was any tradition about the Aryan invasion of S. India, it is extremely unlikely that no trace of it could be found in the early classical literature of Tamil. The uncertainty and the absence of uniformity of opinion among scholars about the dates of works like *Tolkāppiyam*<sup>35</sup> (a work on grammar, social history, ethics, etc.) and so-called Sangam works<sup>36</sup> make it rather difficult to arrive at the earliest limit of the classical period in Tamil Literature. We may with some show of reason fix as their earliest possible date the 4th century B.C., when we have definite historical evidence about S. Indian kingdoms and their activities.<sup>37</sup>

### *Agastya legend.*

A discussion of this topic brings us to another legendary figure, the sage *Agastya*,<sup>38</sup> who according to tradition was the forerunner of Aryan culture in the Tamil land, as Paraśurāma was in Malabar. If Rāma is taken as the Āryan conqueror, it is not quite clear what place should be assigned to Agastya, whose credentials for the foremost rank among the Āryan explorers of S. India are

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35. Some are inclined to date it anterior to Pāṇini (7-5 Cent. B.C.) as it does not refer to the latter, but mentions 'Aindram' the first Sanskrit work on grammar. (*Terra Tamilica*, quoted by Mr. S. P. Pillay in 'Tamil India,' p. 68).

36. They cover a long period. The number of works included under this category is widely exaggerated; and the inference of Mr. K. N. S. Pillay who has subjected them to a critical scrutiny, that the Sangam theory owes its origin to the imagination of the commentators, has something to be said in its favour—"Chronology of the Early Tamils". vide p. 196.

37. (a) Megasthenes, the Greek Ambassador in the Court of Chandragupta (256 B.C.) in his account makes mention of S. Indian kingdoms, which again find a place in Aśoka's Edicts and Pāṇini's grammar. (Cambridge History of India, Vol. V. Chap. XXIV by Dr. L. D. Barnett. p. 597.)

(b) A Pāṇḍyan king sent an embassy to Augustus Caesar in 22 B.C.: *Antiquities of India*, by Dr. L. D. Barnett, p. 42.

38. (a) According to one school his Āryan pedigree is doubtful as the island of Agatty on the Malabar Coast is supposed to be his birth place. (See *Tamil India*, by M. S. Purnalingam Pillay, p. 40.)

(b) Another school derives the name from *Akatti*, a kind of tree, as they believe, that his hermitage was full of these trees on the analogy of the name Bādarāyaṇa for Vyāsa, who lived in a forest of Badarams.

(c) Dr. Barnett ascribes to this legend a later origin. (Cambridge History of India, p. 596).

of equal if not of superior value and importance. This mythical Magician's<sup>39</sup> personality is so buried in impossible and incredible legends that the extrication of the man from the whirlpool of tradition is by no means an easy task. According to one account he lived four centuries before Rāma's time.<sup>40</sup> In the Rāmāyaṇa there is mentioned a hermit sage Agastya, who is said to have been visited by Rāma in his hermitage near *Citrakūṭa*, and who is probably the same as the Agastya of Tamil legend, though the latter is always believed to have made his home at Podiyil, near Travancore, and to be still living there. The author of the *Tolkāppiyam*, who according to some was a disciple of Agastya, does not mention his guru in his work,<sup>41</sup> a fact which speaks for itself. It is obvious that the legend came later, or we have to assume at least two Agastyas. As a writer<sup>42</sup> his versatility and the quantity of his output are as incredible as his superhuman performances already referred to. He was also a religious leader, and is looked upon with reverence in S. India and Jāva, where the inhabitants claim him as the founder of Śaivism. In the Tamil land he looks like the counterpart of Vyāsa in Sanskrit lore, and carries with him all the traditional glory of an institution rather than an individual. In the words of Mr. Siva Raja Pillai, "We have to take Agastya as neither more nor less than the embodiment of the ideal of the Āryan nation in their work of spreading their culture and knowledge to different countries of the South. This new school may urge that the Agastya legend need not be taken as treating of sober facts of history to be thrust into a strict chronological framework but must be viewed as the expression of a generalised type of activity which the Aryan colonists have been pursuing in southern regions."<sup>43</sup>

The indigenous traditions and folklore of the other linguistic areas of S. India—viz., Telugu, Kanarese and Malayālam—strongly support the position which an examination of the Tamil literature suggests. In the literature of these there is a substantial substratum of Non-Āryan element, which made itself felt in the continued

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39. His drinking of the ocean and kicking down the high Vindhya mountains look like feats of magic performed by experts in *Indrajālam*.

40. *History of the Tamils* by P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar, p. 55.

41. *Agastya in the Tamil Land*, by K. N. Siva Raja Pillai, p. 34.

42. 96 works are assigned to him and they deal with all sorts of subjects, grammar, (*Agattiyam*), medicine, mysticism, magic, witchcraft, etc.

43. *Agastya in the Tamil Land*. p. 63.

fight between the champions of the 'pure language' and the 'mixture' raged throughout their literary history down to the present day. The Paraśurāma legend in respect of Malabar is decidedly a later invention, as some Kēraḷōlpattis<sup>44</sup> make no reference to it, nor have the travellers' accounts up to the 16th century anything to say about it.

*Vālmīki's epic primarily a literary work.*

The scope of this chapter does not admit of further elaboration of the topic, nor is it necessary for our purpose. While it is not possible to prove the Āryan conquest of S. India on solid grounds, the theory loses much of its force if it is to be reared on the uncertain foundation of Vālmīki's epic, which is first and foremost a literary work. To attempt to read too much of historical matter into it, is to misjudge its value as a work of art and give historical investigations a wrong lead. It is also equally unreasonable to assume that he was free from the influence of contemporary life and events or bias, to which all poets and artists are subject. It is quite probable that he wanted to paint the Non-Āryans, whom he had no reason to love, in the blackest colours imaginable in his work, and he must be given the credit that is his due for having accomplished it admirably as a master craftsman. How far the other alternative, that as a poet he gave "to airy nothing a local habitation and a name," deserves consideration we shall not attempt to discuss at this stage. For the present we will leave it at that and proceed to consider some other aspects of the question.

*Āryan superiority untenable.*

The word 'invasion' implies superior strength on the part of the invaders. If Rāma was a typical example of Āryan strength and military skill and Rāvaṇa or Bāli of Dravidian prowess in war, there is no doubt that an impartial verdict will give the palm to the latter. The victory over Bāli does little credit to the victor, who appeared to be at his wit's end when his brother with the host of monkeys had to face the *Brahmāstra* of Indrajit, Rāvaṇa's son. Had it not been for the timely act of Hanūman on the advice of Jāmbavān in securing the death-curing medicine<sup>45</sup> to revive the prostrate army, the

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44. They on the other hand speak of a deluge, when the whole West Coast was submerged in the ocean. Paraśurāma is supposed to have reclaimed the land from the ocean.

45. Mṛtasanjivini.

story would have come to an end at that juncture only. The methods employed by the monkeys at the instance of Rāma or rather, we may say at the advice of Vibhīṣaṇa—to prevent the continuance of the Yāga of Rāvaṇa's son (Indrajit) which would have given him invincible power, are such as would make even modern dictators hesitate to adopt them. Either Vālmiki in spite of himself was constrained to pay homage to the superior skill of Rāma's enemy in battle, or exaggerate it to enhance the glory of his hero, or the epic is a pure myth, having nothing to do with the Aryan—Dravidian problem. The only achievement that could be assigned to Rāma's credit, barring his juvenile encounter with Tāṭaka in the company of Viśwāmitra, is the discomfiture of Khara and his followers. Judging it from a purely human standpoint, it must be deemed a miracle, or the Rākṣasa chieftain and his fourteen thousand strong-army were the victims of a bomb-like explosion and lost their lives without having a chance to defend themselves. But the question may be asked, what happened to this extraordinary weapon when Indrajit brought disaster on them with his equally formidable bombshell. These are of-course considerations which go deep into the internal structure of the epic, and are not germane to our present discussion.

Leaving the field of war, we shall proceed to enquire whether the assumed Aryan superiority has any support in the history and nature of cultural development of S. India. We have already seen that the earliest South Indian literature is an indigenous growth and mainly free from Aryan influence. In the field of religion, Prof. Seshagiri Sastriar, a leading champion of the theory of Aryan influence upon the South, admits that the Hindu religion in its post-Vēdic phases was profoundly moulded by Dravidian influences.<sup>46</sup> Both Śaivism and the Mother Cult with their innumerable superstitions and occult practices were incorporated into the Aryan creed and emerged as a new Śakti Cult infusing more vigour and variety into the original faith. South Indian Gods also were admitted into the Aryan Pantheon, and given new names and titles as insignia of their transformation.<sup>47</sup> The religious

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46. Dravidian India. p. 94.

47. The S. Indian Murugan, who has two wives according to Tamilian tradition, was identified with Subrahmanya, who is Commander-in-Chief (Sēnāni) of the Army of Dēvas and is a bachelor (Kumāran) in Aryan mythology. The same applies to Pillaiyar (Ganapati) and Ayyanār (Śāsta). The Malayāli God Vēṭṭaikkaran (Hunter God) underwent a similar metamor-

formula *Nama-ś-Sivāya*,<sup>48</sup> according to some supporters of these views, was originally Dravidian, in a sanskritised garb. It must be admitted that its use as a personal name is restricted to the Dravidian area; but this proves little as to its origin. The simple South Indian conception of the Mother deity as a symbol of fertility and power seems to have inspired the Āryan genius for assimilation more than any other idea, and the countless aspects it assumed as a result of the fusion of the Dravidian and Āryan cultures have an illuminating history.<sup>49</sup> To quote Dr. A. K. Coomaraswamy, "Indeed if we recognise in the Dravidians a Southern race and in the Aryans a Northern race, it may well be argued that the victory of kingly over tribal organisations, the gradual reception into orthodox religion of the phallus cult<sup>50</sup> and Mother Goddesses and the shift from abstract symbolism to anthropomorphic iconography in the period of theistic and Bhakti development, mark a final victory of the conquered over the conquerors (if there was a conquest at all). In particular the popular Dravidian element, must have played the major part in all that concerns the development and office of image worship, that is *Pūja* as distinct from *Yajña*."<sup>51</sup> This mingling or fusion was a long process and was the outcome of several centuries of contact. This

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phosis. He managed to retain his name, but has lost his original independence, having become a minor deity attached to the circle of Śiva in connection with the legend of the latter's appearance to Arjuna in the guise of a Kirāta.

48. Mr. Pūrningam Pillay fancifully explains its etymology in the following way: Nama=ours, Civa ayam=the throng of Śiva devotees. Tamil India, p. 59.

49. The primeval Dravidian Mother Goddess represents an abstract ideal. Her transformation as a partner to each of the Trinities seems to be the result of Āryan influence, which though it extended the range of the Mother's activities, at the same time deprived her of her independence, which idea still survives in the Marumakkatāyam system of Malabar and the words *Taravāṭṭamma*, the presiding woman of the *Taravāḍu* (House), and *Manavi*, of the same significance as in Tamil. Both these words have no suitable masculine equivalents in these languages. It is interesting to note in this connection that the Malabar 'Mother' is still the daughter of Śiva and not his consort.

50. How far the linga-worship is identical with the phallus cult is not quite clear. In the North it is definitely phallic in origin; but in the South although it has sometimes preserved the same character, it is more often devoid of phallic semblance and significance (e.g. in the case of the *Lingāyat* cult). It is therefore possible that in the South two cults have become fused—one of them phallic in origin, and the other a worship of sacred stones of various shapes.

51. History of Indian and Indonesian Art. p. 5.

cultural synthesis may have begun even in Vēdic times, when the Āryans adopted religious ideas and practices from the culture of the Indus Valley ; and it became stronger with the decline of the Buddhist and Jain faiths, which resisted all alien interferences, till the 2nd century A.D., when still the Brāhman caste system was rarely found in Dravidian society. Turning to fine arts, particularly music and the dance, the Dravidian tradition still prevails in S. India. The words 'Āṭṭam',<sup>52</sup> 'Kūṭṭu',<sup>53</sup> 'Pāṭṭu',<sup>54</sup> and the cultural history behind them, with their numberless varieties, ranging from their crudest popular manifestations to the highest cultivated forms, show a long continuous development, in which the Āryan element is hardly distinguishable. The Sanskrit treatise on aesthetics, Nāṭyaśāstra, which by the way does not seem as old as is generally believed, has not been able to analyse them properly ; and whenever the author treats of characteristically Southern forms of art, he only shows that they do not conform to the general rules, and calls them dēśyabhēdas. In the art of music the 'dēśika' style possesses a distinct individuality. In the Yakṣagāna<sup>55</sup> of the Kanarese people and the Kathakali<sup>56</sup> of the Malayālis the indigenous tradition has shown such an unusual degree of vitality that the Āryan element, when it came, was thoroughly transformed to suit the basic conceptions<sup>57</sup> of the former. The Lord Naṭarāja, the Dravidian deity of the Art of Dance and his associations with Chidambaram suggest a predominantly Dravidian basis for that conception.<sup>58</sup> The development of this idea has gone beyond the domain of dance and entered those of sculpture and iconography, with the result that a regular philosophy has been evolved out of it, proclaiming the deity to be the symbol of cosmic creation and marking the victory of Śaivism over Vaiṣṇavism in the field of art.

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52. Generally means dance.

53. Generally means both drama and dance.

54. Generally means Song. In Malayālam the first two have a somewhat different connotation owing to local variations of the art.

55 and 56. Both are a kind of dance-dramas. Vide the author's articles on the subject in the Sunday Chronicle—Madras (1935).

57. The criticism that has been advanced in recent times that the gesture language of Kathakali does not adhere to the formulas of Nāṭyaśāstra, is the outcome of an imperfect knowledge of the indigenous elements that have contributed to its growth.

58. E. B. Havell, *Himālayas in Indian Art*, p. 59, 60. H. Krishna Sastri, *South Indian Images of Gods and Goddesses*, p. 88, 89.

My attempt in discussing the question of Āryan invasion and the assumed superiority of Āryan over Dravidian culture has been only to invite the attention of scholars who have been unduly emphasising Āryan predominance in Hindu culture to certain aspects of Dravidian civilisation and to point out that it is time to take into consideration the evidence which research in South Indian literature, archaeology and arts has disclosed in the interests of historical truth.<sup>59</sup> Hindu culture is no doubt a composite product, to which both Āryan and Dravidian have contributed their share, as was inevitable owing to their constant contact for centuries. As Mr. C. R. Reddy has rightly pointed out, "We Dravidians are proud to be shown as between Āryan and Dravidian: if there has been borrowing on the one hand, there has been giving on the other; that if we received, we also gave; that what assimilation there has been, has been mutual and not one-sided, and that the Hindu civilisation is the common heritage of both".<sup>60</sup> When we have the list of 'borrowings' constantly brought to our notice it is but fair to make an estimate of the 'givings' also. In the case of S. India, where the Dravidian tradition still lingers, in art, literature and religion, it is obvious that the blending was through a process of peaceful penetration extending over several centuries and not through any aggressive conduct or military conquest.

*The Story—Kaikēyi's intrigue.*

The main events of the Rāmāyaṇa story are well-known and need no repetition. A few comments on their organic relation with the plot of the story are bound to be interesting. Rāma is often taken as a model of kingly virtue and filial affection. It is not easy to substantiate this claim by an examination of his conduct at different stages. Take for instance his exile. The circumstances that culminated in his leaving his father's palace and throne for a period of fourteen years do not show him in the best of lights. In fact it is difficult to fix the responsibility for this

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59. The Archaeological Department has not yet attempted the excavations of the cities like Karūr, Musiri, Tiru Vanci-kulam, Korkai, and Kāvēripattinam mentioned in Dravidian classics. They are bound to yield enormous material revealing many unknown facts of S. Indian History and civilisation. It is a pity that the historians have wasted their energies on speculations about a submerged continent instead of attempting to know more about the land that still exists.

60. Introduction to the Dravidian India, p. ix.

on anyone. When the arrangements for Rāma's coronation were in progress Kaikēyi is suddenly reminded by Manthara of the two boons which the King granted her, in a critical situation when she saved his life. She chose that moment to ask for the fulfilment of the boons by which she insisted on Bharata's nomination as heir-apparent in place of Rāma, who was to go in exile for fourteen years. This request was made when Bharata with his brother was away on a visit to their maternal home. The old king was naturally upset by this unexpected turn of events, as a royal proclamation had already been issued announcing the coronation of Rāma as Crown Prince, who was moreover, his special favourite. His infatuation for the young queen deprived him of courage to resist her wish, while his affection for his eldest son made it positively an unwelcome and painful proposition. His divided feelings, coupled with his old age, affected his health, which threatened to collapse. When the prime minister called on the king to consult him on certain important items connected with the coronation arrangements, the Rāja's indisposition became public. Rāma hastened to his father's chamber to enquire the cause of his ailment, which, as he came to know from Kaikēyi, was more mental than physical. Daśaratha, overpowered with sorrow, was unable to explain the complication that had arisen; and Kaikēyi saw in the king's silence her opportunity. Her case was presented with all the emphasis she could lay on the sacredness of the pledged word, and she demanded that Rāma should fulfil his father's promise. This was too much even for the meek king. He denies her request<sup>61</sup>; but Rāma decides to go. We may here pause to examine Rāma's decision. His father, who is personally concerned in the matter (of the boons), does not ask Rāma to do as Kaikēyi desires. On the other hand, he advises strong action on the part of Rāma, foreseeing mischief afoot. What about the safety of the country? The old king is ill; and Rāma's brother, on whose behalf so much fuss had been made, is not on the spot to take charge of affairs in the absence of Rāma. To stage an exit at this juncture is to shirk one's responsibility as a member of the royal family. It may be argued that the cause of truth had been served by Rāma's action; but what about his public duty? It is not sound policy

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61. Both Vālmiki's epic and Adh:Rāmāyana agree in this:—

(a) "Thy fell request will I deny"—Griffith's translation, Rāmāyan of Vālmiki. p. 388 Bk. II.

(b) "Conquered by a woman, deluded in mind, walking in an unrighteous path am I. Do thou confine me and take this kingdom." (Adh:Rāmāyana Trans: Lala Baij Nath, p. 34—Verse 69).

to mix personal issues with the king's duties towards his country and his subjects, who were desirous to have Rāma as their Yuva-rāja. Again, the wishes of the brother who is involved in the matter were not ascertained. It is natural for the intriguing mother to work for her son's accession, but the son may have his own views and need not necessarily agree to her machinations, which he did not approve as was shown by the sequel. It is overshooting the mark to extol the virtues of truth when the person actually under obligation to maintain it, was obviously not willing to fulfil his part of the transaction. Common sense would have shown to Rāma that the situation was the result of court intrigue ; and as an intelligent prince he should have faced it with a counter-move by asking Kaikēyi to send for Bharata immediately, so that the matter might be decided in his presence. This course has certain disadvantages too, if the other party takes a different view; but it is straight dealing. Brotherly affection also demands that Rāma should assist his brother in solving the problem that had arisen instead of taking it upon himself to settle it.

Further, the wishes of the people cannot be easily brushed aside by a prince when they have given open expression to them, especially at a crisis when the old king on the verge of both mental and physical collapse is unable to give them security ; nor should a devoted son think of leaving the father to the mercy of circumstances. When Rāma ultimately decided to go away, the people preferred to follow him and serve him instead of remaining at home. At the first halt he makes, he disappears with Sīta and Lakṣmaṇa at night, when all were asleep. This is neither duty nor propriety, but may be characterised as irresponsible conduct, deceit or moral cowardice, which hardly befits a hero.<sup>62</sup> It looks as if Rāma had some other motives in going to the forest, and would have left in any case, even if Kaikēyi had not intervened. The whole episode in Rāmāyaṇa shows Bharata in shining colours, for he takes his mother to task for her unedifying conduct on his behalf and stands out as a supreme example of brotherly affection and self-sacrifice.

It is argued that Rāma was an incarnation of Viṣṇu, for the purpose of the annihilation of Rāvaṇa and his race, and that if advantage had not been taken of Kaikēyi's move for an exit from

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62. The incongruity of the position is rendered more glaring when in Uttara Rāmāyaṇa Rāma discards Sīta on the ground of popular rumour affecting her reputation.

the palace, his mission would never have been fulfilled. The argument is too flimsy to deserve an answer. Once the divinity of Rāma is admitted, criticism has either to be at a standstill or to assume a different course. For a God, killing of a being like Rāvaṇa is no difficult task. God is all-powerful, even in his human form, and can straightaway challenge and destroy his enemy. That he has not done so betrays a confusion of thought or a blending of two conceptions in the personality of Rāma which makes it difficult to determine where the divinity begins and humanity ends.

Without his divine attributes, it is possible to look upon Rāma as a man full of the spirit of adventure, desirous of exploring regions unknown and enjoying the thrills that new discoveries provide. For such a one the settled atmosphere of a court with its time-honoured formalities and routine will have little or no attraction, while the prospect of adventures in a strange land is sure to be exciting. A few days in Viśvāmītra's company have already shown what that kind of life means. It is also probable that he had heard from the old courtiers strange tales about Southern regions—Daṇḍakāraṇya—and its inhabitants, who had nothing in common with his own people<sup>63</sup>, and among whom the kinsmen of Tāṭaka and Subāhu might be found. The yearning for romance and adventure is considered to be a component part of the heroic mould even these days. Much greater must have been its appeal to popular imagination at the time of Vālmīki or Rāma. This trait by itself makes Rāma a loveable character and a fascinating personality. His weakness as a human being lies in the way in which he twisted the situation arising out of his step-mother's intrigue for his own purpose irrespective of other considerations. But his romantic enterprise more than counterbalances his error, which, when it came to be justified and explained away as being due to a divine medium, enhanced his glory, which Vālmīki immortalised in his epic and which enthroned him in the hearts of the Hindus as their idol and ideal.

### *Bāli episode*

Rāma's encounter with Bāli, the monkey chief and the circumstances that led to the death of the latter constitute another important episode in the epic, and as such deserve some comment.

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63. There is also the story about the flight of Daśaratha to the South to escape the ruthless persecution of Paraśurāma, the enemy of the Kṣatriya race, when he found refuge in the caves of Jatāyu and Sampāti, two brother vultures. This event is sufficiently romantic to bring in its train a fund of stories along with the return of Daśaratha.

The two brothers Bāli and Sugrīva quarrel as a result of a misunderstanding arising out of a fight between Bāli and Māyāvi.<sup>64</sup> Sugrīva is banished from the kingdom, as Bāli had reason to suspect his loyalty and affection. Rāma sympathises with Sugrīva's plight, and promises to kill Bāli and restore Sugrīva to the throne, while Sugrīva in return agrees to help Rāma in his search for Sita and also in any other eventuality that might arise thereafter. Sugrīva is advised to challenge Bāli to a duel, in which Rāma aims an arrow from behind and kills Bāli. About the details of their quarrel all versions of Rāmāyaṇa agree. In the A.R., however, an additional detail appears,<sup>65</sup> which does not affect the situation materially although it exonerates Sugrīva to a certain extent. We are concerned with the conduct of Rāma in killing Bāli not in open combat but by treachery. Foul play is against all canons of the duel. Even supposing that foul play could be palliated on the ground of necessity, the argument does not apply in this case. Bāli before his death asks Rāma certain pertinent questions, expecting an explanation in justification of his conduct. A man might kill a beast for food which was a dire necessity, but the flesh of the monkey was not eaten, and even that excuse according to Bāli could not be cited in favour of Rāma, who appeared in saintly garb and was expected not to molest people unnecessarily. Rāma is unable to answer Bāli<sup>66</sup> directly, and indulges in sophistry, sermonising on

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64. A demon, overpowered by Bāli entered a cave, and Bāli followed him with his brother Sugrīva, who was asked to keep watch at the entrance and close it if blood came out of it after some time. Sugrīva did so. But after a year Bāli came out of it alive after killing the demon. When he found the entrance closed he burst it open by his strength, and thinking that Sugrīva had purposely done it, drove him away, appropriating all his possessions, including his wife.

65. According to the A. R. when Bāli entered the cave of the demon his instructions to Sugrīva were that if after some time milk came out, that must be taken as a sign of death of the demon. If blood came, he must conclude that Bāli was dead, and then he should close the cave. Though it was the milk that came, it looked like blood through the demon's magic, and Sugrīva closed the entrance to the cave.

66. Bāli asks :—

“What fame from one thou hast not slain  
In front of battle canst thou gain  
Whose secret hand had laid me low  
When madly fighting my foe ?”

The Rāmāyān of Vālmīki (Griffith's translation, Vol. V. p. 91.)

and concludes :—

“The questioners with apt reply . . . defy.” p. 97, *ibid.*

(“മുഖൻ നരസിപന്നസ്തി പുഷ്പംനേൻ പ്രിയമരൻ

the monkey king's vices and his right as the representative of Bharata to punish evil-doers in realms belonging to the line of Ikṣvāku.<sup>67</sup> Rāma's claim to speak or do as the plenipotentiary of Bharata, whom he did not even meet or take leave of, before he left Ayōdhya, is the height of deceit, which is by the way quite in keeping with his treacherous conduct towards Bāli. It passes one's comprehension how Kiṣkindha, Bāli's kingdom, could belong to Bharata. Neither he nor his ancestors had ever conquered it or had made any attempt in that direction. The line of Raghu had become famous through the exploits of that hero after whom the line is named, but nowhere is it stated that Bāli was one of the rulers who owed him allegiance. It is only covering one unjustifiable act with another.

What after all is the heinous crime which Bāli committed and for which he was punished by "a deed so base" ?<sup>68</sup> Nobody could blame him for driving away Sugrīva, whose behaviour in the Māyāvi incident Bāli had every reason to suspect. A near relation of a king who had shown proof of infidelity is no safe person to be kept within his palace. The ill feeling might at any time develop into an open revolt against his authority which the discontented person would surely endeavour to undermine. To banish such from the country is the recognised method among sovereigns. Works like Arthaśāstra even recommend their extinction as quite a legitimate act within the purview of the royal code. Bāli's treatment of Sugrīva viewed in the light should be regarded as lenient.

Another charge levelled against Bāli has reference to his conduct towards Ruma, Sugrīva's wife<sup>69</sup>. There is only Rāma's

കലീനൻ സത്യസന്ധനൻ തേജസ്വി ചരിതവ്രതൻ  
 നേരിടാത്തവനെക്കൊന്നി ഒട്ടേറെ നന്മ ലഭിച്ചു നീ  
 പോരികല്യാണമോളെൻ മറിലെഴുതിലയോ ശരം." എന്നു തുടങ്ങി  
 "ആകട്ടെ ലോകം കാലത്താ ലീമട്ടിൽപ്പെട്ടു പോകുമേ!  
 നിൻവേല തക്കതൊന്നെങ്കിൽ നന്നായ് മേൽവേണ്ടതോത്തിടം").

എന്നു വരെ.

67. P. 99, *ibid.* Later versions of Rāmāyaṇa have however, omitted this argument of Rāma.

68. Rāmāyan of Vālmiki, Griffith's translation, p. 93, Vol. IV.

69. Some place Tāra in place of Ruma, assuming that Tāra was the original wife of Sugrīva. There is nothing in Vālmiki's epic to warrant this

testimony<sup>70</sup>, which being one-sided cannot be relied on in this respect, to show that Bāli had misbehaved towards Ruma. The proper person who could give unimpeachable evidence in the matter is Tāra, whose reference to that in her lament is in the mildest terms possible. This is what she says:—

“ Ah Noble Vānar, doomed to pay  
The penalty of all to-day  
Sugrīva from his home expelled  
And Ruma from his arms withheld ”.<sup>71</sup>

This can be only interpreted as referring to Ruma's separation from her husband. The banishment of one's own brother, whose character was suspected on the basis of a single incident, and who should have been given another chance or forgiven till fresh evidence of his lack of faith was forthcoming, must be deemed a sin according to Tāra, who also thinks that Ruma, who was innocent, should not have been withheld from Sugrīva, whose crime did not justify the punishment of Ruma also. From the point of view of Bāli it might be argued that in preventing Sugrīva from taking his wife with him he wanted to deprive his brother of the pleasures of life and condemn him to misery both physical and mental. While it can be conceded that this is too severe a punishment, it is doubtful whether it can be established as a sin in the light in which Bāli's assumed misbehaviour<sup>72</sup> is held. There is still another voice which clears Bāli's character of all its taint, and that is Hanūman's. Hanūman is one of those few loyal friends whom Sugrīva had during his exile. He can never be accused of any partiality towards Bāli. His testimony in the circumstances is therefore, doubly valuable.

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assumption. If there had been an episode like that in Tāra's life, she ought to have referred to it in her lament at Bāli's death, when she had a grown-up son, Aṅgada, born of Bāli.

70. Rāmāyan of Vālmiki, Vol. IV, p. 100.

71. Rāmāyan of Vālmiki. Vol. IV. p. 111.

“സുഗ്രീവഭയ്യയെ ഹരി ഉവനേയമകരീ നീ  
നിനക്കതിന്റെ ഫലമം-ണീവന്നതു ഹരീശ്ചര.”

72. Bāli's behaviour dwindles into insignificance when compared to Sugrīva's who during the absence of Bāli in the cave and after his death made Tāra his wife—we have the testimony of Angadan (Bali's son) for this—p. 463, Vālmiki Rāmāyan (1915) (A.R., p. 162). Rāma seems to have condoned it.

In consoling Tāra says he :—

“ And stay these tears, for thou art wise  
Our Lord the King is doomed to die  
On whom ten million hearts rely  
*Kind, liberal, patient, true and just*  
Was he in whom they place their trust  
And now he seeks the land of those  
Who for the right subdue their foes”.<sup>73</sup>

This praise, coming as it does from a partisan of Sugrīva, cannot be an exaggeration, but is a sincere homage to Bāli's greatness. Hanūman, who is purity and devotion incarnate, is fully alive to the deep tragedy that overtook the career of a magnanimous soul whose only weakness was an excessive consciousness of personal injury. In the light of this testimony, willingly tendered by Hanūman despite his personal attachment to Sugrīva, it is unfair to accuse Bāli of misconduct. In any case, it is not free from doubt, and Bāli has every right to have the benefit of that doubt.

The whole episode is tragic in the extreme; and when we compare the speeches of Bāli and Rāma, which the Ādikavi has put in the mouth of these two characters, it is impossible not to be struck by the difference in their tone and sentiments. There is more nobility and pathos in the last utterance of Bāli than in that of Rāma, who evades direct answers to the points raised by the Monkey Chief and attempts a laboured disquisition<sup>74</sup> on the rights of kings, of which his victim seems to have a better knowledge. It reads like the cooked-up arguments of a counsel who has a weak case to defend with the difference that in the instance in point, the counsel has a personal axe to grind.

73. Rāmāyan of Vālmiki. Vol. IV. p. 113-114.

“അറിവോടും നീയവ്യവസ്ഥ മേവം ഭേദിതമാഗതം  
ആകയാൽ പണ്ഡിതേ ! പുണ്യം കാഴ്ചമൈനികമല്ലതാൻ,  
ആരിൽ ജ്വലംഗമർ പെരു അായിരം പ്രയുക്താഞ്ച ഭം  
വേറെ വേറെ ചൊരുകുന്നി തദ്ദേഹം മൃതനായിതാ  
ഇദ്ദേഹം ന്യായദൃഷ്ടാന്തമിൻ, സാമമനക്ഷമാപരൻ,  
ധർമ്മജിതഭവനംപുക്കു നിതിനെപ്പറ്റി മരളോലം.”

74. The strange argument of a hunter's right to kill monkeys and similar beasts is also advanced by Rāma. Rāmāyan of Vālmiki, vide p. 98, Vol. IV. (Griffith).

From the point of view of human psychology and political intrigue it is easy to understand the line of thinking pursued by Rāma in his dealings with Bāli. In Sugrīva he found a fellow sufferer like himself, a victim of circumstances over which he had no control. As adversity makes one acquainted with strange bed-fellows, the two were naturally drawn towards each other to work out their own ends. Each needed the other's help, and in the circumstances in which they were placed there was no reason to suspect the bonafides of either. Though Bāli was decidedly more powerful than Sugrīva and could have managed what Rāma wanted more easily, he could not be expected to throw himself heart and soul into Rāma's affair like Sugrīva, to whom Rāma could dictate his terms. In the case of Bāli, Rāma must necessarily depend upon his good will, which he had reason to doubt in view of the friendly relation that subsisted between the lord of Kiṣkindha and the lord of Lanka<sup>75</sup>. After the compact with Sugrīva the seriousness of the situation dawned on Rāma. Bāli was no ordinary foe. His strength was superhuman, and as a fighter he possessed rare courage and will power. In his treatment of Sugrīva, his own brother, there was ample evidence of his revengeful spirit. It is quite conceivable that Rāma hesitated to face such a formidable hero. No wonder, that Sugrīva at first doubted Rāma's capacity to kill Bāli, the magnitude of whose prowess he had learned to his cost<sup>76</sup>. Having pledged his solemn word to Sugrīva, Rāma had to save his honour; and the only alternative left was to take Bāli by surprise, following the dictates of expediency rather than the canons of warfare. He was encouraged to do it by the fact that the use of bows and arrows, in which Rāma was proficient, was unknown to the Vānaras, who counted on their physical strength. Rāma's action is on a par with the political murders committed in various countries of the world in both ancient and modern times when differences of opinion occur between individuals and the king or the party in power.<sup>77</sup>

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75. Rāvana's discomfiture at the hands of Bāli, who had the Rākṣasa king hanging on his tail for years through Nārada's mischief, made them depart as friends.

76. Rāma had to perform two feats—throwing the head of Dundubhi and cutting the seven palm trees at one stroke—to convince Sugrīva of his strength.

77. Modern dictatorial Europe (Germany, Russia and Italy) affords ample illustration of the systematic application of this principle.

(a) Mr. C. V. Vaidya's justification of Rāma's conduct on the basis of the sovereign rights of superior races to interfere in cases of misrule

*Śūrpaṅakha and Sīta.*

Though the disfiguring of Śūrpaṅakha occurs before the encounter with Bāli, I have chosen to discuss it at this stage, as the event has a more direct bearing on the subsequent development of the story. The Bāli episode is only an interlude, which has no direct relation with the main incident of the epic, viz. the battle between Rāma and Rāvaṇa. For this Śūrpaṅakha's incident is the immediate cause and provocation. We shall do well to take stock of the various details of the episode before we comment on them. Śūrpaṅakha, the sister of Rāvaṇa, meets Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa at Janasthāna. She appears before them as a charming maiden<sup>78</sup> and falls in love with Rāma, whom she requests straightaway to take her as his wife. The request naturally embarrasses Rāma, as Sīta his wife stands by his side. The two brothers, instead of sympathising with her display of a natural instinct, make fun of her sentiments, indulging in a practical joke on her. She is tossed between them as if to provide amusement. Irritated by such a treatment, she decides on removing Sīta, who, she thinks, stands between her and her desire for Rāma. The seriousness involved in her attempt opens Rāma's eyes to the dangers of the situation, and at his instance Lakṣmaṇa in a bound prevents her from carrying out her object, disfiguring her at the same time. She swears vengeance and hastens to her brothers, Khara and others, who live in the neighbourhood. They offer battle with their fourteen thousand-strong army, and perish in the fight. Thereupon she appeals to Rāvaṇa, who is the supreme lord of the Rākṣasas. To arouse Rāvaṇa's interest, she slightly twists the story describing the extraordinary beauty of Sīta, and impresses upon Rāvaṇa that it was her idea to present such a lovely woman to him, that brought misfortune upon her. The champion of the Rākṣasas takes up the

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among inferior races and the rules of hunting can hardly be accepted: (vide p. 155-157, Riddle of Rāmāyana). Who is to decide the question of superiority? The noble sentiments to which Bāli gives expression in his last utterance would do credit to the most enlightened man of the present day.

(b) The theory of Talboys Wheeler, quoted by Mr. Vaidya, drawing a distinction between the Vedic Rāma of Ayōdhya and Rāma the *linga* worshipper of the South, is only the question of Rāma the God and Rāma the man in another form. To build a theory like that on the solitary instance of Rāma's founding a temple for Śiva at Ramēswaram, which according to some is an interpolation, is to allow the scope of reason an undue range. There is more plausibility in making Śiva a Rāma-worshipper on the basis of the A. R.

78. Lalita.

cause, inspired by vengeance as well as the desire to possess Sīta, and soon arrives in the guise of an ascetic at Janasthāna with his clever accomplice Mārīca. Thus the two principal heroes of the epic are brought face to face for the first time, and in the first round Rāvaṇa scores, flying to his abode with Sīta.

The conduct of the two may now be examined. In dealing with a woman of the Rākṣasa race as Rāma has done, he has disregarded all conventions of chivalry, causing the gravest injury to the honour of that race, and Rāvaṇa as their champion has every right to interfere. In this case there is sufficient provocation. Profession of love by Śūrpaṇakha is but a natural instinct, and her move can by no means be regarded as improper. If her conduct borders on immodesty, it must be remembered at the same time that she is a denizen of the forest and cannot be expected to know the code of behaviour obtained among sophisticated folk. Her forward nature on the other hand has an element of daring innocence which is after all not so despicable. As we do not hear from Rāmāyaṇa about her husband, we have to presume that she was not blessed with one at the time. In that case her advances must be deemed quite legitimate, or at any rate, do not deserve blame. Even assuming, that her lack of modesty was punished by her disfigurement, the punishment is far out of proportion to her supposed crime. The personal safety of Sīta demanded that Śūrpaṇakha must be kept out of the way, but there are evidently better methods of accomplishing that. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa or either of them could easily overpower her and bring her to her senses. The argument is often advanced that Rāma should have killed her forthwith for her improper advances, and that he refrained from it from a sense of Āryan Dharma which never permitted the killing of a woman. The plea comes with ill grace from those who pass off without comment the death of Tāṭaka, which was deliberately planned by Viswāmitra, who had the willing co-operation of Rāma in that venture. It is also sometimes held that it was to save Śūrpaṇakha from the consequences of her excessive passion that Rāma thought of deformity as a deterrent punishment to her. This is a strange contention which approves of punishment in anticipation of a possible crime. We might as well suggest that if Rāma was to embark on a campaign of reform, he might more profitably have carried out his ideas in his own family, where there were already cases requiring such summary treatment.

Now turn for a moment to Rāvaṇa. He evidently believed in the maxim 'an eye for an eye.' For a woman disgraced among

them he decided to have another from the enemy's camp. If one snatched like that is nearer to the heart of the enemy, so much the better ; and so Śīta became his victim. A stern sense of logic seems to be the motive power behind his action. It was open to him to handle Śīta after the fashion of Rāma ; but he preferred a better course, which marks him out as more chivalrous in his behaviour towards women. If chivalry is a sign of refinement, he shows more evidence of it than Rāma. He takes Śīta to his palace, and tries the milder method of persuasion to bring her round. In any case his behaviour is not open to the objections to which that of Rāma is open, nor is there any need to justify it on the ground of the Rākṣasa custom of abduction of woman before marriage<sup>79</sup>.

Mr. Vaidya's suggestion would have been right if the abduction of Śīta by Rāvaṇa had been an independent event having no connection with the Śūrpaṇakha episode, and if it was a part of a general campaign organised by the Lord of Lanka for the acquisition of fair women for his personal use. It does not appear from the Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki, or for that matter from any other version of it, that Rāvaṇa had any such intention. Nor does he seem to have heard of Śīta and her exceptional charms<sup>80</sup> before Śūrpaṇakha approached him with her tale of woe. It is not in the course of wanderings in the pursuit of women that he arrives at the hermitage of Rāma. His intervention has been no doubt provoked, and cannot be in any sense deemed unjustifiable. Rāvaṇa's action needs scrutiny in view of the unwarranted assumption that he is a bad character and the Rākṣasas are uncivilised beings. How far the Rākṣasas deserved such a criticism will be answered in the course of this chapter. Before that we have to anticipate another argument which disputes Rāvaṇa's claims to be a hero, as he attempts to steal away Śīta rather than challenge Rāma for his conduct towards Śūrpaṇakha. The question is one of procedure, and as such does not affect the main issue. Rāvaṇa's right to interfere undoubtedly stands on firm grounds. Whether that should have taken the form of abduction or an open challenge is a matter of tactics which are resorted to for the attainment of one's object. As has already

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79. The riddle of Rāmāyaṇa by C. V. Vaidya. p. 148.

80. In Ananda Rāmāyaṇa, Rāvaṇa is mentioned as one of the kings who attempted to bend the divine bow to win the hand of Śīta. Bhavabhūti for dramatic effect makes use of this detail in his drama 'Jānakī Pariṇayam.'

been pointed out, the idea of one woman for another is the main consideration. In the event of a fight one cannot be sure of its result, and the chief object stands only a doubtful chance of being realised in such a contingency. So Rāvaṇa, artful as he was, thought of securing his principal object first and facing the consequences of his action later. A fight, in any case, was inevitable. Rāma was not likely to consider the loss of his wife with indifference, and was sure to deal with the offender in the proper way. From the point of view of Rāvaṇa his enemy should not have an easy time over it, while he could in the meanwhile, prepare for the conflict. Viewed from any standpoint, Rāvaṇa's conduct has better justification than that of Rāma. When ultimately the crisis came and the enemy challenged him, Rāvaṇa stood up and fought with all his might to the last. The idea of evading it was never in his mind. In this connection it may be worthwhile to notice another charge that is generally levelled against Rāvaṇa without sufficient evidence. His weakness for women is often pointed out as one of his many vices. But instances in Purāṇas<sup>81</sup> to substantiate this are few and far between. When he conquered Indra, it is said that Urvaśi and other celestial nymphs were forcibly taken away by him to his palace. But no visitor to Lanka bears testimony to this fact. We hear only of one woman as his legitimate wife and queen. The maintenance of a harem was a prevailing custom among kings. Its size or strength varied according to the importance of the king. Probably Rāvaṇa too had a similar institution<sup>82</sup>; but in that respect he is in good company<sup>83</sup>.

The episode<sup>84</sup> in which Rāvaṇa uses force against Rambha reflects more discredit on herself and the abode of Indra, where

81. There is only one instance in which Rambha figures.

82. Rūpayauvana-sampanāh

Rāvaṇasya varastriyāḥ—Perhaps these lines of Vālmiki refer to Rāvaṇa's harem, (quoted on p. 104 of the Riddle of Rāmāyaṇa).

“രൂപയൗവനസംപന്നം

രവണസ്യ വരസ്ത്രീയഃ”

83. The greatest sinner in this respect is Kṛṣṇa, whose harem was 16,008 strong.

84. Once Rāvaṇa was halting in the valley of Kailāsa when Rambha passed that way to keep an appointment with Kubēra, the Lord Chancellor of heaven. Rāvaṇa interposed asking her to keep company with him on that day. She declined on the ground of her engagement with Kubēra, whereupon Rāvaṇa used force and Rambha cursed him to meet his death through a woman. Rāvaṇa's infatuation for Śīta and his consequent downfall are traced to this curse of Rambha.

she is a 'chartered libertine,' than on Rāvaṇa, who only sought to exercise a right which other heroes who had access to heaven enjoyed. Indra in mythology rules over a realm where pursuit of pleasure is cultivated as a fine art along with other fine arts, viz., music and dance, and nymphs like Urvaśi and Rambha<sup>85</sup> play the leading role in the whole drama. They entertain heroes<sup>86</sup> of this world as well as the other, who had rendered service to the Dēvas, and are ready to offer their company also to them. It is stated in the Purāṇas that this incident with Rambha occurred when Rāvaṇa was young and may be regarded as a 'youthful indiscretion.' None therefore, will blame Rāvaṇa too severely for this act. His character indeed commands greater respect than that of Indra, who makes use of his nymphs for various purposes, and contaminates the atmosphere of both heaven and earth, throwing temptation in the way of even ascetics<sup>87</sup>, not to speak of vigorous worldly men like Rāvaṇa. Critics are often prepared to pass Indra without notice, while they subject Rāvaṇa to a deal of unfair criticism.

### *Rākṣasas.*

Who were they? Our observations on Rāvaṇa's conduct take us to the wider subject of the origin and nature of the Rākṣasa race, about whom much has been written by various writers. Some try to make out that they were cannibals<sup>88</sup> and a barbarous race. But they are at the same time confronted with a problem in which they are obliged to reconcile their cannibalism with certain other statements about Rākṣasas, such as their beauty<sup>89</sup>, their origin<sup>90</sup>, their knowledge of Vēdas<sup>91</sup>, which testify

85. There are two more in the group, Mēnaka and Tilōttama.

86. There are several instances of such entertainments in Purāṇas. Purūravas and Daśaratha were recipients of such honours. The former was very much attached to Urvaśi, who had to take birth on earth to please him.

87. Viswāmītra and Nārāyaṇa are classical instances. Indra is always jealous of men performing austerities for the purpose of attaining heaven. He sent Mēnaka to distract the attention of Viswāmītra engaged in penance which she disturbed twice. In the case of Nārāyaṇa, another ascetic, Urvaśi took the place of Mēnaka. There are several such instances.

88. Riddle of Rāmāyaṇa, p. 106.

89. *Ibid.* (Note 2, p. 160).

90. Rāvaṇa is descended from the Sage Pulastya.

91. Rāvaṇa and his brother knew Vēdas and were religious. [p. 277, Ancient Indian Historical Tradition by F. E. Pargiter (1922)]. The hōma sacrifices performed by Rāvaṇa and his son Indrajit resemble the Vēdic rituals very closely.

to their refinement and culture. Apparently these theories about Rākṣasas are the result of a confusion of thought. Even taking the descriptions in Rāmāyaṇa as our basis, we find that they are mutually contradictory. Though Virādha, Kabandha<sup>92</sup> and Rāvaṇa are all designated as Rakṣasas, we know from Rāmāyaṇa that the former two were cannibals, while the latter and his race were of a different type and had nothing in common with the others. Vālmiki's description<sup>93</sup> of Lanka, the palace of Rāvaṇa, gives us the picture of a great centre of civilisation which was in no way inferior to that of N. India.<sup>94</sup> There is therefore, every reason to think that terms like Rākṣasa, Daitya, and Dānava conveyed originally a meaning which was quite different from what they were made to convey later. Mr. Pargiter's inference that they were originally men and their transformation into demons was a later development has plenty of mythological evidence in its support<sup>95</sup>.

#### *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa.*

Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa is generally considered to be a part of Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa. It is however significant that the former does not contain any evidence of its relationship with the latter. Every Kāṇḍa concludes with a reference to the dialogue between Uma and Mahēśwara.<sup>96</sup> The reference is repeated verbatim at

92. A. R., p. 62, Verses 17-19, translation by Lala Baij Nath ; Rāmāyaṇ of Vālmiki, p. 276, Griffith (1915).

93. Rāmāyaṇ of Valmiki, p. 354.

94. Ancient Indian Historical Tradition by Pargiter p. 277.

95. (a) It is worth while to quote the following passages from Pargiter's work on the subject. "These names, Dānava, Daitya etc., denoted people originally. Thus King Yayāti married Śarmisṭha, daughter of Vṛṣaparvan, who was King of the Dānavas and a Daitya. Bhīma killed the Rākṣasa Chief Hidimba and had by his sister Hidimbi a son Ghatōtkaca who was king of the Rākṣasas and took part in the Bhārata battle..... Similarly the Rākṣasas in the story of Rāma were the inhabitants of Ceylon and the Godavari valley..... As these people were originally enemies, these names turned to mean alien and hatred, hostile or savage men..... This abusive use led to the attribution of evil characteristics to such people, who were then described as demonic beings and so these terms approximated to *Asura* in meaning. (Ancient Indian Historical Tradition, pp. 290-291).

(b) It may also be noted in this connection that the Jaina version of Rāmāyaṇa which has been rendered into Kanarese makes no mention of Rākṣasas but only of Vidyādhara. History of Kanarese Literature by Rice, p. 34.

96. Ityadhyātmarāmāyaṇe, Umamahēśwara Samvādē.

‘ಇತ್ತಯ್ಯಾತ್ಮರಾಮಾಯಣೇ ಊರ್ಮಹೇಶ್ವರಸಂವಾದೇ.’

Mr. C. R. S. Iyengar adds the following note about A. R. "believed to

the end of every Kānda with the necessary change in their names. In the face of this fact its association with Brahmāṇḍam is a mystery. Either Adhyātman had an independent existence, or the compiler of Brahmāṇḍam has incorporated it in the bigger Purāṇa for reasons of his own. The nature of the Purāṇas suggests this inference as a possibility. They are compilations, like modern encyclopaedias, in which information of all kinds was gathered for the edification of the votaries of particular religious cults that existed in Hindu Society.<sup>97</sup> The Vaiṣṇavic bias of A. R. is patent enough. If B. P. was compiled after A. R., its inclusion in the former for Vaiṣṇavic propoganda was a necessity. If it was done later, the omission could have been supplied in a revised edition of B.P. In any case it is difficult to believe that A.R., which is a solid work complete in design and execution, formed part of another work.

*The genesis of the Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇam in Malayālam.*

Here again we have to begin with a legend. Once a Brāhmaṇa Sanyāsin presented a Ms. copy of the original Adhyātman<sup>98</sup> written in Telugu (according to another version Nāgari) script to an Ampalappuḷa Rāja, who wished to have it transcribed into Malayālam script so that he might read the rare work. Mēppattūr Bhaṭṭatiri, who happened to be at the palace at the time, was asked by the Rāja to do the transcription or arrange for it. Since Meppattūr did not know Telugu, Eḷuttaccan was approached for the purpose,<sup>99</sup> as he was conversant with

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be a part of Brahmāṇḍa, but the internal evidence shows that it is related by Viswāmitra. Bhaṣiyalpurāna (111-19) says that Lord Sankara having thus gratified the wish of Rāmānanda vanished from the place. Later the holy man sought Sri Kṛṣṇa Caitanya and served him faithfully for 12 years subsisting solely on milk. The master enjoined him to compose the work known later on as A. R. "Neither Vālmiki nor Vyāsa can be claimed to be its author." (Introduction to his translation of the Rāmāyaṇ of Vālmiki, p. 76).

97. Otherwise the repetition of the same subject matter in different Purāṇas can hardly be explained.

98. The story is that the Ms. was brought from Benares. Why the Brāhman should go all the way to Benares to get a Telugu Ms. is not easy to understand. Perhaps he might have secured it on his return from Benares via Telugu districts.

99. Another version says M. Bhaṭṭatiri, who was on friendly terms with the Rāja, took Eḷuttaccan to Ampalappuḷa and introduced him to the Rāja, who then personally asked our poet to transcribe the work into Malayālam script. That is however a matter of detail.

all Dravidian scripts. In the course of its transcription the work was rendered into Malayāḷam verse by the poet. Both the Rāja and Bhaṭṭatiri were immensely pleased with Eḷuttaccan's work, the transcription in honour of the Malayāḷam version. The story goes on further to say that as a reward for Eḷuttaccan's meritorious labour all the Cakkāla Nāyars<sup>100</sup> within the territory of Ampalappuḷa were exempted from the oil-mongering business and all their machines were removed. The sequel of the story, it must be confessed, transforms it into an incredible legend. That a man of Eḷuttaccan's wide outlook and temperament would have agreed to a proposition to deprive thousands of his fellowmen of their means of livelihood and, still more, that he would ever think of his birth<sup>101</sup> in a particular clan as a stigma, is really hard to believe.

There is still another story. The author of the original Adhyātman again a Brāhman, was feeling unhappy as his work was not having the recognition which according to him was its due. In the course of his wanderings he met a Gandharva at Gōkaṛṇam,<sup>102</sup> and sought his advice as to what he should do to popularise his work. The Gandharva directed the Brāhman to another person who happened to be on the spot at the time. The mysterious person, according to tradition, the great sage Vyāsa himself, was not disposed to forgive the Gandharva for this unexpected inroad on his privacy and cursed him to be born as a man. The Gandharva therefore, was reborn as Eḷuttaccan later.<sup>103</sup> Since he knew the author of Adhyātman in his previous existence, Eḷuttaccan wanted to give him some importance by choosing his work as the basis of his Malayāḷam rendering.

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100. The implication is that Eḷuttaccan belonged to the oil mongers' clan (Cakkāla Nāyar), one of the subdivisions of the Nāyar Community. Oil-mongering was then apparently not considered to be an honourable profession.

101. Eḷuttaccan's humility makes him proclaim that he is in the forefront of the ignorant: page 3 of Adhyātman: Ajñānināmādyanāyu ḷōruñān.

“അജ്ഞാനിനാമദ്യനായുഃശ്ലോകേ അനൻ.”

102. A place in S. Kanara once considered to be the Northern boundary of Keraḷa.

103. The story unfortunately does not proceed to tell what happened to the Adhyātman or its poor author, whose begging expedition was primarily responsible for this curse on the Gandharva.

The two stories, though vying with one another in respect of their improbability, nevertheless suggest certain possibilities, viz., that Eḷuttaccan was conversant with the other branches of the Dravidian family of languages, that Adhyātmam was first introduced probably from Telugu districts into Malabar at the time of Eḷuttaccan, and that Eḷuttaccan's work was considered to be superior to the original. The last is, as scholars will admit, not a possibility but an unquestionable fact, which we will show in the course of the chapter. The stories also seek to answer the question why Eḷuttaccan ignored the great epic of Vālmiki, which is by far superior to Adhyātmam in point of literary merit, when he chose to bring out a Rāmāyaṇa in Malayālam. The Ampalappuḷa legend was not convincing enough as an explanation for his preference to Adhyātmam; and his admirers might hence have been led to provide another through an invention of their own. While we are prepared to sympathise with the sentiments of his champions, we can hardly give them credit for an intimate knowledge of his work. Mention is made of Vālmiki's name at the very commencement of Eḷuttaccan's work, in which the blessings of the "Prince of poets" are invoked by the 'Prince of Malayālam poets'<sup>104</sup>. The knowledge that another great poet<sup>105</sup> had already accomplished the task of writing a Malayālam rendering of Vālmiki's epic might have also induced him to prefer another version of the story of Rāma. We have already considered at length in Chapter II the influences of the age which might have determined the choice of his theme. The preamble to his work also confirms our view. Vālmiki sang the glories of a great hero. The age of Eḷuttaccan was no doubt different from that of the early poet, and his message had to be suitably amended. We have no exact idea of the circumstances or the environment in which Vālmiki conceived his story. The dominant note of his epic however, points to an heroic age that revelled in the romance of war consequent upon the unsettled state of society and looked upon its heroes as objects for emulation. Eḷuttaccan, as we have seen, lived in a period that was tired of war and its horrors, and was badly in need of a spiritual message to soothe the agony of the

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104. Vālmikī Kaviśrēṣṭhānākīya Mahāmuni Tānmamavaramtarikeppōzum Vannikkunnēn.

“വല്ലഭീകി കവിയത്രേഘനാകിയ മഹാമുനി  
താൻ മമ വരം തരികെപ്പൊഴും വടിക്കണേൻ.”

105. Kannaśśan.

human soul that had realised the futility of ravage, devastation and mutual annihilation. The theme of Adhyātma suited him and his age, and so he made the choice. The following lines proclaim the object which he had in view in composing his work, viz. the mental peace of his brethren.

‘ Adhyātma pradīpakamatyantam rahasyami—  
Tadhyātmarāmāyaṇam mṛtyuśāsanaprōktam  
Adhyayanam caitiṭum martyajanmikalkellām  
Muktisiddhikkumasandigdhamijjanmam koṇḍē.’ \*

[‘Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇam revealed by Śiva is the most secret as it expounds the Adhyātma (esoteric) knowledge. Men who recite it are sure to attain salvation in this birth’.] The inspiration behind his message was not merely one of religious enthusiasm, but was characteristic of a poet-seer who gave his readers through the magic of his words aesthetic pleasure first and salvation later. The process made them doubly prepared for the message. In this respect he is on the same plane as Kamban in Tamil and Tuḷsidās in Hindi. Neither of these poets thought of translating into his own language the original epic word by word. The epic of Vālmiki along with the vast multitude of connected legends that had gathered round the personality of Rāma constituted the foundation on which they raised their superstructure, of which the design and finish were entirely theirs. Eḷuttaccan also is a follower of the same method, with the difference that he based his work on Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇam instead of Vālmiki’s epic. An original genius like him could hardly be bound down by any other work, and he has taken every liberty with the theme to make his venture a first class production. Sometimes we find him closely following the original, especially when enunciating a religious doctrine. But at other times we notice his readiness to illuminate the dark corners of the original, elucidate what is obscure in the latter or introduce new ideas to paint a situation in the new light. In doing this he has made ample use of his knowledge of other works on Rāmāyaṇa.<sup>106</sup> The example of his predecessor must have encourag-

\*“അദ്ധ്യാത്മപ്രദീപക മര്യുശാസനസ്വമി-  
ത്യദ്ധ്യാത്മരാമായണം മൃത്യശാസനപ്രോക്തം  
അദ്ധ്യയനംചൈതൃട്ടം മർത്യജനികകലംകൈല്ലാം  
മുക്തിസിദ്ധിക്കുമസന്ദിഗ്ദ്ധമിജ്ജനമംകൊണ്ടേ.”

106. For example, Kaṇṇaśśan’s Rāmāyaṇam, Vālmiki’s epic, Rāmāyaṇa campu, etc.

ed him to pursue an independent course like this. A story like Rāma's never loses its charm in retelling. On the contrary, it gathers new lustre and beauty, like purified gold, from every attempt at recounting it.

### *Ežuttaccan's epic.*

We will now proceed to examine a few instances to show how Ežuttaccan handles his theme and indicate certain characteristics of his poetry.

One can hardly read two pages in Ežuttaccan's work before he is struck by the devotional fervour of the poet. The mere mention of Rāma immediately conjures up the figure of his idol before him, and a series of epithets follows to transform into words what the poet experiences in his mind. If there is an occasion for a praise of the hero, the poet identifies himself completely with the character who does it and makes it as elaborate as possible. All the divine attributes which proclaim Rāma as the Supreme Being, along with a review of his achievements and graces, particularly the God's personal interest in his devotees, find a place in it. There is a remarkable peculiarity about these praises or stōtras. In the A. R. every alternate page contains a stōtra. Although the God to be praised is the same and his attributes also are more or less similar, Ežuttaccan's stōtras are never monotonous, owing to his amazing command over the vocabulary and the intensity of his emotional fervour. The reader never loses sight of Rāma's personality, his divine mission, and the immensity of his compassion and kindness to his Bhaktas. The original Adhyātma was also intended to sing the glory of Rāma as a God, but the reader never derives so lively and abiding an impression of this as he does from Ežuttaccan's work. The poet's own personal feelings permeate every line of the stōtras in his work, which as pen-pictures and lyrical compositions have few parallels either in Malayālam literature or in other literatures of the world.

### *Ežuttaccan's Rāma.*

The character of the hero is not the same as we find it in the original Adhyātma, which gives us the picture of a divinity that preaches its own importance in season and out of season, but lamentably fails as a human being. Whenever the author of the A. R. attempts to introduce human elements into it, he goes to the other extreme and makes the character grotesque. Ežuttaccan's conception is different. His hero is an ideal for gods as well as for men. If he is the most compassionate and powerful

of gods, he is also the most farsighted, deep and magnanimous of men. Ežuttaccan does not approve of the original author's attempt to paint Rāma's childhood in the usual way of the poets. The child Rāma in the original Adhyātma runs away from his father when he calls him, and he is quicker than his mother. He comes and goes as he likes.<sup>107</sup> It is by such pranks that he pleases his parents. Ežuttaccan's boy Rāma pleases them by his boyish liveliness, engrossing beauty, engaging looks, sweet smiles, infantile steps and various other attractive movements.<sup>108</sup> He endears himself not only to Daśaratha and Kausalya, but also to his step-mother and the people of the city. All the five senses<sup>109</sup> derive pleasure from his sight. Ežuttaccan wants to show that his boy Rāma was a god-child, a paragon of beauty and grace and perfection. To describe him as an ordinary child with all its frivolous pranks was according to our poet to deprive divine infancy of its dignity and charm. His description of Kausalya and her sapatnis<sup>110</sup> during their pregnancy prepares the readers for this view of Rāma. They wore an appearance full of brilliance<sup>111</sup> and majesty, characteristics of the divine embryo ( ' bījā ' ) they were bearing.

As the hero grows, his divine dignity and grace ripen into equanimity of temper and princely behaviour, with an unerring devotion to the rules of public conduct prescribed by Śāstras. When Rāma and his brother are asked to go with Viśwāmitra, Ežuttaccan takes care that they shall pay their respects to their parents and guru before they take leave of them.<sup>112</sup> The same courteous behaviour is exhibited by Ežuttaccan's Rāma when he greets the bow of Śiva at the court of Janaka<sup>113</sup> with a salutation as a mark of respect for the name it bears.

107. Translation by Lala Baij Nath. Verses 47-50 p. 11.

108. A. R. (Mal.) p. 3.

109. Pṛitīnalkinān Samastēndriyaññāḷkkumellām.

കരണശൃംഗതപുണ്ണപാശംഗവീക്ഷണമകരണമം

.....

ചേതോമോഹനങ്ങളും ചേഷ്ടിതങ്ങളെക്കൊണ്ടും

തരതരമമ്മമാക്കും നഗരവാസികൾക്കും.

പ്രീതിനൽകിനാൻ സമസ്തേന്ദ്രിയങ്ങൾക്കുമെല്ലാം.

110. The Sanskrit term used by the wives of the same person for mutual reference.

111. A. R. (Mal.) p. 12 (1878).

112. (a) A. R. (Mal.) Lines 2-3, p. 21.

(b) The author of the original A. R. is not very particular about these details.

113. A. R. (Mal.), p. 29.

In the encounter with Paraśurāma, Eḷuttaccan gives us a picture of Rāma which is different from what we find in either Vālmiki's epic or the original Adhyātma. When Vālmiki's Rāma hears the challenge of Paraśurāma, he "kept back the hot words that rose to his lips".<sup>114</sup> The behaviour of Rāma in Adhyātma is still more agitated, and he "angrily snatched away the Vaiṣṇava bow from his (Paraśurāma's) hand."<sup>115</sup> Eḷuttaccan's Rāma first meets the challenge with a graceful smile and then addresses a few polite words whose hidden meaning is more poignant than the arrow that he subsequently releases.

This is what he says :—

"If great and magnanimous men like you treat boys like me in this fashion, what safety have they ?

And how are they to perform their duty according to their tradition or dharma ?

If once your worthy self desires a thing it meets no obstacle.

A blind<sup>116</sup> boy like me cannot be expected to fare well in *Guṇabandha*<sup>117</sup> (the blending of Guṇas) at any time.

Though born of Kṣatriya race, I have no skill in archery.

114. Translation of Vāl. Rāmāyaṇa by C. R. Srinivasa Iyengar. p. 213.

115. Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa Trans. by L. B. Nath, Verse 15-16, p. 22.

116. Intellectually blind.

“ചൊല്ലേഴും മഹാനഭാവനാരംഘം പ്രേതശാന്തമാക്കും

വല്ലാതെ ബാലന്മാരോടിക്കണെ തുടങ്ങിയൊരു

ആശ്രയമവകെന്തെന്നുള്ളതു തപോനിയെ ?

സപരമകലധർമ്മ മെങ്ങനെപാലിക്കുന്നു ?

നിന്തിരുവടി തിരുവുള്ളത്തിലേറുന്നതി-

ന്നന്തരമുണ്ടോപിന്നെ വരുന്ന നിരൂപിച്ചാൽ!

അന്ധനായിരിപ്പോരു ബാലകനുണ്ടോ ഗുണ-

ബന്ധനം ഭവിക്കുന്നു സന്തതം ചിന്തിച്ചാലും.

ക്ഷത്രിയകലത്തിങ്കലു രേവിക്കയും ചെയ്തേൻ

ശസ്ത്രാസ്ത്രപ്രയോഗസാമന്ത്രിമില്ലല്ലോതാനും.

ശത്രുമിത്രോദാസീനഭേദമെനിക്കില്ല,

ശത്രുസംഹാരംചെയ്തേൻ ശക്തിയുമില്ലയല്ലോ.

അന്തകാന്തകൻപോലും ലംഘിച്ചിടുന്നതല്ല

നിന്തിരുവടിയുടെ ചിന്തിതമതുമുഖം,

വില്ലിങ്ങുന്നതാലും ഞാനാകിലോ കലച്ചീടാ

മല്ലേകിൽ തിരുവുള്ളക്കേടുമുണ്ടാകവേണ്ടേ.”

117. The poet uses Guna in two meanings, 1. the string of the bow, 2. virtue or good quality.

I make no distinction between a friend and a foe.<sup>118</sup>  
 Nor am I capable of killing an enemy.  
 Even the destroyer of Antaka<sup>119</sup> cannot go against your  
 decision.  
 Still, please give me your bow  
 I shall try my hand at it  
 Do not be offended if I fail.

This is followed by a beautiful description of Rāma's infantile grace and demeanour, which defies translation and raises the satirical tone of the speech to its boiling point. The whole piece is a master-piece of irony, in which every word is like a shaft. Eḷuttac-can's skill in such compositions is unrivalled and they abound in the pages of his Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata. This quality of his poetry makes his readers revert to it always with pleasure. It is entertaining and at the same time thoughtful. The more you read it the more you enjoy it. The description of it as 'Ālōca-nāmṛta' fits it admirably, for like nectar it never palls on the palate. It is no wonder that Malayāḷis read his works daily as a matter of religious duty.

A similar occasion arises when Rāma meets Kaikeyi after the latter started her diabolical game on the eve of his coronation. Vālmiki makes Rāma expound the virtues of filial dharma and renunciation and declare that he is capable of the highest sacrifice for the sake of his father whose obligations are as important as his own. Says Rāma :—

“I pray you to lay to your heart well that the hollow joys of life have no power over me and that I am as dispassionate as the sages that abide in the holy forest. I pray you remember carefully that I hold my life of value only so far as it serves to fulfil His Majesty's pleasure. Know I of any higher Dharma than to wait on the pleasure of my father and serve him in thought, word and deed”?<sup>120</sup>

118. This can be also interpreted philosophically.

119. Śiva, who killed Antaka, the God of death.

120. Vāl. Rāmāyaṇa, translation by C. R. S., verse 80, p. 96.

“അതഥം കൊതിച്ചു ഞാൻ ദേവി ലോകവശ്യം കോരങ്ങളിടം  
 ഇഷ്ടിപോലെ വെറും ധമ്മ പരന്നെന്നറികെന്നെ നീ.  
 ഇപ്പിടിച്ചുനന്നൊരിഷ്ടത്തെ ചെപ്പൊന്നൊന്നാൽ കഴിഞ്ഞിടും  
 അതെൻ പ്രാണൻവെടിഞ്ഞിടും ചെയ്തതീർന്നിതു മുറുമെ.  
 അതിലും വലുതായോരു ധമ്മാചരണമില്ലതാൻ  
 അർപ്പിക്കൻറ ശുശ്രൂഷയും ഭേദത്തിൻമൊഴി ചെയ്തയും.” (വാ. ൧൦.)

A. R. also sounds a similar note with Rāma who feels sorry at the turn of events, narrowing down the ethical issue to a matter of filial duty which is then elaborated:—

“I shall forsake Sīta or Kausalya or even kingdom. He who does his father’s work without being told is the best of sons. The son who does his father’s bidding is middling. He who does not do his father’s bidding is not a son but a refuse of a son.”<sup>121</sup>

Both the poets seek to paint Rāma in the most ideal colours possible. Eḷuttaccan follows the original Adhyātmam so far as it goes, and then gives a finishing touch by introducing the human element into the situation. It may be policy to preach idealism when you are unable to meet the intrigues of your adversary. But it is no sign of intelligence to pretend not to have grasped the real issue, and to let the enemy think that his stratagem has not been seen through. Eḷuttaccan therefore, prefaces Rama’s speech with the following remarks:—

Rāma : Mother, crown Bharata.

I shall retire to the forest soon.

121. A. R. (original) translation by L. B. Nath, verse 60-61. p 34.

“താതാർത്ഥമായിട്ടു ജീവനെത്തന്നെയും  
 മാതാവുതന്നെയും സീതയെത്തന്നെയും  
 ഞാനുപേക്ഷിച്ചതിനില്ല സംശയം  
 മാനസേഖദമിതിനില്ലെന്നിടത്തും.  
 രാജ്യമെന്നാകിലും താതൻ നിയോഗിക്കിൽ  
 ത്യാജ്യമെന്നാലെന്നറിക നീ മാതാവേ!  
 ലക്ഷ്മണൻ തന്നെ ത്യാജിക്കുന്നു ചൊല്ലിലും,  
 തൽക്ഷണം ഞാനുപേക്ഷിച്ചുനറിക നീ  
 പാവകൻ തങ്കൽ പതിക്കേണമെങ്കിലും.  
 മേവം വിഷം കുടിക്കേണമെന്നാകിലും  
 താതൻ നിയോഗിക്കിലേതുമേ സംശയം  
 ചേതസി ചെററില്ലെന്നിടെന്നറിക നീ.  
 താതകാർയ്യ മനാജ്ഞാപ്തമെന്നാകിലും  
 മോദേനചെയ്യുന്ന നന്ദനത്തമൻ  
 പിത്രാ നിയുക്തനായിട്ടു ചെയ്യുന്നവൻ  
 മജ്യമനായുള്ള പുത്രനറിഞ്ഞാലും  
 ഉക്തമെന്നാകിലുമിടയ്ക്കുമെന്നാലെ  
 കർത്തവ്യമല്ലെന്നു വെച്ചുടങ്ങുന്നവൻ  
 പിത്രോർത്ഥമെന്നു ചൊല്ലുന്നു സമ്മാനം.”

Why did not my father tell me that and why does he  
feel sorry about it ?

Bharata is as good at governing the country as I am at  
discarding it.

It is a strain to rule,

While it is easy to live in the forest,

My mother is really partial towards me in having asked  
me to take care of my body alone.<sup>122</sup>

This is turning the tables upon Kaikēyi, who could not be accused of excessive affection towards Rāma. The tone of his words outwardly indicated the utmost respect for Kaikēyi, but with an unmistakable sting implied exactly the opposite. On the first reading they appear like praise for the step-mother who had done Rāma the greatest injustice. The situation had already taken an undesirable turn. Kaikēyi, whose intrigue was patent enough, cleverly concealed the personal issue involved in her move under the cover of emphasis on the solemn obligations of the king and his eldest son Rāma, who was to fulfil them on the former's behalf. To resort to a counter strategy would disturb the internal harmony of the palace, and probably might lead to disastrous results. But it would have done little credit to Rāma's intelligence if he had left the impression that the bitter pill administered by Kaikēyi, though coated with her honeyed words, had been swallowed by him under the mistaken idea that it was sweet. Ežuttaccan, therefore, saves Rāma from this predicament by making him pay Kaikēyi in her own coin with a mild rebuke that appears like praise and exposes the fallacy of her attitude. The hero is thus raised in our estimation both as a man and a god.

122.

ചെയ്യുകിഷ്ടംകം ഭരതൻ ഞാനിതി.  
വൈകാതെപോവൻ വന്നത്തിനു മാതാവേ!  
രാജ്യത്തെ രക്ഷിപ്പതിന്നു മതിയവൻ  
രാജ്യമുപേക്ഷിപ്പതിന്നു ഞാനുംമതി.  
ഭണ്ഡമത്രെ രാജ്യഭാരം വഹിപ്പതു  
ഭണ്ഡകവാസേത്തിന്നേററമെളതല്ലോ.  
സ്നേഹമെന്നെക്കുറിച്ചുവെമ്മക്ക മി-  
ല്ലേഹമാത്രം ഭരിച്ചിടെന്നുചൊൽകയാൽ.

We find in this an echo of the idea contained in a line from the B. Campu,  
“Mayipatati garīyān ambatē pakṣapātaḥ :”

‘മയി പതതിഗരീയാനംബതേ പക്ഷപാതഃ’

The Śūrpaṅakha episode in Eḷuttaccan's Rāmāyaṇam reveals a similar premeditated design. The original story has made it bad enough. Though the mutilation of her form was done by Lakṣmaṇa, both Vālmīki and the author of the original A. R. lay the responsibility for the act on Rāma.<sup>123</sup> We have already offered our criticism on Rāma's conduct in this respect. Some of the later poets who have handled the matter also appear to have thought that Rāma's behaviour needed some justification, and have attempted several alterations in various details. Kamban paints Śūrpaṅakha as an extremely passionate woman desperately in love with Rāma and introduces a quite undignified conversation<sup>124</sup> between her and Rāma. Though Kamban's motive is to justify Rāma's behaviour and raise his hero in the estimation of his readers by dragging the passionate demoness to the lowest depths he seems to forget that the very condescension of Rāma in talking to her in that vein affects his reputation too. During this interview Sīta and Lakṣmaṇa are not with Rāma. Enraged at her disappointment Śūrpaṅakha enters the hermitage to kill Sīta, when Lakṣmaṇa, watching the whole scene from the door, rushes inside and disfigures her. Even after her disfigurement Kamban makes her stay and figure in another dialogue with Rāma which is positively vulgar. Rāma then threatens even to kill her as he did Tāṭaka. Kamban's elaboration of the scene, though not very creditable to Rāma, nevertheless betrays his anxiety to find some justification for Rāma's conduct.

Tuḷsidās's description occupies comparatively a small space in his narrative. His unwillingness to make Rāma give the order to Lakṣmaṇa to perpetrate this brutality on Śūrpaṅakha is obvious. He therefore, reduces it into a sign,<sup>125</sup> but at the same time, heightens the gravity of the act by sending her hands to Rāvaṇa. The sign need not necessarily be for the inhuman treatment which was meted out to Śūrpaṅakha by Lakṣmaṇa in his indignation, and so Tuḷsidās wants to shield his hero under cover of that uncertainty.

123. (a) "Let not the hideous wretch escape without a mark to mar her shape". R. V. Griffith's translation, edited by M. N. Venkata Swami, p. 301 (1915).

(b) Then by the order of Rāma taking hold of dagger and seizing her, Lakṣmaṇa of great strength cut off her nose and ears. A. R. (original), p. 72.

124. The part played by Kāmadēva in the life of young lovers is discussed in great detail. *Kamba-rāmāyana Caritam* (Mal.) by A. Rāman Pillay, p. 30-35.

125. "Raghu Rai seeing that Sīta was frightened made a sign to his E.—15

Ezuttaccan deals with the situation in a different way. His Rāma does not order Lakṣmaṇa or make a sign to him, but keeps the Rākṣasi at bay when she approaches Sīta in a menacing attitude. He also makes it plain that her conduct was due to her despair and disappointment at her blasted love.<sup>126</sup> Though the change looks simple and insignificant, its effect on readers is no doubt, immense. Ezuttaccan's description of Sūrpaṅakha and her demeanour excites our pity rather than indignation; and when the situation reaches a climax the readers are impressed more with its tragic consummation than with any sense of disgust towards the behaviour of a voluptuous woman. Our poet never leaves the readers in doubt about the intensity and genuineness of her passion, which, as fate would have it, was bestowed on a wrong person and led to her ruin. It would therefore, appear rather cruel if Rāma were to brush her aside and deal with her as if she were a wild beast. Ezuttaccan in the circumstances makes his Rāma face the situation as an inevitable but unfortunate incident which has to be tided over without much discredit to one's self, and relieves his hero of any personal responsibility in such a brutal act. Lakṣmaṇa's interference, in the light of the setting designed by our poet, appears as another unfortunate occurrence, which in the circumstances it was not possible to control, and was due to Lakṣmaṇa's excessive devotion to his brother. On the whole Rāma emerges out of it more honourably than he does in other versions of Rāmāyaṇa; and it has to be admitted that Ezuttaccan has done greater justice to his hero than other poet-votaries of Rāma, whose excessive zeal has outrun their sense of propriety.

The episode also discloses the poet's profound sympathy for the weakness of human nature, which is apparent in his treatment of Kaikēyi and Rāvaṇa. Other poets pour out the most venomous abuse on these two characters, apparently for the glorification of their hero. Ezuttaccan exercises considerable restraint in the matter. Other characters are often allowed to say what they like about them, but his own references to them are couched in language that cannot be called excessive. We shall revert to this subject later.

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brother—and Lakṣmaṇa with the greatest ease struck off her nose and ears; her hands he sent to Rāvaṇa in defiance." (Growse's translation, p. 345).

126. A. R. (Mal.) p. 109, The Rākṣasi..... Approached Sīta Dēvi in a menacing mood. Rāghavan with anxiety resisted her and kept her at bay. Seeing this Lakṣmaṇan rushed with his sword drawn from its sheath and cut her ears, breast and nose.

In the Bāli-Sugrīva controversy also Eṣuttaccan does not exhibit any tendency to take sides with the brothers. In the episode relating to Māyāvī which led to the misunderstanding between them, there is a minor detail introduced by our poet. When Bāli entered the cave pursuing the Asura, his instruction to Sugrīva was to close the entrance when blood came and keep it open if milk appeared, the implication being that blood would come only if Bāli died and that in case the Asura perished, it would be indicated by the appearance of milk. According to Sugrīva's testimony he saw blood and in closing the cave he was true to the instructions given to him. The magic of the Asura which transformed milk into blood was a mystery which both were not aware of. Hence the misunderstanding. This detail, which is not found either in Vālmiki or the original A.R., is Eṣuttaccan's invention. It serves to clear the character of the brothers, whose misunderstanding and innocence are thus rendered more tragic.

In the Mal. A.R., Bāli is not directly accused of any improper conduct with Sugrīva's wife. Rāma's answer to his questions takes the form of a general hint that men who misbehave in their relations with daughters, sisters, brother's wives or daughters-in-law, must be regarded as equals in evil-doing, and as he has assumed the role of the protector of Dharma,<sup>127</sup> all such men come within the range of his mission. In the original A.R.,<sup>127a</sup> a reference to Bāli's conduct towards Sugrīva's wife is made. Our poet has omitted that. Perhaps he felt that the argument was too weak, and has not sufficient justification. Even the general charge that Bāli was an evil-doer cannot be sustained; but in view of the position to which Rāma was dragged by circumstances some such excuse had to be improvised. But to base a general charge of evil-doing on this instance, which is more an insinuation than a fact, Eṣuttaccan seems to have thought it unjustifiable. It is more dignified to put it in general terms, which might cause Bāli, whose eventful life could have possibly given room for such an indictment, to look inward and repent if there had been any fault on his side. It is also quite possible that the variations<sup>128</sup> of this episode in different Rāmāyaṇas might have induced our poet not to put undue reliance on this detail.

127. Virtue.

127a. Thou hast forcibly taken to wife thy younger brother's wife. Therefore, O, thou denizen of the forest, thou hast been killed by me. Verse 62, p. 93.

128. In Jaina Rāmāyaṇa Sugrīva is represented as the husband of Tāra,

At the same time Ežuttaccan takes care to mention Bāli's immense power, which had made him forget himself and pay scanty attention to the condition of his brother, who after all was not despicable. Rāma's speech in the Mal. A.R., magnifies this weakness of Bāli, and it is this trait of his character that impresses Ežuttaccan's readers more than anything else.

Those who read the original A.R., feel very much disappointed that its author has disposed of the gigantic fight between the two brothers in a couple of lines, and that too as a mere statement of fact. Our poet has given us a vivid description of it in twenty-four lines, which thrills the readers. A similar description is presented to the reader whenever a fight occurs in the story,<sup>129</sup> which the author of the original A.R., dismisses summarily. Ežuttaccan when writing the epic never forgets that the members of his community who were warriors by profession would welcome such passages and derive considerable intellectual satisfaction from them. Both his Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata have plenty of such descriptions, which in point of vividness and force are equalled only by the pen-pictures of his favourite deity.

The master stroke of Ežuttaccan in the delineation of Rāma's character appears when Rāvaṇa falls down dead on the battlefield. Vibhīṣaṇa exhibits sorrow at the death of his brother, and so do Mandōdari and other Rākṣasa women. It is a solemn occasion when the victor rejoices at the culmination of his prolonged struggle and anxiety, in glorious triumph. On the other side of the picture, is the pathetic scene that witnesses the pangs of separation, destitution and destruction felt by the surviving relations of the vanquished.

The hero who baffled the imagination and efforts of his enemies for a considerable time put up a strenuous fight, admirable in plan and execution, till the last breath escaped from his body. He may have had his own faults and weaknesses. But as a fighter he showed marvellous energy, skill and courage. Nor did he lack the ingenuity in devising stratagems when necessary for his purpose. Never for a moment did he waver, in spite of adverse counsel. He believed in the cause he fought for,

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who was seduced by Sahajāti, who approached her in the guise of her husband. There is no mention of Bāli in it; and the fight is between the seducer of Tāra and Sugrīva. This setting of the story reminds us of the Ahalya episode in Rāmāyaṇa.

129. Khara's fight, which is described in detail by Ežuttaccan, is another instance. Yuddhakāṇḍam is full of such descriptions.

and never hesitated to lay down his life for it. The energy and the determination which he displayed were always echoed by those who stood by him and whom he inspired by his example. Any unbiassed reader of Eṣuttaccan's Rāmāyaṇa will be struck by the remarkable personality of Rāvaṇa, who drew from life its choicest gifts and faced its worst risks and dangers with equal cheerfulness born of the spirit of adventure and heroism. It is impossible even for enemies not to be drawn irresistibly towards a character of such all round magnanimity.

In the original A. R. Rāma appears as a cold-blooded soldier who takes death as a matter of course and does not attach much importance to it. He despises the lamentations of Vibhīṣaṇa, who deserted his elder brother at a most critical hour and played no inconsiderable part in his downfall, but who nevertheless was moved to tears at his death. He does not allow Vibhīṣaṇa to weep to his heart's content, and asks him to arrange immediately for the cremation of the dead body of the fallen foe. Such a procedure was quite repugnant to Eṣuttaccan's sense of public conduct, and he converts his Rāma into a noble enemy who is eager to pay his homage to the departed hero whose greatness is beyond question. In this respect he follows the Ādikavi,<sup>130</sup> adding his own personal touches to raise the sublimity of the utterance. It is not heroic to carry hostility beyond death, and he who in the exultation of triumph does not forget to pay his tribute to the fallen enemy attains a moral dignity which sheds additional lustre on his already established glory. It is also a part of one's duty to the dead. As I have already pointed out, Eṣuttaccan takes particular care that his hero should never make himself responsible for any such lapse of conduct. Here is what Rāma says about Rāvaṇa to console Vibhīṣaṇa :—

“ He<sup>131</sup> is a great hero, having faced me in battle and fought and met his end well.

Do not mourn for him. It ill befits his journey to the other world.

Know, it is the duty of heroic kings to die in battle.

Only virtuous souls who die fighting attain the 'heaven of heroism'.<sup>132</sup> He has no more taints :

So do the 'after-rites',<sup>133</sup> without delay.

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130. Rāmāyan of Vālmiki (Griffith's), Canto CXI, p. 289 (1915). The warrior King has nobly died.....

131. Malayālam A. R. p. 263.

132. Viraswarga.

133. Sēṣakriya.

According to Ežuttaccan, all who have had contact with the deity either through devotion or enmity free themselves instantaneously from all effects of their evil actions. Rāvaṇa too underwent a similar process of purification, and established his right for a place in heaven. The poetic value of the situation is thus considerably enhanced by Ežuttaccan's treatment of it, and at the end of the protracted fight the reader also feels immensely relieved from the tension created by the heroic stand made by Rāvaṇa and his hosts and his tragic end.

The character of Rāma, as conceived by Ežuttaccan, required such a glorious finish. The personality of Rāma as revealed through Vālmiki's epic and through countless legends was immensely complex, its divinity and its humanity always warring against each other for supremacy. Poets and sages of India were alike responsible for the contradictions and incongruities which gathered around his personality in the course of its evolution. Ežuttaccan's attempt has been to harmonise these incongruities and create out of them a hero admirable both in his human and divine aspects. The wide popularity of his work, which is still unrivalled, testifies to the remarkable success that has attended his attempt.

#### *Ežuttaccan's Rāvaṇa.*

His treatment of Rāvaṇa also is characterised by a similar altruistic motive. Centuries of propaganda had raised Rāma in popular estimation and Rāvaṇa too, underwent a corresponding degradation; that was but inevitable. From the position of a rival hero whose methods and outlook differed widely from those of his enemy he was gradually converted into a demon. Nevertheless, his humanity is visible enough through the fantastic conceptions that have surrounded this great hero, who still has a soft corner in the heart of the people of South India. Scholars in modern times have therefore, begun to look upon the descriptions of his form and character with suspicion. His ten heads<sup>134</sup> and twenty hands are explained as symbolic of his immense power, ten times above the average, on the analogy of the name Daśaratha.<sup>135</sup> The latter is said to have been called such, not because he owned ten different chariots but because he could drive his chariot in ten directions, which indicat-

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134. There is also another Rāvaṇa with hundred heads, well known in Tamil legends, as Mayil Rāvanan who has found his way into Aryan mythology as Pātāla Rāvāṇa.

135. Daśa, 'ten' ratha 'a chariot.'

ed the extent of his power and influence. In the Yakṣagāna literature in Kannaḍa and Kathakālī literature in Malayālam, Rāvaṇa is an important figure, and there are many plays in which the leading role is assigned to him. This fact proclaims the immense popularity of the legends about him and his exploits. It is also significant that Rāma has little or no importance in this type of literature.

It is but reasonable to suppose that Eḷuttaccan's conception of Rāvaṇa was influenced by these considerations. We have already commented on his abduction of Sīta. His appearance in saintly form for a thoroughly worldly purpose indicates the romantic bent of his mind; and his wooing of Sīta also is equally suggestive of culture and enlightenment. Though his abduction of Sīta was an act of vengeance, he, no doubt, fell in love with her and wanted to win her hand by appealing to her good sense and commending her beauty. Vālmīki makes him blow his own trumpet, and we find in his description a commonplace lover using the ordinary undignified language.<sup>136</sup> In the original A. R. the opposite extreme is exhibited. Rāvaṇa tries to install himself in the affections of Sīta by abusing Rāma and proving that he has no regard for her.<sup>137</sup> Eḷuttaccan raises the whole issue to a classic dignity by making the lover perform a real intellectual feat. As usual he employs words in double sense—

“Rāvaṇa addressed endearing words of sweetness to Bliss Incarnate :—

“Fair Lady, listen to me who has become a slave to your  
lotus feet. Oh woman of sublime virtue, put me at ease  
and look at me, the Lord of Asuras and the world!

Why do you hide within yourself?

Give me a quick glance of engaging curiosity?

My mind is fixed on you.

Reverend Dame! Your husband, the son of Daśaratha, is  
visible only to few, and that too at times; only lucky  
people can succeed in seeing him after a persistent  
search.<sup>138</sup> Fair lady! you have nothing to do with the

136. Rāmāyan of Vālmīki, Griffith's translation. Vol. IV, p. 329-331.

137. A. R. : L. B. Nath's translation. Verse 22-30, p. 117-118.

138. The implication is that Rāma is not a social being and the attempt to get at him is a laborious process in which only persistence and luck bring success. In the philosophical sense he is a God who is not visible to ordinary mortals.

son of Daśaratha. He has no desire in anything at any time.<sup>139</sup>

He is without any *guṇa* ;<sup>140</sup> constant embraces, company or enjoyment of your charms will not make him love you.

He has none to protect him and he never is without Śakti.<sup>141</sup> There is nothing that you can do for him.

He is without fame, gratitude, and personal feeling.<sup>142</sup> None knows his exact nature.

He is without *Māna*,<sup>143</sup> and is a Paṇḍita.<sup>144</sup>

He is always in the midst of foresters,<sup>145</sup> has no aptitude for the best things of life.

Nor has he any sense of distinction

A low caste man or Brāhman, a cow or a dog are all the same for him.<sup>146</sup>

You and a savage woman make no difference to his mind.

He has already forgotten you and there is no use waiting for him.

There is no doubt that he is indifferent towards you;

While I am your slave's slave ; accept me straightaway.

Why give up a diamond that has come to your hand unsought and seek a piece of lead ?

If you become my spouse!

The fairies of heaven will be at your service with respect and reverence.

Please do not lose time, enchanting beauty ! live for ever as my sweetheart.

139. In the worldly sense this means that one who is incapable of any personal attachment will never be a good husband. In the philosophical sense he, being a God, is above all worldly desires.

140. In one sense he is above *guṇa*, meaning Nirguṇa brahma, in another, he has no good quality or virtue.

141. If Rāma is regarded as God he needs no protection. As a human being he is wandering about in the forest with none to protect him. He is devoted to Śakti (power divine and worldly) and so has no consideration for you or, he always goes with the divine feminine energy (Śakti) and is never independent.

142. As a God he is above these attributes. As a man, his previous career according to Rāvaṇa does not show that he possesses these qualities.

143. Measure, or self-respect.

144. Scholar. In one sense he is the seat of knowledge. In another he is engaged in the acquisition of knowledge and like those of such nature, has no taste for physical pleasures of any kind.

145. It may mean either hermits living in forests or uncivilised men.

146. The analogy is continued. God looks upon all alike. As a man he is unable to distinguish good from bad.

Many a beauty does menial service to you  
 I am a terror even to the God of death  
 Think of the virtues of manliness.  
 I am a revered man adored even by Indra.  
 Have therefore, some consideration for me who have put  
 myself entirely in your charge and do as I desire.  
 O essence of loveliness, lotus-faced beauty, I am falling at  
 your lotus-feet  
 Save me, save me, forever.”

As a piece of ingenuity and subtle appeal this passage is brilliant. Ežuttaccan looks upon Sīta not as a mere heroine but as the divine spouse of Rāma ; and the opportunity to make love to her, even though it be in vain, is a rare occasion which would come within the reach of only exceptional persons. The fact that Rāvaṇa was blessed with this chance is a circumstance in his favour, and he therefore, had to be presented in proper form. Ežuttaccan has shown that Rāvaṇa deserves the first rank not only among warriors but also among lovers.

The next glimpse we get of Rāvaṇa is when Hanūman is brought as a captive to Rāvaṇa’s durbar by Indrajit. Rāma’s messenger destroyed the beautiful garden of Lanka and killed several attendants, as well as Akṣa, Rāvaṇa’s son, who came to stop him. Hanūman’s crime was no doubt, serious, and he expected the worst from the Lord of Lanka by way of punishment. Rāvaṇa was prepared to give Hanūman a hearing before he made up his mind as to the form of punishment. The durbar is transformed into a judicial tribunal engaged in dealing with a capital crime. It is evident that the offender belongs to the enemy’s camp, and the treatment that is accorded to him is bound to have its repercussions at the other end. It is interesting to notice how the different poets handle the situation. Vālmiki gives us an idea of the splendour of Rāvaṇa’s person, the jewels and diamonds that form part of his adornment.<sup>147</sup> The author of the original A. R. is too business-like to waste any words on the description of Rāvaṇa or his court, although he makes Hanūman sermonise at length on the greatness of Rāma, the realisation of self, and the necessity of Rāvaṇa’s reconciliation with the Lord of Sīta for his own safety.<sup>148</sup> It is only from Ežuttaccan’s picture that

147. R. V., Griffith’s translation, Vol. IV, p. 384-85. Hanūman is well impressed with Rāvāna’s dignified bearing.

148. L. B. Nath’s translation, p. 160.

we get an insight into the nature of the atmosphere that prevails at the durbar. The essential requisite of a tribunal is that it should inspire confidence even in the minds of the criminal who is on trial. In this instance diplomatic considerations also require that, as the offence and the offender are of an unusual kind, the situation must be handled in a delicate manner. If the offender is put at ease, he might give some clue to the plans of the enemy which might be profitable to know. Ežuttaccan takes care that this aspect is given due consideration. In his picture, Prahasta,<sup>149</sup> who questions Hanūman at the instance of Rāvaṇa, commences his queries with these significant words :

“Prahasta in a mild and conciliatory tone asked thus :—

Oh Monkey ! who sent you here ?  
 Before this royal durbar speak truth, great soul  
 You are sure to be released  
 Do not entertain fear in your mind  
 This durbar is equal to *Brahma's durbar*  
 Untrue words, violation of Dharma, and improper actions  
 Are unknown in the country of the Lord of Lanka.

These words have a ring of sincerity that will win over even the most implacable of enemies, and convey the impression that Rāvaṇa's administration of justice was essentially sound and that he was not the monster that he is usually represented to be.

As an artist Ežuttaccan uses subtle suggestions, which make his pictures remarkably effective. He never spoils their effect by over-elaboration. In his delineation of Rāvaṇa he never uses abusive epithets, as other poets have done. The various characters of the story express their own opinions, and Rāvaṇa gets his due from his enemies and their partisans. But our poet rarely assumes personal responsibility in that respect. This attitude of the poet leaves the impression that Rāvaṇa is after all not a bad fellow, and what is said of him by his enemies must not be accepted at its face-value.

There is also another important point in which he differs from the author of the original A.R.<sup>150</sup> When Rāvaṇa falls on the battle-field, it is stated in the original A.R. that a light came out of his body in the direction of Rāma, in whom it ultimately reposed.<sup>151</sup>

149. One of Rāvaṇa's ministers.

150. We do not find it in *Vālmīki*.

151. Original A. R. (L. B. Nath), p. 167, v. 78-80.

No such phenomenon appears in Ežuttaccan's version, and the omission is not without justification. Rāma is in human form ; and if as the original A. R. wishes us to believe, this passage symbolises Rāvaṇa's soul attaining union with Rāma, who is regarded as the supreme soul, the form of the latter also should change. Throughout the work Rāma is represented as Viṣṇu in human form, and he appears in the divine form only to Kausalya at his birth, and that too in secret. So long as the human form is retained, it is but appropriate that its functions also are presented as human. In the case of all whom Rāma killed, a similar light appears, according to the author of the original A.R.,<sup>152</sup> and Ežuttaccan, but the light in all such instances ascends to heaven to join the divine light. The distinction in Rāvaṇa's case is that he is the chief enemy of Rāma, and Ežuttaccan emphasises this fact by a simple but suggestive statement that he fell and his soul ascended to heaven.

### *Sīta.*

The heroine of the Rāmāyaṇa is looked upon as an ideal of wifely devotion, like her sisters Sāvitrī and Damayanti, capable of immense suffering in its cause. Even the worst calamities in the form of forcible separation from her husband and imprisonment by another person who harasses her by professions of love and threatens her with death in the event of refusal, are not strong enough to make her swerve from the high principle she cherishes. She appears more as a personification of a principle than as a being with a human touch and individuality. Such perfection is often associated with divinity, and Sīta also shares it with her husband in the Hindu scheme of things. As in the case of Rāma, Ežuttaccan has assigned a dual role to Sīta also. Without in any way lowering her from the exalted position she occupies in the world of mythology, Ežuttaccan subtly attempts to humanise the character. When describing her marriage with Rāma he remembers that it is a divine union, and no word suggestive of the usual erotic sentiment finds a place in the description. But he also feels that even the union of divinities loses much of its charm if it is entirely divorced of romance. He therefore, makes his Sīta put the "garland of glances"<sup>153</sup> on Rāma before she puts on him the garland of marriage. This like an electric switch, illumines the whole occasion. Ežuttaccan is an adept in such subtle touches expressed in a word or two that hide a world of meaning.

152. Virādha, Kabandha.

153. Nētrōpala Māla—p. 27 A. R.

During their flight from Lanka back to Ayōdhya Rāma describes to Sīta the various localities on the way which are associated with his activities. When they reach Kiṣkindha, the kingdom of the Vānaras, Sīta according to Eṣuttaccan expresses a desire to see the wives of the monkey chiefs, and the Vimāna lands there to pick them up. In the well known version of Vālmiki's work no such request is made by Sīta, although Mr. Griffith says that it is mentioned in the N.W. recension of the epic.<sup>154</sup> Kamban in his immortal work<sup>155</sup> introduces a passage to that effect ; but he leaves the Vānara women behind after the exchange of courtesies. Eṣuttaccan's Sītā invites them to Ayōdhya, and they join the triumphal party in their journey thither. She even qualifies her request by the remark that they had been separated from their husbands long, and there is none who knows the pangs of separation better than she. Sītā's behaviour on the occasion cannot be regarded as a 'palpable interruption,' as Mr. Griffith terms it. On the other hand, to ignore the Vānara women in the hour of victory and triumph in view of what their husbands had done for her sake and the sake of her husband would be the height of ingratitude. They are all returning home to celebrate the happy termination of their troubles, and it is but proper that the wives of the vānara chiefs should also be allowed to participate in their joy. It would have been different if they had gone some other way. Whether Eṣuttaccan got the idea from the little known N. W. version of Vālmiki, or, whether it was his own suggestion, or whether he drew his inspiration from Kamban, it is not easy to say. From his general attitude towards the details of personal relationship and social conduct, of which there are innumerable instances in his work, it seems quite possible that the idea may have occurred to him independently.

#### *Bharata and Hanūman.*

These two characters stand on a level of their own in Rāmāyaṇa. In their absolute self-surrender and devotion to Rāma they are supreme examples of Bhakti, which Eṣuttaccan regards above all other virtues of which the human soul is capable. It is impossible to resist tears when one reads the description in the Malayālam A. R. of Bharata's mental agony caused by the news of his father's death and Rāma's exile due to his mother's intrigue. He immediately wants to clear away any misunderstanding and

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154. Rāmāyaṇ of Vālmiki, note under p. 293, (Griffith), Vol. V. It is in the Kumbakōnam edition (Yud: Kand, p. 470).

155. *Kamba-rāmāyaṇa Caritam*, p. 411.

drags the whole court of Ayōdhya to the forest. He continues his journey on foot from Guha's abode ; the first sight of Rāma's steps in the dust arouses in him a passion of affectionate adoration for his brother, and he is painted by our poet as rolling himself in it and pouring it over his head in his ecstasy.<sup>156</sup> In him brotherly love and godly love are wonderfully combined. While Bharata's sacrifice for his brother is immense, Hanūman's service to his master is unparalleled. Hanūman's achievements in Rāmāyaṇa raise him to the foremost rank among the leading characters of the drama, and one Kāṇḍa is solely devoted to the narration of his flight to Lanka to carry his Lord's message and his stupendous feat of setting the city of Rāvaṇa on fire. Eḷuttaccan has chosen the most beautiful metre, unrivalled in its sonorous beauty and flow, to relate the episode, and it eminently deserves its name of Sundarākāṇḍam.<sup>157</sup> He here makes a free display of his poetic genius, no longer handicapped by the restrictions imposed by the original. The same spirit pervades Yuddhakāṇḍa also, which is thrilling with the vivid description of the battles fought by different heroes and ultimately by Rāvaṇa and Rāma.

In the last two Kāṇḍas the deviations from the original are more numerous, and the poet treats his theme far more independently. The descriptions of the battle may be regarded as a matter of detail. The sermon<sup>158</sup> on the futility of human desires and the unreasonableness of attachment to the body and family which Lakṣmaṇa preaches when Vibhiṣaṇa begins to mourn for Rāvaṇa have been omitted by Eḷuttaccan with sufficient reason. The occasion is too sorrowful for anybody concerned to bear with a long discourse of the kind. A similar instance is the introduction of the *Ādityahr̥daya* Hymn, which Agastya delivers to Rāma when the battle is raging furiously and Rāma feels shaken in spirit and is in need of an invigorating elixir to continue his fight with unabated will. The original A.R., has ignored it, while Eḷuttaccan, following the example of Vālmiki,<sup>159</sup> gives it prominence, elaborating the Hymn in his own way and adding all the attributes of the Sun God. Apart from its appropriateness to the occasion, in which a protracted war had brought terrible

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156. Even the author of the original A. R. who believes in Bhakti, only makes Bharata praise the dust on which Rāma had set his feet. (L. B. Nath's translation p. 56 Chapter IX stanza 3).

157. Sundaram=beautiful.

158. Original A. R. p. 169 v. 11-25.

159. R. V. (Griffith), Vol. V, p. 248.

exhaustion in body and spirit to those engaged in it, Ežuttaccan's partiality to the Hymn can be explained by his reverence for the traditional Sun-worship that prevails among Malayālis.<sup>160</sup>

*Conclusion.*

The foregoing sketch gives us an idea of the way in which Ežuttaccan has handled the epic of Rāmāyaṇa. As I have already observed in the beginning, his work has all the freshness of an independent work, though it is based on the original A.R. He has also freely drawn from Vālmiki and other authors whenever his ideas of poetic justice and discretion demanded it. Even when he borrows from others, he presents the matter in his own inimitable way, which when combined with his original additions makes his epic an epoch-making production of the age.

With all its literary beauty and majesty of diction, however, Ežuttaccan's Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa leaves the impression on the reader that in it the poet's genius has not reached its full height. Here and there a certain amount of restraint is visible, and the poet seems to be holding his muse in check. The dominant idealistic tone of the story and the didactic purpose which he wanted to fulfil through it perhaps, deterred him from the unreserved exhibition of his talents, or it may be, his genius was still growing. To enjoy him at his best we must turn to his other epic, Mahābhāratam, which is dealt with in the succeeding chapter.

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160. The custom is often referred to in the Ballads of Malabar, in which the heroes are described as worshipping sun and earth before they begin their daily lessons in their gymnasium or start a journey in the morning.

## CHAPTER IV

### SRI MAHĀBHĀRATAM.

#### *Introductory.*

The change from Ežuttaccan's Adh: Rāmāyaṇa to his Mahābhāratam is like the one from flower to fruit. In the one we enjoy the fragrance and the promise of a fruit and in the other the real sweetness in its finished manifestation. If the analogy is stressed further, we have to presume that there must have been a reasonable interval between the flower and the fruit, although evidence as to the actual point of time is lacking. As we have pointed out at the end of the last chapter, Adh. Rāmāyaṇa leaves the impression that the poet has not employed his powers to their fullest capacity, either through the handicap which the subject matter entailed, or through the sense that they should be reserved for something better. The difference in the general tone and execution between both is pretty obvious even to a casual reader. In Rāmāyaṇa a high note of idealism prevails and the language employed is correspondingly serious and heavy, although its natural genius appears now and then in spite of a conscious effort to control it. In Mahābhārata the poet's art breathes a wider freedom in scope and range that could be born only of complete mastery and mature growth. Perhaps, the themes of the two epics rendered this change necessary and desirable. In Adh. Rāmāyaṇa there is a unity of design which necessarily restricts the free play of the poet's fancy, as in it he has endeavoured to achieve a purpose which is not purely poetic. Therein we witness a struggle between the philosopher and the poet, the former keen on reform, attempting the unique experiment of clothing in poetic garb his sublimest thoughts, which are not quite compatible with pure poetry, while the latter asserts himself when occasions offer in spite of the restraints imposed by the former. In Bhārata no such struggle is visible: the two have wonderfully combined, leaving the lead to poetry. Whether the change, which has been no doubt, a distinct gain so far as literature is concerned, is due to the growing conviction that while philosophy changes poetry lasts, it is not easy to determine. As the proverb goes in Malayālam, we shall be satisfied rather with the sweets supplied, than enquire the formula of their preparation.

Before we actually enter into the contents of the work we shall pause for a moment to consider its relationship with the original epic in Sanskrit. The size<sup>1</sup> itself indicates that Ežuttaccan never attempted a rendering of the whole epic with its innumerable Upākhyānams and legendary additions, and there has been considerable exercise of discrimination. A good number of stories which have crept in the Sambhavam and Āraṇyam have been omitted, and the Bhagavadgīta is the most notable of the omissions. The Gīta however, is mentioned in a passing reference which will be discussed in the course of this chapter. The Pāṇḍava story, which forms the skeleton of the great epic, is followed in all its details, with as much addition of extraneous matter as will be helpful to illuminate the main theme. It is interesting to enquire what principle, if any, governs the eliminations or omissions. The question takes us to a wider issue concerning the original epic and its various recensions. Critical thought in Ežuttaccan's time seems to have been quite aware of the developments the epic assumed in the course of its evolution. Certainly Ežuttaccan has his own views about it, which apparently must have been the guiding factor which ultimately determined the form of his work. The doubt raised by modern scholarship about the authorship of the epic was a definite issue with Ežuttaccan, and he goes to the extent of saying in the prologue that it is, like the Vēdas, *apauruṣēya*. He<sup>2</sup> emphasises further that nowhere is it mentioned that the Bhāratam was composed by Dwaipāyana; it was only narrated by him.<sup>3</sup> Its importance, he affirms, is in the fact that Bhagavān Vēdavyāsa introduced famous works like the 'Gīta' and Sahasranāma into the Bhāratam, which thereupon began to rank even with the Vēdas. Ežuttaccan further states that Paulōmam and Āstikam are

1. Ežuttaccan's Bhāratam runs only to 441 pages in the printed edition. In modern times the great epic has been rendered into Malayālam in its full form by Kuññu Kuṭṭan Tampurān. It is 10 times bigger than Ežuttaccan's work.

2. Ōrkumpōlapauruṣeyatwamunḍitinnatō.

“കാകുന്ദോഽപൗരൂഷേയതമുണ്ടിതിന്നതോ.”

3. (a) Dwaipāyanōṣṭa puṭa nissrta mennākunnu  
Dwaipāyanēnakṛta mennatu collilallo. Mal. Bh., p. 2.

“ചൈവായനോഽപുടനിസ്സൃതമെന്നാകന  
ചൈവായനേന കൃതമെന്നതു ചൊല്ലീലല്ലോ.”

(b) Compare this with the statement of Prof. E. W. Hopkins, *The Great Epic of India*, p. 50, Chapter II.

Paribhāṣas,<sup>4</sup> and this opinion is ascribed to Vyāsa himself. In the prologue it is also mentioned that the Bhāratam has undergone three stages in its evolution, in which the final stage is due to Ugrasravas, the Sūta who narrated the story to the sages assembled in Naimiśaraṇyam under the leadership of Śaunaka for the “sacrifice” that lasted for twelve years. The Sūta says that he is narrating the version which Vaiśampāyana, the famous disciple of Vyāsa, expounded to Janamejaya during his great serpent-sacrifice. Vaiśampāyana had learned the story from his guru, who is thus believed to be the original narrator of the epic. It is also significant that Eḷuttaccan mostly uses the word Bhāratam as the title of his work, and not ‘Mahābhāratam’—thus implying that he is rendering into Malayālam only the Bhāratam and not the greater epic Mahābhāratam, as it was called in its ultimate form.

What exactly was the form and the content of the original Bhārata epic ascribed to Vyāsa is still a matter of speculation. The matter has been investigated by both oriental and occidental scholars, and it is interesting to note the various conclusions they have arrived at. Even the name of the original work is a disputed point. We have the authority of the epic itself that it was once known by the title of ‘Jaya’ (Victory).<sup>5</sup> This raises the question of the genesis of the title Mahābhāratam by which it is known for centuries. It takes its name from the Bhārata line of Kings that figure in the story, although the founder of the dynasty appears very seldom in it. Because it is divided into a number of ‘Parvams’ or chapters, it is sometimes called Parvam.<sup>6</sup> We have therefore, to conclude that one of the compilers styled it

4. Usually means a commentary. Here it signifies that they do not form part of the original Bhārata and they were added to elucidate the events described in the epic. This corresponds to their description as ‘roots’ in the original epic. Mahābhāratam (Mal.) Trans. by Kuññi Kuṭṭan Tampurān, p. 3.

5. . . . Jayamudīrayēt.—invocation slōka. Jayōnāmētiḥāsōyam (swargarōhaṇam)—(C. V. Vaidya, Mahābhārata, A Criticism, p. 2.).

“നരരായണം നമസ്കൃത്യ  
നരംചൈവ നരരാത്ഥം  
ദേവീം സരസപതീം വ്യാസം  
തതോജയ മുദീരയേത്.”

6. This is attested by the Malayālam proverb—“Parvam Vāyiccāl Sarvōm ariyām” (if one reads Parvam, one can know everything).

“പഠ്തം വായിച്ചാൽ സദ്യം അറിയാം.”

Mahābhāratam to distinguish his version from the Bhārata.<sup>7</sup> A similar uncertainty exists about the actual beginning of the Sanskrit epic. "Some believe," it is said, "that Mahābhāratam begins with Uparicara, others with Āstika, and others still with the word Manu".<sup>8</sup> It is usual in many ancient works to give a summary of the contents in the prologue; and in the Malayālam Bhārata the first parvam. Paulōmam, answers that purpose. We find the same in Vālmiki's epic. Whether this first parvam is by the original author or subsequent editors or compilers it is not easy to say. In the Āstikam it is clearly stated that Ugraśravas is repeating or retelling what has already been narrated before by Vaiśampāyana. As Mr. Vaidya concludes, there is absolutely no doubt about the two editions which the original form of the story underwent and also the name of the poets who made those compilations, since both mention Vyāsa, on whose work theirs were based. The first person to issue the epic story in some concrete form was apparently a *Vyāsa*.<sup>9</sup> The word *Vyāsa* may mean simply an editor or compiler; and each of the works to which it is attached had at least one (sometimes more than one) Vyāsa who put it into orderly shape.

*Mahābhāratam. The history of criticism.*

It is again not easy to determine the precise forms the epic assumed in different stages. The study of the epic, particularly in the west, beginning from Mr. C. Lassen (1837) to Mr. E. Washburn Hopkins (1915),<sup>10</sup> has revealed many illuminating facts, and two schools of thought have emerged, one favouring the analytical method and the other the synthetic method. The former is ably championed by Mr. E. W. Hopkins, whose masterly analysis resulted in the assumption that in the developmental history of the epic there were four distinct stages, viz:—

- (1) 400 B.C., when there was only a collection of Bhārata lays in which Pāṇḍavas were unknown.

7. Vyāsa is supposed to have taught his work to five of his pupils; and each one of them is said to have produced a separate edition of the epic. C. V. Vaidya, *Mahābhārata: A Criticism*, p. 4.

8. C. V. Vaidya, *The Mahābhārata: A Criticism*, p. 2.

9. From the enormous amount of literature from the Vēdas down to the Purāṇas that shelter under the wings of this name one must hesitate to regard him as one individual. The name may as well imply an institution that existed for several centuries. See V. R. R. Dikshitar, *Some Aspects of Vāyu Purāṇa* (Madras University), p. 50.

10. The author of *The Great Epic of India*.

- (2) 400-200 B.C., when the Mahābhāratam tale sprang up with Pāṇḍavas as the heroes, and Kṛṣṇa as a demi-god.
- (3) 200 B.C. to 100 or 200 A.D., when Kṛṣṇa assumed the importance of a supreme God, and interpolations of a didactic nature and many episodes were added.
- (4) 200-400 A.D., when the introduction and the later parts were added.<sup>11</sup>

The other school, headed by Mr. J. Dahlmann, holds the view that the epic has a unity of its own.<sup>12</sup> He also admits the existence of two distinct elements in it, narrative and didactic, which were combined by a clever diaskeuast who gave it its present form. Mr. G. J. Held<sup>13</sup> the latest exponent of this school, who elaborates the thesis further on ethnological lines, also emphasises the unity of the epic. The necessity of approaching the epic from two such opposite view-points is not quite apparent. The analytical school does not ignore the fact that the main stream of legends embodied in the epic, centres round the Bhārata line of kings, although extraneous stories also have found their way into it by way of answer to the questions of the listeners to the narrator. The synthetic school on the other hand, admits that the materials of which the epic is composed, are of two different kinds. So far there is common ground. To admit difference in the nature of the subject matter, which might probably be the result of interference with the epic material by different hands, is to agree to the theory of interpolation. The cultural background which necessitated the alterations in the epic at different stages is not disputed by either. There is therefore, more reason for both the schools to establish a common ground than to stick to their extreme view-points. The form in which we find the epic now is no doubt, the work of the last compiler. The question of his indebtedness to the previous editors is a disputed point which can only be settled by the analytical method. The more minute the analysis is, the better will be the results achieved and the greater the volume of information collected, out of this gigantic literary venture. Even supposing that the Pāṇḍava story entered into it at a later stage, its connection with the Bhārata story is unquestionable. In any case, it must have been there when Vaiśampāyana related the epic to Janamējaya, who as the lineal des-

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11. *The Great Epic of India*, pp. 397-398.

12. Quoted in *The Mahābhārata*, by G. J. Held, p. 14.

13. The author of "The Mahābhārata, An Ethnological Study", 1935.

centent of Pāṇḍavas had a personal interest in the story. The sages of Naimiśāraṇya are not in the same position. Their interests were purely academic or cultural, and to a certain extent mixed with the idea of a learned entertainment during intervals between exacting work connected with sacrifice. It will not be unreasonable therefore, to suppose that it was in the last stage (at the hands of Sūta and the residents in the hermitage of Śaunaka) that the Mahābhāratam emerged in its ultimate form as we find on that occasion a deliberate attempt to study the great work inspired by purely cultural motives. This endeavour is quite in keeping with the tradition of that hermitage, where according to legend the Purāṇas<sup>14</sup> were similarly handled, and Mahābhāratam was probably the first to receive their attention. The sages (who were also scholars) seemed to have accomplished this with the co-operation of the Sūtas, who were experts in mythology and dynastic history and professional singers and reciters. This view helps us to understand why we find in Mahābhāratam two distinct types of material as the two agencies involved in reshaping the epic were the inheritors of two different traditions. The Sūta represented the Kṣatriyan and the sages the Brāhmanic points of view.\* The former supplied the narrative element, and the latter the didactic element, incorporating their cherished religious convictions and doctrines. As Pargiter<sup>15</sup> pertinently points out, this combined effort marks the transition of these lays of popular knowledge from Kṣatriyan to Brāhmanic control, which retained its hold on it ever since. To this extent the legend of the sages of Naimiśāraṇya (who may be compared *mutatis mutandis* to a modern university) seems to have a basis of reality; how far the local habitation and name assigned by tradition to this institution are literally correct must remain uncertain.

### *The epic in Malayālam.*

We will now pass on to the epic in Malayālam. Even in the arrangement and naming of the Parvams Eḷuttaccan's plan is different. There is no parvam with the title of Ādi<sup>16</sup> in Eḷuttaccan's work, in which the first two chapters,

14. Bhāgavata, Brahmāṇḍa, etc.

\* This view is disputed by scholars like V. R. R. Dikshitar. *Ind. His. Quarterly* (Calcutta), Vol. VIII, pp. 757-760.

15. Ancient Indian Historical Tradition, p. 62.

16. Vide appendix—Note I to C. V. Vaidya's work in which the Parvams with the number of ślōkas in each are mentioned in a tabular form. Eḷuttaccan's arrangement follows the enumeration of parvas given in the epic: (K. K. Bh., p. 3) Paulōmam and Āstikam are included under Ādi.

which he says do not belong to the epic proper and are introductory, are called Paulōmam and Āstikam. The first refers to Vyāsa's work, Vaiśampāyana's classic narration of the epic at the serpent-sacrifice of Janamējaya, and the Sūta's repetition of it to Śaunaka and others, gives a brief summary of the contents of the Mahābhāratam from Sambhavam to Svargārōhaṇam and concludes with the story of Udanka, who advises Janamējaya to perform the serpent-sacrifice. The next, Āstikam, describes the sacrifice of the king and the arrival of Āstika, at whose instance the sacrifice is terminated. Then comes Sambhava Parva, with which according to Eḷuttaccan the Bhāratam opens. He begins it as a new work with the usual invocations. Here again there is a summary of the whole epic beginning from Dakṣa up to the coronation of Abhimanyu, followed by detailed narration of certain legends, in which the priority is given to the birth of Vyāsa,<sup>17</sup> who is supposed to be the original compiler of the epic. The other episodes which are described in detail are the stories of Yayāti, Śakuntala and Bhīṣma, which naturally lead to the story of the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas. The rest of the titles are the same as those given in the original epic, except in two cases.<sup>18</sup> Sambhavam closes with the story of the destruction of the Khāṇḍava forest. It is noteworthy here that Indra entertains Kṛṣṇa to forgive his unsuccessful intervention in the affair and leaves the impression on the reader that Kṛṣṇa is the real strength behind Arjuna. There is also a note at the end of the parvam which says "Iti Śrīmahābhāratē Śatasahasrikāyām Samhitāyām Paribhāṣārūpam Sambhavaparvam Samāptam."<sup>19</sup> In this the Mahābhāratam is called a 'collection of 100,000 parts' and the Sambhavam itself is said to be in the form of a Paribhāṣa. This statement is significant. If the term paribhāṣa<sup>20</sup> is to be taken in the sense of an explanation or introduction, it would

17. This episode must be regarded to have been added by the later compilers as Vyāsa is not likely to narrate his own story.

18. Vanaparva is called Āraṇyam; and there is a small parvam entitled Aiśikam between Strī and Saupatikam which are classed as sub-sections in the original epic. The number of chapters and ślōkas enumerated in Paulōmam generally agrees with what is given by Sūta. The total number of parvams according to Eḷuttaccan is 18, of chapters 2000, of ślōkas 100,000, which after making due allowance for the Hindu partiality for round numbers approximate to what is found in M. Bh. (Bombay edition).

19. In the original epic the appellation 'Śata Sahasrikāyām' is repeated at the end of every parva.

20. Vide p. 129.

suggest that to the poet's mind the important part of the epic is yet to follow, and that the portion narrated so far is an entity by itself. The Khāṇḍava episode ends in an unqualified victory : and both Nārāyaṇa and Nara are active participants in it. This also reminds us of the invocatory ślōka in which the blessings of both Nārāyaṇa<sup>21</sup> and Nara are sought to help the poet to narrate 'Jayam' (Victory). In the epic as it is, the end does not take the form of victory ; rather it is the reverse. The Pāṇḍavas, bereft of all their ancient glory, were unable to defend themselves against the attacks of barbarians and were obliged to go on a pilgrimage, giving up all their earthly interests. One after another they fall on the way, except the eldest brother, who is the only person considered fit to enter heaven in his human form. Even there the sight of Duryōdhana, who had asked for his shortlived heavenly seat at the time of his cousin's entry in it, was not a happy event. A culmination like this can by no stretch of imagination be called a 'victory'. The way in which Eḷuttaccan concludes Sambhavam therefore raises a doubt whether he believed that, in the figurative language of Mr. Hopkins, this was the kernel round which the threads of other stories were subsequently woven by Vaiśampāyana and others.<sup>22</sup> It must also be stated at the same time that Eḷuttaccan leaves it at that and does not make any positive statement on the question.

The other parvams follow the course of the story narrated in the original epic, omitting many of the didactic disquisitions like the Gīta and Anugīta and also Upākhyānams. For instance, in Āraṇyam only the story of Naḷa and the Rāmāyaṇa are included, although a passing statement is made that Brihadaśwa and others,<sup>23</sup> told Yudhīṣṭhira a number of other stories and there is no time to describe them. Here another fact strikes us. In the summary of Rāmāyaṇa, which is fairly big in proportion to the length of other episodes included in the work, the presentation exceeds the limits of a summary. In a chapter covering twenty pages,

21. Nārāyaṇam Namaskṛtya Naram . . . Jayamudīrayēt.

“നരായണനെനയും സാക്ഷാൽ  
നരനും നരനേയുമേ  
സരസപതീ വൃസരേയും  
നമിച്ചു ജയമേരുക.”

22. *The Great Epic of India*, p. 363.

23. Dhaumya and Mārkaṇḍēya.

eleven pages are devoted to the Rāmāyaṇa story. Not a single main event in the Rāmāyaṇa is omitted, and many important details<sup>24</sup> also find a place there. One episode particularly deserves mention. Lakṣmaṇa's arrival at Kiṣkindha to communicate to the Vānara chief Rāma's displeasure at the unusual delay in fulfilling his part of the agreement is treated at length and occupies a much larger space than that allotted to it in Adh. Rāmāyaṇa. When Lakṣmaṇa starts, he thinks that as one elder brother had been killed by another elder brother, one younger brother could very well deal with the other younger brother. When he appears at the gate of Kiṣkindha and sounds his bowstring, the whole Vānara host trembles, and Sugrīva at the advice of Hanumān sends Tāra first to greet Lakṣmaṇa.<sup>25</sup> The description which Eḷuttaccan makes of Tāra in Bhāratam is different from what we find in Adh. Rāmāyaṇa. Here the Vānara beauty is presented in all her sensuous splendour, purposely designed to distract the attention of Lakṣmaṇa, who is found to be in a hostile and angry mood. She welcomes him more like a lover than a host, exposing her charms to his admiring gaze. This had the desired effect. Lakṣmaṇa as in ordinary life, yields to the influence of womanly beauty on man.<sup>26</sup>

*The importance of Kṛṣṇa in Eḷuttaccan's epic.*

The above analysis gives the impression that Eḷuttaccan's handling of the story was mainly guided by the idea that the story of the Pāṇḍavas,<sup>27</sup> with Kṛṣṇa as their guiding genius, is the important part of Mahābhāratam. All the other episodes are subsidiary to this main theme. The episodes which he has selected for somewhat detailed treatment in Sambhavam and other parvams are intended only to illuminate this. In the Pāṇḍava story the importance of Kṛṣṇa is obvious. Kṛṣṇa appears in the story for the first time at the marriage of Draupadi, when he recognises the Pāṇḍavas in the guise of Brāhmins and points them out to his brother. Their relationship as paternal cousins is cemented by

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24. For instance, even the deceptive cry of Mārīca, "Jānaki! Lakṣmaṇa!" finds mention. Mal. M. Bh., pp. 226-237.

25. In the original M. Bh., Sugrīva only receives Lakṣmaṇa with his wife. (K. K. Bh., p. 629). Kamban also gives a similar turn to the situation.

26. This is an example of Eḷuttaccan's poetic sensibility getting the upper hand over his philosophic outlook.

27. He concludes with the ascent of Yudhiṣṭhira to heaven and omits Khilaparva and Harivamsa, which are appended to the original epic.

the marriage of Arjuna with Subhadra, and ever after no serious action of any kind is undertaken by the Pāṇḍavas without consulting Kṛṣṇa, who is acknowledged by them as their supreme Deity and benefactor at the Rājasūya sacrifice. His divine aspect, which has been for some time, a matter of opinion among interested partisans, manifests itself clearly when Draupadi cries for help when she is insulted and disgraced publicly by Duśśāsana after the fateful game of dice. From that moment onwards Kṛṣṇa is no longer in the background, but is a regular actor in the whole drama. With his appearance as a mediator between the contending parties and the assertion of his divine personality on that occasion to check the contemplated insult to him by the Kauravas he virtually becomes the chief actor, and the Pāṇḍavas his accomplices or agents. Towards the end of the story his disappearance from the stage reduces the Pāṇḍavas to a state of helplessness and destitution, and they are obliged to retire, meeting an end which is not in keeping with their past glory or exploits. The combination of Nārāyaṇa and Nara is thus fully illustrated. One without the other is powerless; Nārāyaṇa, being the major representative of the divine energy, draws away with him even the vitality of his counterpart.

It is this vision of Kṛṣṇa in the Bhārata story that has appealed to Eḷuttaccan, and his attempt has been to present the epic theme so as to display his favourite deity to the fullest advantage. Even from the very beginning he does not hesitate to say that it is the story of Kṛṣṇa contained in the sacred work of Vyāsa that he is attempting to narrate, and he addresses his *parrot*<sup>28</sup> in that strain. The foundation for this is also laid by describing the birth of Kṛṣṇa after the Vyāsa episode and before the story of Pāṇḍavas' ancestry, for the purpose of relieving Earth of her burden of Asuras who had been born as kings in that age. He repeats this at the beginning of every chapter, and wherever Kṛṣṇa appears there is the usual praise of the deity accompanied by a description of the God's powers and influence over mankind and the inevitable divine smile. At the commencement of Sambhavam the parrot is

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28. Eḷuttaccan's works are all in the form of parrot-songs, *Kiḷippāṭṭu*, (*Kiḷi*—parrot, *pāṭṭu*—song). It was the custom with ancient poets in Malayālam to imagine a parrot or swan possessing supernatural powers and knowledge as the narrator of stories. In the case of parrots its sweet sound symbolises the music of poetry. In modern times the term is only applied to the metre of certain type of poetry. [Vide Appendix VI for a note on *Kiḷippāṭṭu*].

asked to narrate the story of the Pāṇḍavas<sup>29</sup> in brief, at the same time in the best form of which she<sup>30</sup> is capable. Even when describing the youth of the Pāṇḍavas at Hastinapura and the rivalry between them and the Kauravas, Eḷuttaccan tells his readers that Suyōdhana and his brothers have Śakuni and Karṇa as their friends, while the Pāṇḍavas have only God as friend. This conception of Kṛṣṇa as the force behind the Pāṇḍava story as against their enemies runs throughout Eḷuttaccan's work. Bhīṣma, Vidura and even Vyāsa emphasise this fact when they offer advice to Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Suyōdhana<sup>31</sup> on different occasions. The finishing touch is given at the Aśwamēdha of Yudhiṣṭhira, which celebrates the victory won by arms, and makes a fitting culmination of his political career begun with a Rājasūya. There Eḷuttaccan makes the Brāhmins who attended the ceremony say that this surpasses in grandeur all the sacrifices performed by kings in ancient times for the reason that Yudhiṣṭhira has as his friend no less a personage than the God Kṛṣṇa, who is prepared to do even menial work for his devotee, and his fortune is thus unrivalled.<sup>32</sup> At the end of the work also he makes Sūta conclude his long narration by contemplating Kṛṣṇa.<sup>33</sup>

This conception of Kṛṣṇa is the outcome of Eḷuttaccan's own conviction strengthened by his study of Mahābhāratam and his proximity to the Guruvāyūr temple, where Kṛṣṇa worship is even now dominant. He takes his stand on the version communicated to Janamējaya by Vaiśampāyana. The questions of Janamējaya and the answers of the narrator are very often referred to, while Sūta is represented as only repeating what Vaiśampāyana had already said. The reference to Sūta is a mere formality.

#### *The Central Theme of Eḷuttaccan's Epic.*

We may now proceed to a consideration of the central idea of Eḷuttaccan's epic, which, unlike the original Bhāratam, has a unity of design and execution. Eḷuttaccan seems to have made a unique experiment with the epic theme. While he was fully alive to the merits of the original epic as a store-house of knowledge, religious and secular, as a poet he was convinced that the immensity of its size and the diverse doctrines it preaches have deprived it of much

29. Mal. M. Bh., p. 59—Ennālum curukkiṇān Pāṇḍavarute Katha . . .

“എന്നൊലും മുരുകി അൻ പാണ്ടവരുടെ കഥ.”

30. It is always a hen-parrot.

31. Mal. Mbh., pp. 268, 280, 384.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 416.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 441.

of its value as the highest expression of art. The central stem overburdened with huge appendages, appeared too weak to support them. The essence of its beauty had been lost in the vast mass of extraneous matter that had been added for its adornment. At the same time, he realised that it contained the brightest gems of Hindu artistic and philosophic thought, which needed re-emphasis and re-affirmation. The epic in the course of its progress shared the fate of many a Hindu institution, having been shaped and re-shaped by many hands, at different times according to the necessities and requirements of the society that was also growing with it, and it was looked upon as a visible symbol of the national mind. The traditional practice of singing it for popular amusement and instruction tended to make it grow to vast and unwieldy size, so that the original outline became more and more obscured. As a national heritage every section of Hindu society claimed it, and it tended to absorb all sorts of elements, good, bad and indifferent. Such a tendency, though it developed its encyclopaedic character, took away much of its greatness and beauty as a constructive work of art.

Ezuttaccan's attempt therefore, was to present to his countrymen a work focussing their attention upon the essential features of the great epic, which they should enjoy primarily as a poem dealing with their heroic past. What they had to learn from it should not in any way interfere with their enjoyment of its poetry, and should be within their reach without any conscious effort on their part. He must have also felt that he had given them perhaps, more than enough food for thought in his Adh. Rāmāyaṇa, which contained enough of metaphysical speculation on the nature of Jivātma and Paramātma and such questions. He therefore, laid the emphasis upon the narrative element in his Bhāratam and gave to the didactic element a very subordinate place.

Such a plan required that a kind of unity had to be created out of the heterogeneous material supplied by the epic. Artist as he was, he made a clear distinction between the essential and the non-essential, and emphasised the former for the sake of effect. Such a unity was designed only for artistic purposes and had as its aim the satisfaction of pure aesthetic impulse. It has nothing to do with the unity which ethnologists are anxious to build on the theory of phratry-relationship or potlatch in respect of the epic.<sup>34</sup> They challenge all accepted principles of linguistic analysis

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34. The Mahābhārata, An Ethnological Study. Ch. VI.

which so far has led all other branches of study in collecting positive proof to render the study of the epic profitable. Ethnological speculations as applied here are at best uncertain. The phratry-relationship is usually found in the primitive condition of a society. Such a conception is hardly compatible with the highly ethical teachings contained in the Bhagavadgīta, which cannot be considered as the product of an uncivilised state. The champions of the theory are not prepared to look upon the Gīta and other didactic portions of the epic as interpolations. On the contrary, they assert that they form integral parts of the epic. The potlatch theory stands on a similar footing.<sup>35</sup>

Ežuttaccan's epic is an emphatic answer to these theories. The unity which he has created is the product of his own artistic genius, and is not inspired by any other collateral circumstance or evidence. His selection of the Pāṇḍava episode as the central theme is not intended to sing the glories of the five brothers but to bring his favourite God into greater prominence. The Pāṇḍavas according to him deserve credit only for their devotion to Kṛṣṇa; but for whose help they would have been nowhere in the struggle recorded in the epic.

There is also another undercurrent which amplifies the unity which Ežuttaccan constructs around the character of Kṛṣṇa. It is his faith in Destiny, of which Kṛṣṇa is the embodiment. He conceives the Bhārata war as a conflict of opposing forces, which go under the generic terms 'good and evil.' We are already familiar with the 'Dēvāsura theory', that lies, according to our poet, at the background of the terrible conflict into which the different characters are drawn by an irresistible force of circumstances, of which some of them were conscious. In spite of the various nefarious attempts of Suyōdhana and his vicious circle, the Pāṇḍavas escape death at the early stage of the story. With the acquisition of the Khāṇḍava forest and the performance of Rājasūya they reach the height of prosperity and glory, which excite the jealousy of their kinsmen and lead to the unfortunate gamble. Again an instance of the subtle work of Destiny! Terrible consequences follow. In spite of the advice of Bhīṣma and others interested in the welfare of both parties, Suyōdhana re-

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35. The gamble with dice is the basis of this theory. There is some point in applying the argument to the Rājasūya sacrifice, which signifies common consent, an essential condition of a potlatch; but the gamble is obviously the result of an intrigue.

mains obdurate with the curse of Draupadi staring him in the face. After the exile and the period of disguise, the Pāṇḍavas return to claim their kingdom. Kṛṣṇa mediates in vain, and the war is declared, in which he takes a personal interest intensified by the sense of insult offered to him by the 'hundred brothers'. The whole course of events moves in a vicious circle, from which the personalities involved find themselves unable to escape, leading to a great catastrophe. The first person to anticipate this is Vidura, who warns Dhṛtarāṣṭra on the eve of Kṛṣṇa's visit thus :—

“ It is not possible to go against Destiny.  
This is ordained by God  
Human will is powerless.”<sup>36</sup>

This is echoed by Bhīṣma<sup>37</sup> and Drōṇa,<sup>38</sup> who much against their will join the Kauravas in their fight against the Pāṇḍavas. The course of Destiny becomes more aggressive as the battle proceeds. Both Bhīṣma and Drōṇa, invincible bowmen as they are, die, not vanquished but condemned through curses earned during their life-time. In fact, all the notable victories won by the Pāṇḍavas are not the outcome of their own superior skill or valour but are due to adventitious circumstances like these. Drōṇa, when entreated to refrain from the use of disastrous weapons in the war, proclaims the sentiment with renewed emphasis :—

We are all under the influence of God's will  
and His will shall be done !

Kṛṣṇa expresses the same idea<sup>39</sup> when he consoles Dhṛtarāṣṭra after the death of Duryōdhana and when he is hit by the hunter and foresees the destruction of his own clan. It receives the authority of Vyāsa himself when Aśwathāma uses Brahmāstra to kill the Pāṇḍavas 'root and branch,' and Arjuna meets it with his counter-weapon when wholesale destruction is imminent.<sup>40</sup> It reacts on Kṛṣṇa himself when Gāndhāri pronounces doom on him and his line at the battle-field.<sup>41</sup> He then accepts the curse, saying that he is preparing for his end and that he is glad that she also thinks likewise. He thus identifies himself with Destiny.

36. Mal. Bh., pp. 268-269.

37. *Ibid.*

38. *Ibid.*

39. Mal. Bh., pp. 369, 427, 428.

40. *Ibid.*, pp. 379, 380.

41. *Ibid.*

Vidura sums up the whole philosophy by coupling Destiny with the doctrine of Karma.<sup>42</sup>

Ežuttaccan employs this doctrine as a running commentary on the Mahābhāratam story, in which one party, though much superior to the other in equipment and valour, perishes through the play of Destiny, while the other, though deficient in many respects, wins by the same agency impersonated in Kṛṣṇa. He thus illustrating the domination of the divine will over human will and power, introduces his pet doctrine of Bhakti as the only means of turning Destiny in one's favour.

*Ežuttaccan's omissions—Hariścandra and Sāvitrī.*

In the light of the above considerations, the omissions we notice in his work appear to have been made deliberately, and based on certain principles. Instances of omissions are innumerable; and both the narrative and didactic parts have been equally subjected to the guillotine. Two of the numerous episodes omitted may be noticed as typical cases. One such is the story of Hariścandra in Udyōgam, which has been recalled by Nārada to remind Yudhiṣṭhira of the virtues of the Rājasūya. Ežuttaccan dismisses the whole episode in a line, while the original devotes some pages to it. The other relates to Sāvitrī, the paragon of chastity in Hindu mythology. Both the stories illustrate the triumph of human will power over Destiny. Hariścandra undergoes all sorts of miseries, arising out of his degradation through the machinations of Viśwāmitra, who in the story appears as the agent of Destiny. The rivalry between Viśwāmitra and Vasiṣṭha, taking the form of a challenge on the truthfulness of the great King, is the real motive force, and Hariścandra is not responsible for it; but his unconquerable will, not to swerve from the path of truth ultimately triumphs. Sāvitrī also presents a similar problem. Even the God of Death, who claims the life of her husband in the usual course of his dispensation, is amazed at her extraordinary power acquired through her unparalleled devotion to virtue, and eventually complies with her request. Both these stories run counter to the doctrine of Destiny which Ežuttaccan develops in his epic, and are out of tune with its general spirit. They are therefore, rejected. In the case of the Sāvitrī episode there is not even a reference. Probably Ežuttaccan also thought that in the context in which the question is asked it is not very appropriate. In the original

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42. Mal. Bha., p. 382.

epic the story is narrated in answer to Yudiṣṭhira's<sup>43</sup> enquiry for an instance in which a chaste woman like Draupadi suffers. The wife of the Pāṇḍavas has very little in common with Sāvitrī. Perhaps, Eḷuttaccan may have even doubted whether a woman with five husbands could really be called a chaste woman. To compare her with the redoubtable champion of chastity is to make that virtue look ridiculous.

### *Bhagavad Gītā.*

Among the omissions in the didactic portion the Bhagavad Gītā is the most conspicuous. Eḷuttaccan has his own justification for it. In the first instance, a long work like the Gītā, containing eighteen chapters, does not fit in with his scheme of Bhāratam, in which he attempts the narration of the story within the smallest compass possible. To introduce a work of the magnitude of the Gītā into it would certainly upset its unity and be out of proportion to its size. Moreover he seems to have also doubted the consistency of its teachings and the propriety and practicability of a long discourse on the occasion. In his prologue,<sup>44</sup> when giving the summary of all the Parvas, he speaks of Kṛṣṇa's message to Arjuna when the latter shows signs of mental depression at the sight of his gurus and kinsmen on the other side, against whom he has to fight, and feels keenly the inhumanity of the whole enterprise. Kṛṣṇa then takes pity on him as his devotee and preaches to him the truth of Vēdānta. His discourse also illuminates the various problems relating to eternity, supreme knowledge, varṇāśramācāra, sūtratatwa, sāṅkhyayōga etc. The conception of duality vanishes from Arjuna's mind, and he is convinced of the doctrine of monism, which gives him contentment. To create confidence in him Kṛṣṇa shows him his universal form. In Bhīṣmam, where the original epic introduces the Gītā, he presents it in a different way.<sup>45</sup> The tragedy of the scene that arouses Arjuna's despondency is emphasised, and Kṛṣṇa reminds him of his duty to fight as a king and kṣatriya. Thereupon Eḷuttaccan says that Kṛṣṇa dealt at length with the subject of Adhyātman and instilled confidence into Arjuna by the exhibition of his universal form. Terror-stricken, Arjuna then seeks his refuge, whereupon the solemn message is given :

“ Oh Kaurava! fear not : fight on :  
Do not be despondent, ‘ *all you see is I* ’ ”

43. K. K. Bh., Vol. I. p. 640.

44. Mal. Bh., p. 8.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 283.

This is followed by the cryptic lines :

“ What Mādhava told Arjuna in order to remove his delusion is all Upaniṣads, and learned men have called it the Gīta.”

The form in which Eḷuttaccan has put it indicates that he sees in the conflict only a poetic situation in which Arjuna stands in need of divine inspiration to overcome his depression, and that the teachings of the Gīta are contained in the Upaniṣads. It is a kind of mystic experience to Arjuna, the effect of which Eḷuttaccan seems to visualise from his own emotional consciousness.

The Gīta has been a puzzle to many scholars, and its message has been interpreted in different ways. All schools of Hindu philosophic thought have endeavoured to make it the basis of their doctrines.<sup>46</sup> Even in modern times its appeal, is diverse. C. V. Vaidya looks upon it as a priceless work on ethics,<sup>47</sup> philosophy and religion combined. Lāla Lajpat Rai sees in it the philosophy of action.<sup>48</sup> The astute thinker Tilak finds the doctrine of Energism expounded in it.<sup>49</sup> Such diversity of views points to a fundamental lack of coherence in the teachings embodied in it as a result of an attempt to incorporate in it what has been said in different earlier philosophical works, particularly in Upaniṣads.<sup>50</sup> Modern critical study has arrived at the same conclusion. The opinion of two distinguished scholars on the subject representing the English and the Indian view-points deserves our attention in this connection. Says Dr. L. D. Barnett in his learned introduction<sup>51</sup> to his translation of the work :

“If the greatness of a book be measured by its power over the souls of men then assuredly the Gīta is a great book. Yet if we apply to it the standard of criticism it cannot be ranked with great classics. Its thought is confused, its utterance is loose and rambling. The learning it parades is shallow and ill-assorted. At rare intervals indeed it breaks out into utterance of deep poetic intensity and thrilling melody, but they are almost always echoes of

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46. Śankara, Rāmānuja, and Mādhva, founders of three different churches, have written commentaries on it in support of their doctrines,

47. *Epic India*, p. 468.

48. *The Message of the Gīta*, p. 33.

49. *Introduction to Hindu Scriptures*, p. xxiv.

50. In the opinion of some this constitutes the chief merit of the work as it provides a common ground for different creeds of Hinduism.

51. p. 79.

voices from the past, and as a rule may be traced back to Upaniṣads.”

Dr. S. Das Gupta echoes the same view but in a different form : “ Sometimes in the same passage and sometimes in passages of the same context the Gīta takes a pantheistic view, reverting in the same breath to a transcendental or to a theistic view and thus seeming to imply that no contradiction was felt in the different aspects of God as preserver and controller of the world, as the substance of the world, life and soul and as the transcendent substratum underlying them all.”<sup>52</sup>

Eḷuttaccan anticipated this view four centuries ago, and the fact that he gave expression to it in plain language in his epic bears ample testimony to his intellectual honesty and bold thinking. The only new thing about the Gīta according to him, was the personality of Kṛṣṇa, to which he drew attention. The introduction of the Gīta, which according to him lacked the unity of conception which he was attempting in his work, would therefore, be against his artistic ideal, and it was accordingly eliminated from his work. He however, recorded the event.

Here the critic may raise another issue. Is it the first time that Arjuna was forced to fight his gurus and became conscious of his sin ? A similar situation arose at the end of the Ajñātavāsa when the Kauravas with all the gurus challenged Virāṭa after stealing his cows and Arjuna had to defend him. He experienced no compunction at that time. On a subsequent occasion during the war,<sup>53</sup> Arjuna raised his hand against his elder brother, who slighted his ability to win ; whereupon Kṛṣṇa intervened and asked him to desist from ‘Guruvadhā’, which he advocated as a matter of duty in the Gīta. Eḷuttaccan points out here that “ contrary to his previous teaching, Kṛṣṇa said that the punishment for ‘guruvadhā’ was hell.”<sup>54</sup>

### *Eḷuttaccan’s Kṛṣṇa.*

Eḷuttaccan’s attitude towards the Gīta gives us an insight into his conception of the character of Kṛṣṇa, its traditional author. In it he appears as a philosopher who sets at nought human considerations, and praises Vairāgya,

52. Indian Idealism, p. 59.

53. Mal. Bh., Karnaparvam, p. 343.

54. Mal. Bh., p. 341.

indifference to the flesh, as a sublime virtue. But in the actual story of the epic he evinces a personal interest in the characters with whom he is associated. Such a role is quite opposed to the one revealed in the Gīta. Elsewhere he exhibits passion and emotion just like other characters, and whole-heartedly identifies himself with his devotees. This aspect of his character according to Eṣuttaccan is the most lovable part of Kṛṣṇa's personality, and represents its universality. His description of Kṛṣṇa is accordingly quite different from that of Rāma. Rāma is admirable and commands adoration. Kṛṣṇa comes nearer to his heart and awakens his love and devotion. In Kṛṣṇa, he as a true Bhakta, visualises the perfect mingling of the divine and the human personality. Kṛṣṇa's role as Pārthasārathi, which in his view symbolises God's universal sympathy and service to his devotees, draws out all the devotional fervour of which he is capable. It flows into a most charming poetic description, which is at once a masterpiece of lyrical and of mystical expression. It is put in the mouth of Śalya, who acts as charioteer for Karṇa during his fight. Karṇa asks for Arjuna. Śalya points out the chariot driven by Kṛṣṇa. The moment the name of Kṛṣṇa is mentioned the intensity of the poet's feelings breaks out into melodious poetry, every line of which thrills the reader with rapturous ecstasy. It brings the whole figure of Kṛṣṇa as a charioteer before his mind's eye. It defies translation; but the following lines are typical. The poet describes Kṛṣṇa from head to foot. This is how he describes the eyes :—

Kindness that extends to us devotees,  
 The anger that turns on wicked men,  
 The tender love that endears to women,  
 The sense of wonder at the sight of the battle,  
 The smile that mocks the unworthy,  
 The terror that frightens enemies,  
 All these shine in the eyes in their mixed beauty.

The picture concludes thus :—

..... and the lotus feet  
 as always enthroned in my mind, I saw in that jewel  
 of a chariot."

The personality that is revealed through these inspiring lines possesses a charm and dignity which are absent in the matter-of-fact philosopher who preached the Gīta. In Eṣuttaccan's mind Kṛṣṇa moves with all the sensations and intensity of feeling which a living

personality inspires. He never looks upon Kṛṣṇa as a mere intellectual abstraction. He is a presence to be felt and known. He wants his readers also to love the charming personality of Kṛṣṇa as he does and as women have already done.<sup>55</sup> The incongruity apparent in the combination of amorous propensity and philosophic serenity that often puzzles critics of Kṛṣṇa's character has no place in Eḷuttaccan's conception of Kṛṣṇa.

### *Other Characters.*

Eḷuttaccan's imagination has invested the other characters also with a similar individuality of appeal, although it is less intense than that of Kṛṣṇa. Bhīṣma with his dignified and philosophic bearing, Drōṇa with his relentless skill and acuteness, Karṇa with his pompous boasting, Dhṛtarāṣṭra with his crooked vision, Dur-yōdhana with his self advertising pomp, Duśśāsana with his ruthless cruelty, Śakuni with his low cunning, Yudhiṣṭhira with his virtuous calm, Bhīma with his impetuous strength, Arjuna with his artful and engaging disposition, Vidura with his profound wisdom, Vyāsa with his mysterious grandeur, and above all Kṛṣṇa with his transcendental splendour all pass before the reader's mind as beautifully drawn pictures with a definite outline and expression.

### *Eḷuttaccan's poetry.*

In the consideration of Eḷuttaccan's poetry the first thing that strikes us is his overmastering personality. In fact, as John Drinkwater suggests, "the personality of the author and the spirit of the age<sup>56</sup> are the most important influences in all poetry". Every line of his is stamped with his genius, and we can distinguish his work in any collection of Malayālam poetry, even though the author's name is purposely concealed. A graceful felicity of diction, the adjustment of the style to the thought and situation, the absence of any straining after effect, an innate beauty born of a natural flow of words and not of any attempt at conscious embellishment, a charming finality of expression, above all a high moral tone and dignity, are the most prominent characteristics of his poetry. There have

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55. Eḷuttaccan never describes the amorous adventures of Kṛṣṇa. He thinks that the God is loved by women for his personal charms and the interest he takes in them. In the *Mahābhārata* Kṛṣṇa saves the honour of Draupadi, which act is by itself enough to win the regard of the fair sex.

56. We have discussed this in Chapter II.

been poets before and after him who equal him in one or two of the above qualities. But there is none who possesses these in such perfect combination that we often are at a loss to say which of the above are the most dominant characteristics. This accounts for the unique position he holds in Malayāḷam literature. His style has an eternal freshness and vivacity that has been unaffected by the lapse of four centuries. It still stands as a model. It surpasses the style of even the leading poets of modern times in point of modernity and finish. Many of his expressions have become household words among Malayāḷis, and still remain a potent influence in Malayāḷam language and literature.

Another remarkable feature is the versatility of his genius. Poetry is often divided into different classes, such as narrative, descriptive, lyrical. It is impossible to say in which of these types he excels. In all he attains the highest level of excellence to which even few great poets can lay claim. The same applies to his skill in dealing with various human moods. Indian Aesthetics recognise nine fundamental moods constituting nine Rasas,<sup>57</sup> that find expression in fine art. Our poet is equally adept in the delineation of all these moods. He seems to have also included Bhakti (devotion)<sup>58</sup> as the tenth, which pervades all his works as a supreme sentiment.

Behind this poetic personality stands the man in all his imposing but graceful complexity. First and foremost is the poet, possessing a keen insight into human nature and taking a genuine interest in it. There is then the philosopher, looking upon life with a good-humoured sympathy, but occasionally smiling at its foibles; and above all there is the saint, to whom morality is a passion, and devotion to God an overmastering weakness.

Coming to Bhāratam, in which an epic theme with a number of minor stories has to be handled, narration necessarily has priority. It is a delight to watch the easy flow of Eḷuttaccan's narration, illumined by an exceedingly fertile imagination. The essentials of the story are presented in their proper perspective, and the characters parade before us full of life and action. In accordance with their poetic value, some stories are short, other more elaborate. The

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57. 1. Sṛṅgāra (love), 2. Vīra (the heroic), 3. Hāsya (humour), 4. Karuṇa (Pathos), 5. Bhayānaka (fear), 6. Raudra (terror), 7. Bībhatsa (disgust), 8. Vyāsana (sorrow) and 9. Sānti (contentment).

58. G. A. Grierson prefers to translate this as 'faith'—*Gleanings from the Bhakta-māla*, p. 614 of J.R.A.S.—July 1909.

interest is sustained throughout ; and one always wishes to read them over again to enjoy their beauty and charm. The stories that describe Vyāsa's birth, Yayāti's eventful marriage with Dēvayāni and his secret affairs with Śarmiṣṭha, Śakuntala's heroic defence of her rights, Arjuna's romantic elopement with Subhadra, are examples of vivid narration. For every episode the background is well prepared. An instance may be cited. When Arjuna is admitted to the inner apartments of Kṛṣṇa's palace Subhadra is ordered to look after the pretended Sanyāsin. He falls in love with the charming virgin, who meets him several times a day. In the original they straightaway begin a conversation, in which Subhadra enquires after the welfare of the Pāṇḍavas, and particularly of Arjuna, who is then supposed to be on a pilgrimage. Our poet does not introduce them so abruptly. He makes both observe each other well, impressing on the reader their mutual feelings. Arjuna watches Subhadra play with her friends, and indulge in various amusements. Both feel the inner urge, and Subhadra, enlightened woman as she is, realises the delicacy that Arjuna feels in playing a part not quite suited for romance. She is the first to break the silence. Let the poet describe it :

“ One fine day after a meal, in a happy mood and full of  
curious desire, feeling the call of Cupid,  
Standing at the door half open,  
Revealing her eyes and throbbing breast little by little  
she thought,  
Though improper If I speak to the Yati<sup>59</sup> the truth will  
be known. If not, no harm is done by the exchange  
of courtesy.”

Then the conversation proceeds. When her enquiry reaches the third brother of the Pāṇḍavas she adds a qualifying compliment to Arjuna that he is too good a man to suffer like that.<sup>60</sup> Before this scene the poet gives his readers an idea of the Yati's condition :

“ The Sanyāsin entered the maiden's chambers, became  
a slave to her charms ;  
The brother of Dharmaputra<sup>61</sup> felt the pangs of love,  
Lost his sleep and relished not his food,  
And every day there was more concentration in his  
thoughts.

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59. Sage.

60. Referring to his pilgrimage.

61. The poet by this expression satirises his conduct.

*Love.*

A few examples of his treatment of the various moods may be quoted. We will begin with love, which is a perennial theme of the poets all over the world, and is considered to be the 'Prince of aesthetic moods.'<sup>62</sup> In this respect Ežuttaccan adopts a method of his own. Different aspects of the erotic mood represented by various characters are portrayed. He also makes a distinction between blind passion and genuine love. In the former category, to name a few examples, come the Parāśara episode and Kicaka's tragedy. He relates the affair of Parāśara in a disapproving tone, as according to him the sage betrayed his calling lamentably and did not exhibit as much discretion as the unsophisticated fisherwoman showed. He makes the sage speak the usual language of lust and concludes:—

“ Why say more !!

The sage who had seen the secret of wordly ties and  
their redemption (Salvation)

In a sacred hour (morning<sup>63</sup>) and on the sacred (waters)  
and pure Yamuna

When the divine light of sun was dawning embraced the  
daughter of the fisherwoman.”

He justifies this on the ground that it led to the birth of a great man, and moralises on the effects of contact with virtuous souls though for improper purposes.

*Heroines.*

Among his heroines Dēvayāni is an example of jealous love, and the scenes in which she appears are described in that vein. Śarmiṣṭha is of the opposite type, passionate, submissive and genuine. The tragedy of her relationship with Yayāti is vividly pictured. Yayāti loves Śarmiṣṭha, a princess whose temper brings her trouble and servitude under Dēvayāni, who becomes mistress of the situation and also the legal wife of her lover. Chance one day gives her an opportunity to meet Yayāti, and her passion is thus described:—

“ On that day after her ceremonial bath

She surveyed her breast despairingly,

Adorned her teeth and lips and painted her round breast  
and forehead with sandal paste,

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62. Rasacakravartti.

63. When he is expected to say his prayers.

Spread her flowing hair that looked like Cupid's crest  
 Wore a clean cloth, and painted her eyes black,  
 Bedecked her body with gold jewels  
 Looked at the mirror  
 Thinking of her lover, and leaning over an *aśōka* tree."

It is a perfect picture of passionate love.

In the scenes between Subhadra and Arjuna which we have already noticed, this voluptuousness is absent. Their union is painted as a model of enlightened love, in which the lover and the loved unite in perfect equality. External charms play a subordinate part, and mental ecstasy reigns supreme in it.

#### *Other sentiments.*

The heroic sentiment is described in all its intensity in the battle scenes that occur in Bhīṣmam and other parvams. These pictures abound in minute details of the fight, which though promiscuous in nature, appear with all the vividness of a photograph. They are full of colour and light, and thrilling with action and movement. Not a single item escapes the sharp vision of Kṛṣṇa, who always turns his chariot to the danger zones. Bhīma's fight with Bhagadatta's elephant is a splendid example. But for Kṛṣṇa's intervention it would have ended in the death of Bhīma.

The duel between Duśśāsana and Bhīma and the latter's drinking the blood of the fallen foe teem with terror (Raudra), and the description is a masterpiece of the kind. The same applies to the duel between Bhīma and Suyōdhana. As I have already pointed out in the previous chapter, through the description of duels the poet caters to the Malayālis' traditional love of war, and keeps alive the popularity of 'Ankam'<sup>64</sup> fights between heroes in Malabar which often loom large in popular ballads. It is preserved in the art of Kathakali, which developed a vast literature in the century after Ežuttacān. A duel is an inevitable item in a Kathakali performance.

Gāndhāri's lamentation on the battlefield is a remarkable word-picture of pathos. She and other womenfolk enter the battlefield in order to have a last look at the dead bodies of their sons and husbands. The sight arouses uncontrollable feeling in them. Our poet makes her look at every corpse and contrast its condition with its living state. Her pathetic address to her own son Suyōdhana, Karna and Abhimanyu is heart-rending in the

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64. A ceremonial duel to settle personal disputes.

extreme. Abhimanyu is the youngest of all. Though he is not her son, the mother in her melts at the sight of the boy hero.

Oh look, Kṛṣṇa ! there he lies on earth,  
covered with blood.

Oh Śiva ! Śiva ! the charming boy who shines like an  
emerald,

The pet child of Arjuna,

And your own nephew,

Why did you not save at least his life ?

Killing is your pastime !

Ežuttaccan's dignity does not prevent him from indulging in humour, but he believes in the maxim that 'brevity is the soul of wit'. The reader perceives sparks of humour which at his touch flashes into flame. When Uttara is offered to Arjuna in marriage in return for services rendered, he accepts her for his son, in view of (according to the original Bh.<sup>65</sup>) her age and the possibility of scandal attaching to his character. Our poet does not leave it at that, but adds an interesting remark :—

"All the things that he taught<sup>66</sup> (her)  
No one knew ! People might say thus."

Bhīma's strangling of Kīcaka has called forth a similar observation. Kīcaka unsuspectingly embraced the disguised Bhīma!<sup>67</sup> The latter

"Pierced his (Kīcaka's) body with his nails,<sup>68</sup> thinking  
that want of love should not be suspected."

Such instances are scattered all over the pages of Ežuttaccan's Bhāratam, which is a storehouse of poetic gems.

To sum up, Bhāratam is the crowning gem of Ežuttaccan's poetic achievement. The diversity of interest afforded by the theme gave his genius plenty of scope, and the result was an abundant display of it. Though he has omitted a number of stories and didactic

65. K. K. Bh: Vol. I, p. 66.

66. Arjuna was the dancing master to the womenfolk at Virāṭa's Court. Mal. Bh., p. 250.

67. Kīcaka's advances were resented by Draupadi, who was saved by Bhīma by meeting Kīcaka in the guise of a woman and killing him.

68. The word used is 'Nakhakṣatam', a technical word which Vātsyāyana uses in his Kāmasūtra (science of erotics).

additions, all that is worth having in the original epic as genuine literature is contained in his magnificent production. It is beyond doubt that from the point of view of pure aesthetic enjoyment Ežuttaccan's achievement is a distinct gain to the field of Bhārata literature. His imagination and poetic sensibility have made notable original contributions to the sum total of literary output achieved through the medium of the Bhārata lays that have been growing for centuries on Indian soil. His work is a masterpiece of vigorous narration, subtle characterisation and sublime poetry.

Ežuttaccan's Bhāratam, though much smaller in size has nothing in common with the colourless summary of Kṣēmēndra. The original epic and Ežuttaccan's epic stand in the same relation as the works of two different artists who have used the same brush and paint for their make-up. While Kṣēmēndra's work is like a toy-model of the original with none of its beauties Ežuttaccan's Bhāratam is another first-rate artistic production of the same type as the Sanskrit epic, differing in design and finish. The enlightened public of Kēraḷa therefore, with sufficient justification still cherish it as the epic of Malayālam although in recent times they have been so fortunate as to secure a good literal translation of the Sanskrit epic<sup>69</sup> and Kṣēmēndra's summary.<sup>70</sup> This is no reflection on the works of these translators; on the contrary, it proclaims the unquestionable merits of Ežuttaccan's masterpiece.

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69. By Kuṅṅukuṭṭan Tampurān, reference to which has already been made in the course of this chapter.

70. By Kaṭattanāḍ Udayavarma Rāja and others.

## CHAPTER V

### MINOR WORKS : CONTEMPORARIES

#### *Introductory.*

In respect of the Adh. Rāmāyaṇam and the Mahābhāratam discussed in the preceding chapters there has been no dispute about their authorship. Tradition, critical study and manuscript evidence are unanimous in assigning them to Eḷuttaccan. On the question of his minor works such unanimity of opinion does not exist. The practice of submitting one's ventures in the literary field to a guru for approval or correction and the instinct of imitation, a common weakness of humanity, have been mainly responsible for the difficulties in this respect. If by some chance the guru could not examine a work of his disciple, its author would prefer to remain anonymous, and in course of time the works of both the teacher and pupil were mixed up. If the guru happened to be the founder of an institution, the confusion increased in proportion to the number of members it had. In the case of Eḷuttaccan we have already seen that he was a pioneer in more fields than one, and he had a regular stream of followers and disciples. Besides, the practice of reading one's poem to interested listeners kept the author's name in the background, and his modesty, which had no publicity organisation to shake it, took care to conceal it. If this confusion was not enough, imitators completed it.

#### *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇam,*

undoubtedly occupies the first rank among Eḷuttaccan's minor works. Curiously enough, scholars who have wasted their energies in studying uncertain works have not paid much attention to this. It is not included in the list of the eleven works enumerated in the History of Malayālam literature.<sup>1</sup> More than half the number mentioned therein have been proved to be not his. Other scholars<sup>2</sup> make only passing reference to this poem, but have not commented on its merit.

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1. The History of Malayālam Literature by P. Govinda Pillay, p. 187.
  2. (a) Kēraḷa Bhāṣa Sāhitya Caritram, Vol. II, p. 344.  
(b) P.K., Tuṅjatteḷuttaccan, p. 5.

It is based on the Sanskrit Purāṇa of the same title. As usual, it is only the narrative material that is taken from the original. The rendering is Eḷuttaccan's own. The work was undertaken at the instance of Nētranārāyaṇan<sup>3</sup> and the author is referred to as a Rāma Śiṣya (disciple of Rāma)<sup>4</sup> at the end. This Rāma is the same person (brother) mentioned by Eḷuttaccan in the A.R. The poet attempts only to render the middle portion of the voluminous Purāṇa, and treats the stories of Jamadagni, Kārtavīryārjuna and Sagara at considerable length. The fight between Paraśurāma and Kārtavīryārjuna reminds us of the descriptions of thrilling battle scenes in the poet's Mahābhāratam. This story has an historical interest. It is often taken as signifying the struggle between Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism or between Kṣatriyas and Brāhmins for supremacy in ancient Hindu Society. Kārtavīryārjuna is a devotee of Viṣṇu. Paraśu Rāma is a disciple of Śiva. His faith is doubtful, as he appears later as an incarnation of Viṣṇu. Śiva saves him on two critical situations during his prolonged fight with Kārtavīryārjuna, from whose Vaiṣṇavic disc he escapes death by bowing to it. This attitude of the enemy induces Kārtavīryārjuna to regard him as a friend and stop fighting, and during the trance into which he falls on contemplating his deity he meets death at the hands of his foe. Eḷuttaccan's description makes it clear that the victory of Paraśurāma is not due to his superior skill but a matter of chance or divine will.

The poem is in the heroic mould, and the vigour of our poet's narration and diction is manifest throughout.

The story describing the digging of the earth by Sagara's sons in search of their sacrificial horse, the resultant encroachment by the sea which submerged the sanctuary of Gōkarṇam<sup>5</sup> and Paraśu Rāma's reclamation of it later, is of peculiar interest to the people of Kēraḷa as it looks like another form of the local myth in which Kēraḷa appears in place of Gōkarṇam. It is however, noteworthy that Eḷuttaccan does not connect the two legends.

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3. The family name of Āḷuvāncēri Tamprākkaḷ, the Nambūdiri high priest of Malabar.

4. . . . Rāmaśiṣyanāl idam.'

".....രമാശിഷ്യനാലിദം."

5. In South Kanara.

*Uttararāmāyaṇam,*

is next in point of merit. Rāvaṇa's ancestry forms the theme of the earlier portion of the poem, and the latter part deals with the abandonment of Sīta. This poem has provoked the greatest controversy among scholars. In it the poet follows Kaṇṇaśśan's "Uttaram" which is based on that of Vālmiki, and not the 'Uttaram' of Adh. Rāmāyaṇa. R. N. Paṇikkar on that ground argues that it is not Eḷuttaccan's work.<sup>6</sup> As P. K. suggests,<sup>7</sup> this is no argument against his authorship, as we have seen from our study of A.R. and Mahābhāratam that Eḷuttaccan has drawn from Vālmiki and others, and that it is no disqualification. But what about the original contributions and passages in U. R. which are not traceable to the works of any previous writers? The following is one among many such instances. It describes the reactions of nature to the abandonment of Sīta in the forest.

"Seeing the sorrows of the lotus-eyed (Sīta),  
 Alas! Trees and Creepers are mourning in sympathy.  
 Pity stops the river's flow!  
 The sun stands perplexed!  
 Wind ceases blowing, and snakes (wind-eaters) hide in  
 holes!  
 Birds keep silence on trees!"<sup>8</sup>

A careful student can easily detect the touch of Eḷuttaccan's masterhand in such passages.

*Dēvī Māhātmyam.*

This is a small poem dealing with the Mother's encounter with various Asuras like Madhu and Sumbha and their death at her hands. It forms an important part of the literature of the Śakti cult. The mention of Rāmācāryan removes all doubts about the authorship, although it has to be classed as among the poet's early productions in point of quality. The narration is good, but other qualities are yet to grow. Perhaps, the poet was only beginning to feel the call of the muse and was yet unable to make up his mind about his loyalties. The inherited impulse of a Nāyar for the traditional worship of the Mother was claiming his genius, and he was responding to the first call.

6. Kēraḷa Bhāṣa Sāhitya Caritram, p. 436.

7. Tuṅṅatteḷuttaccan, p. 47.

8. Uttara Rāmāyaṇam, p. 64.

Ežuttaccan's name is intimately connected, as I have pointed out in Chapter II, with the worship of Śakti, which was and is a popular cult among the Nāyars of Malabar. It is closely linked with their martial traditions. As a member of that community it is possible that our poet wanted to do something for the cult, and this poem was the outcome. He seems to have created an esoteric group among the followers of the Mother, and written an authoritative work for their use.\* Dēvi Māhātmyam is said have been composed for beginners. The popular sect devoted to the Mother worship or Kālī worship derives its inspiration from the Dārūka legend.<sup>9</sup> In Dēvi Māhātmyam Dārūkan does not appear. Probably the distinction is purposely made to separate the esoteric from the popular mode of worship.

#### *Harināma Kīrtanam.*

Some comments have already been made in Chapter II on this work when discussing the date of Ežuttaccan. This is the only one among his works in which the name of a Nīlakaṅṭhan instead of Rāman, appears as that of his guru. This fact by itself throws a doubt on the theory ascribing its authorship to our poet. In respect of Mahābhāratam and U. R. which contain no mention of Rāman, the evidence of Mss. fills the gap and supplies the necessary confirmation. No such authentic evidence is forthcoming to establish the authorship of Harināmakīrtanam. The internal evidence of the work also justifies the suspicion. The poet's devotion to Kṛṣṇa, which assumes an emphatic form in the Mahābhāratam is absent in this. Nor does Rāma come in for special consideration. As the name indicates, it is a stōtra on Viṣṇu. Reference to Vṛṇḍāvana and amours of Kṛṣṇa (V. 29), which our poet has studiously avoided in his notable works, is another reason to doubt the authorship. Above all, there is a request to the guru to correct the composition, which indicates the author's lack of confidence in himself. Ežuttaccan has never displayed any such tendency. The difference in style is considerable. But that consideration may be waived if there is other overwhelming evidence.

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\* During my recent trip to Lōkanārkāvu (N. Malabar), I was told by the people of the locality that Ežuttaccan once visited the temple and composed a 'Dēvi stōtram' at the request of its owners.

9. It is peculiar to Malabar. The story presents Kālī as the daughter of Śiva and not as his consort, in which role she appears in legends current in other parts of India, vide Appendix VII.

I must not be understood to be under-rating the merits of this marvellous production. Its author no doubt, belongs to the school of thought which our poet represents. He is an Advaitist and a Yōgi. The central ideas of these two doctrines have been condensed in two slōkas (V. 2, 4.) which in their profundity and clarity have something of Eḷuttaccan's tone. The author's power of expressing high philosophical truths in pure Malayāḷam words is remarkable. It is a gem in Malayāḷam literature, and has undoubtedly emanated from a brilliant member of the fraternity whose modesty or other-worldiness cared for neither name nor fame.

#### *Cintāratnam.*

*Cintāratnam* is in the doubtful list. It betrays bitter hatred of Brāhmins, which is against the very creed of our poet. It is at the same time a memorable work, containing much worldly wisdom, and is addressed to the author's daughter.

I have already stated my view about Bhāgavatam.\*

Kēraḷanāṭakam mentioned by the author of Kēraḷōḷpatti has not been discovered so far. A Malayāḷam translation of Vāgbhaṭā's *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdayam* assigned to Eḷuttaccan is used by the native physicians of Malabar. Scholars have not seen it so far, and it is not possible to say what its character is. Besides these, there are innumerable Aṣṭakams<sup>10</sup> in praise of various deities in Sanskrit and Malayāḷam that are used for prayers by the older generation of teachers. Their devotional tone and poetic beauty bear the stamp of our poet's personality and serve to remind us of his role as an Ācārya.

#### *Contemporaries—Rāman and Nētranārāyaṇan.*

The poet speaks only of two men as his contemporaries. One is his elder brother Rāman and the other is Nētranārāyaṇan. Unfortunately enquiries made by scholars have not elicited any new information about these two persons and their association with the poet. There is no doubt that he held them in high esteem. His brother Rāman is referred to as a great scholar, and Nētranārāyaṇan is spoken of as a Brāhman saint. The latter, as the name indicates, belongs to the well-known Āzuvāncēri mana, the house of the great Nambūdiri priest. This house is only a few miles from the poet's birth place, and it is quite probable that the two

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\*Vide Appendix VIII for a detailed note on the subject.

10. A poem in stōtra style with eight stanzas.

were drawn to each other by their temperament and outlook. It is also possible that this saint induced Eḷuttaccan to compose the A.R. The name Dēvanārāyaṇan,<sup>11</sup> which appears in the legend about the A.R., may be a mistake for Nētranārāyaṇan,<sup>12</sup> as such errors often occur in the oral transmission of anecdotes from age to age. The identity of this Brāhman saint with the author of *Tantrasamgraham*, whose name is Nilakaṇṭha, is suggested by the fact that the latter also belongs to Āḷuvāncēri. Besides their family names, members of titular families in Malabar have personal names too. The family name is often used by the senior member in official correspondence on behalf of the house. Since Nilakaṇṭhan's date<sup>13</sup> coincides with that of Eḷuttaccan, the assumption that both the names Nilakaṇṭhan and Nētranārāyaṇan apply to the same individual is not improbable. The poets' proficiency in Tāntric ritual is perhaps, due to his association with this famous 'Tāntrikan.' But it does not follow that the other Nilakaṇṭhan mentioned in *Harināmakīrtanam* and the author of *Tantrasamgraham* are identical persons.

#### *Mēppattūr Bhaṭṭatiri.*

Another name that deserves mention in this connection, is that of Mēppattūr. Here again, tradition is our main authority. Their dates come very near each other, and they are separated by one generation.<sup>14</sup> As Mēppattūr is supposed to have lived more than a hundred years, there is a probability of his meeting the poet-saint in his old age and seeking his advice about the composition of his work Nārāyaṇīyam.<sup>15</sup> There is one thing common between them, and that is proved beyond doubt, by their works. Both are advocates of Bhakti and devotees of Kṛṣṇa. In the case of Mēppattūr personal sufferings<sup>16</sup> intensified his devotional fervour, while with Eḷuttaccan, it was the outcome of pure faith that stood in need of no such inducement. This similarity in outlook and faith suggested by the general tenor of their major works and confirmed by tradition indicates the influence of Eḷuttaccan on the

11. The family name of the Rāja of Ambalappuḷa.

12. The family name of the Āḷuvāncēri priest.

13. 1501 A.D.

14. Vide p. 62.

15. There is also an anecdote about a discussion between them on the relative importance of sound and meaning in literature.

16. He was a confirmed paralytic. The story goes that by the time he finished his prayers through his work he was miraculously restored to health.

learned men of his age, with whom Bhakti was a governing principle.

*Pūntānam.*

The name of another Nambūdiri poet and devotee of Kṛṣṇa is linked up with that of Mēppattūr. He is Pūntānam, of whom mention has already been made in Chapter II. He also advocates Bhakti in his famous philosophical poem Jñānappāna. He was not a Sanskrit scholar, and he is reported to have asked his brother poet to go through his work and make corrections in it. The latter declined, as it was in Malayāḷam. This attitude of the scholar-poet seems to have displeased their common idol Kṛṣṇa and brought back his old complaint accompanied by a dream in which Kṛṣṇa appeared and chastised him for his indifference towards his other devotee. I have already referred to Mēppattūr Bhaṭṭatiri's guru Achuta Piṣārōṭi, the astrologer, who also is from Tṛkkaṇṭiyūr. There is no story connecting these two with Eḷuttaccan. This group of men who seem to have lived not far removed from each other appears to have inherited the tradition left by the Poet-Saint.

## CHAPTER VI

### EZUTTACCAN AS AN EPIC POET, PHILOSOPHER AND REFORMER

#### *Ezuttaccan as an epic poet.*

Epic poetry is often distinguished by the universality of its appeal and the sublimity of its thought and diction. The former is due to the diverse interests it presents and the mass of human experience it embodies. The latter is the result of the high level at which the characters are set. In the western world Homer, though he possesses both, is noted for the first quality, and Dante and Milton for the second. In India epic poets have generally combined the two. In point of diction Vālmiki is considered superior to Vyāsa, who however, excels the former in universality of appeal. In Tamil and Malayālam Kamban and Ezuttaccan respectively have attained a similar distinction. Though the characters in the epics which he has rendered into Malayālam are not his creations,—as for that, the characters in most epics are mostly legendary heroes—he has given them a new individuality and life which make them appear almost as if created by him. They are presented with classic dignity and grandeur in the sublime style of his diction and thought, which he maintains throughout his major works. Their appeal has been therefore, universal and varied. The people of Malabar look upon them as their own heroes, and quote them in their daily life in the setting in which they are placed by the poet. Reference has been made to the practice of daily recitation of his epics giving them a status which the works of no other poet in Malayālam have enjoyed before and after him. There is another quality of his poetry which has added to its popularity. The charge of indecency has been laid at the door of the epic poets of India, among whom sensuousness and saintliness are very often inseparable. It must be said to the credit of our poet that he has never exposed himself to such an attack. His works can be read in a mixed assembly of men and women without arousing in any of them a sense of shame. His descriptions of heroines, even the most sensuous of them, never degenerated into an analysis of their features, in which Sanskrit poets often indulge. The reader's attention is focussed upon their general beauty and not upon their various limbs. They are not types either. Everyone of them is different from the other, and has an individual charm.

His presentation of them never wounds the moral susceptibilities of readers. This unique quality has made his epics eminently fitted for daily recitation with reverence in every Malayāli home, and they have raised the tone of its character and the sense of aesthetic appreciation of the people. Their human touch endears itself to all, however different their temperaments and interests.

*Ežuttaccan and his predecessors.*

In diction and narrative ease Kaṇṇaśśan comes almost near him, but he lacks Ežuttaccan's vigour, vision, and variety. Both have handled identical themes, and certain ideas are common to them; but even in such cases, when they pass through our poet's artistic mould they are thoroughly transformed and breathe a new vitality and force. An instance may be cited. When Rāma breaks the bow at Janaka's palace, Kaṇṇaśśan compares the sound to thunder: the kings are frightened at it like snakes, and Sīta is pleased like a peacock. The expressions like 'Iṭi' and 'Veṭṭuka<sup>1</sup> which Ežuttaccan uses to convey the same idea impress the reader with the actual sound of the breaking of the bow. He also brings in a hen-peacock to suit the analogy to the heroine. The characters of both have life. While Kannaśśan's figures move only through the agency of himself, Ežuttaccan's do so of their own accord. In imagery Ceruśśēri is more fertile, but he betrays symptoms of conscious effort. Ežuttaccan's pictures proclaim the dictum that "art lies in concealing art." Ceruśśēri relies on adornment for effect, while Ežuttaccan achieves it through the natural power of words and their associations. One displays his art through a situation, and the other presents a situation through his art. Both Kaṇṇaśśan and Ceruśśēri lack Ežuttaccan's versatility and finish.<sup>2</sup> Nor have they shown any skill in the art of dialogue, in which effective speeches heighten the dramatic effect of situations in Ežuttaccan's poems. Kṛṣṇa's speech at the Court of the Kauravas arguing the case of the Pāṇḍavas and Sakuntala's defence of her rights are remarkable examples of this aspect of Ežuttaccan's poetry.

1. Iṭi Vettitum vannam . . . . . Mal. A.R.

“ഇടിവെട്ടീടുംവണ്ണം വിൽമുറിഞ്ഞൊച്ചകേട്ടു  
നടുങ്ങി രാജാക്കന്മാരാരാഗങ്ങളെപ്പോലെ.  
ഒരമലമി മയിൽപ്പേടപോലെ സന്തോഷം പൂണ്ടാറും.”

2. In the light of these remarks there is no need to comment on the view expressed by Dr. Burnell that Ežuttaccan was a mere translator,

*Ezuttaccan's Philosophy and Religion.*

Except for his preference to the doctrine of Bhakti, Ezuttaccan does not seem inclined to preach exclusively the concepts of any school of Hindu philosophic thought. As an enlightened Hindu who has learned the fundamentals of every school and has known at first hand the currents and cross-currents of the different religious divisions that are known by the misleading name Hinduism, "which is neither a single tree nor a forest of trees,"<sup>3</sup> he expounds each as occasion offers. In his A.R. the Advaita philosophy, with its conceptions of Jivātma and Paramātma and Māya, is explained at length as found in the original, with his own personal touches here and there. In the Mahābhārata Destiny and Karma are emphasised. Behind all these runs the undercurrent of Bhakti, emanating from his Vaiṣṇavic faith and emphasising devotion to a supreme Deity, who according to his conviction is Kṛṣṇa. He is a true Bhakta, possessing all the qualifications enumerated in Bhaktamāla. "Trust is the scented oil and hearing of the story of the Lord is the cosmetics. Dwelling on him in the heart is the clear water in which she (Bhakti) batheth and which removeth from every limb the foulness of spiritual pride".<sup>4</sup> The doctrine is preached to Śabari,<sup>5</sup> in the A.R. and elaborated in Mahābhāratam,<sup>6</sup> when Kṛṣṇa's disc performs a miracle. The reflections in which he indulges on the latter occasion seem to sum up his religion and philosophy.

"The son of Indra fulfilled his vow,<sup>7</sup>  
And Mādhava withdrew the disc;  
and the Sun shone bright.

If Īswara, who is truth incarnate is pleased, even the  
lowest of men will realise their ambition.

There is no use having money or influence;

For divine pleasure one needs have only Bhakti.

A Bhakta, though powerless, poor and low-born,

Will be deemed most virtuous among men,

And he will be blessed with enjoyment and salvation,<sup>8</sup>

3. Hinduism by Dr. L. D. Barnett, p. 1.

4. Gleanings from *Bhaktamāla* by Sir G. A. Grierson, C.I.E., J.R.A.S., July, 1909, p. 610.

5. (Orig.) A.R., p. 85, 86.

6. Mal. M. Bh., p. 232.

7. To kill Jayadratha, who played foul against Abhimanyu and killed the boy hero.

8. The poet here uses the words 'Bhukti' and 'Mukti'.

If you have your mind pure,  
Worship the beautiful-eyed God" (Kṛṣṇa).

The stress he lays on mental purity in this is typical of his general attitude towards life. As a true Hindu, religion was never for him an abstract idea or a philosophical concept, nor is his philosophy like that of the Vedāntin divorced from life. It is an experience in which the tenets of the various creeds converge.<sup>9</sup> It is rooted in the "consciousness of the ultimate reality and not in any theory."<sup>10</sup> That consciousness gives the supreme happiness, and can be attained only through Bhakti of which purity of mind and body is an essential part.

The general tone of his works and also tradition emphatically affirm that he was never content with preaching purity. He practised it to perfection. He gives us an insight into the mysteries of Yōga when he describes the death of Bhīṣma,<sup>11</sup> Kṛṣṇa<sup>12</sup> and Kārtavīryarjuna.<sup>13</sup> They assume a Yōgic pose, receiving death rather than succumbing to it. These descriptions have the ring of personal experience. But Eṣuttaccan never expounds Yōga as a working principle for all, but presents it as an ideal condition within the reach of only those who are fit for it mentally and physically.

The hypothetical name 'Rāmānujan'<sup>14</sup> has led many people to believe that our poet was a follower of Rāmānuja, the founder of the Viśiṣṭadwaita school of philosophy. Nowhere in his works do we find a reference to this school or its philosophy. On the contrary, Adwaita is often mentioned in them. It is an unusual position as generally Bhaktas are Viśiṣṭadwaitins. He calls Bhārata a story of Adwaita (Adwaitō-pākhyānam).<sup>15</sup> The two schools differ on one main issue. The Adwaitist characterises salvation as "the identification of the supreme soul with the individual soul, the two being one in

9. All doctrines are fundamentally one.

Nānāsiddhāntamellāmēkaṣṭhakaḷ tanne, Santi, p. 407.

"നാനാസിദ്ധാന്തമെല്ലാംഏകനിഷ്ഠകരതന്നെ."

10. S. Radhakrishnan, *Legacy of India*, p. 261.

11. Mal. M. Bh. p. 409.

12. Mal. M. Bh. p. 426.

13. Brh. Pur. p. 119.

14. I have already referred to this topic when discussing the poet's name in Ch. II.

15. Mal. M. Bh. p. 57.

essence."<sup>16</sup> The other recognises the two as distinct entities, and aims at the union rather than the fusion of the two. Ežuttaccan has never shown any inclination to the latter view. Nor does he recognise the doctrine of Varṇāśrama Dharma, which Rāmānuja emphasises on the authority of the Gīta. He seems to have combined Adwaita with the Bhakti aspect of Viśiṣṭādwaita, perhaps under the influence of the wave of the Bhakti movement which swept over the whole of India during that century.

*As social and educational reformer.*

In the social sphere our poet has left the memory of a life devoted to service and sacrifice. Education of the masses was his ideal. He proclaims his faith in the awakening of the masses at the commencement of the A. R. by announcing that he is composing the work for the 'un-enlightened',<sup>17</sup> and he asks the enlightened to forgive his intrusion in a field which according to them, he is not entitled to enter. Through this cryptic reference flashes a light that bares open the social conditions which he tries to improve.

In ancient Kēraḷa instruction in warfare and letters was given in Kaḷaris.<sup>18</sup> The teachers in them were generally Nāyars. The system worked very well so long as that community controlled the state and its various activities. With the rise of the priestly class, favoured by the conditions outlined in Chapter II, Sanskrit culture encroached on indigenous culture and mass education suffered a set back. No teacher without a knowledge of Sanskrit was considered worthy of his calling, nor his position as a scholar was recognised. Facilities for learning that language were not within the reach of the average man, as Brāhman teachers of Sanskrit were available only to the gentry and others who had access to them socially. The political vicissitudes of the country compelled Nāyars to concentrate their attention on military training at the expense of their mental equipment, and a general intellectual barrenness threatened to overtake the people at large. It was from this cultural calamity that Ežuttaccan saved his countrymen, particularly the major portion of the Nāyars and the masses. Being a Yōgi himself, his needs were few, and he was prepared to impart knowledge to his fellow-men free. His personality attracted people from far and near; and

16. Heart of India, p. 106.

17. Bōdha hīnanmārkkariyāmvannam collitunnēn.

“ബോധഹീനന്മാർക്കറിയാവുന്ന ചൊല്ലിടുന്നെൻ.”

18. Later on they became mere gymnasiums or centres of military training.

soon his residence, which had already been made a temple of learning by his elder brother, was converted into a hermitage. His mission was, as in the literary field, to develop the pioneer work done by his brother to perfection with the force of his personality and genius. Even in these modern days, when schools have replaced the traditional institutions of public instruction, the "Ežuttaccan method"<sup>19</sup> which stands for all-round thoroughness, has not lost its reputation.

*His interest in military training.*

From our survey of the epics we have seen that Ežuttaccan was not for eliminating military training from his scheme of education. He never wanted Nāyars to lose their martial valour. By his description of fights he kept their traditional interest in warfare alive. But he always warned them to be fair in their fighting and thereby raised its moral tone. Foul play in battle aroused his indignation. When Bhīma dealt a blow on the thigh of Duryōdhana Ežuttaccan unconsciously cries "Ayyō! Kaṣṭam" (alas! what a pity!) Everything else in Bhīma he was ready to forgive, but not this treachery. He always presented fairness as an ideal for a soldier. He had the greatest admiration for the heroes who died fighting for the principles they held dear. His descriptions often presented the vanquished in a better light than the victors. He always gave them an opportunity to state their case in heroic form before they began the actual combat. At the same time, he had the vision of a prophet to realise that the impact of events was too strong for the political power of his countrymen to survive, as it was decaying. So he concentrated on their cultural uplift.

The political integrity of Malabar received its first shock from the Portuguese when it was beginning to crumble. It steadily declined in the period that followed, till the final blow came from Mysore in the 18th century. Travancore, as it was far from the tribulations that affected the Northern part of Kēraḷa, managed to preserve it longer owing to the genius of the great ruler Mārt-tāṇḍavarma and his equally great Minister Rāja Kēsavadāsa. Its meteoric outburst in the North of Kēraḷa through its worthy champion Kōṭṭayatt Rāja in the beginning of the 19th century showed its inherent vitality. By this time however, it was shattered to pieces, and the chance of its rehabilitation vanished for ever. In the confusion that was inevitable in such a crisis its culture also

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19. Ežuttaccan Maṭṭu. This applies also to the way in which his epics are recited.

would have perished, had it not been for the genius of Ežuttaccan, who by his noble and enduring efforts in the literary, social and cultural spheres, restored it on a firmer basis. It has endured ever since.

His is no doubt, a remarkable achievement in every way. His function throughout had been to blend the best elements in the old and the new. In literature he combined the indigenous culture with the Sanskritic traditions, giving the former a healthier tone and a more enduring virility. He was considerably helped in this by the achievements of Kaṇṇaśśan and Ceruśśēri in the literary field. To their delicate notes he added his vigorous clarion call. The status of Malayālam was no longer in doubt, but was established once for all. In the educational field he practised the principles he preached in his works, and revived a rapidly declining system, infusing fresh vigour and life into it by which it could adapt itself to the new needs and requirements. By training a vast body of young men imbued with his ideal of conduct, saintly devotion, self-sacrifice and a genuine interest in their fellow countrymen he instilled into the ancient culture of the land a refreshing vitality and force that raised his people from their gloom and placed them on a higher plane of existence. "The poet was really a prophet in the land".

This cultural regeneration had its effects. When the political horizon was cleared of clouds and things settled down, the results of Ežuttaccan's solid work came to the surface. The community that had the privilege of his guidance came to the forefront in the new order; and enjoyed the prestige that had been theirs centuries ago. Behind this remarkable phenomenon stands in all its glory the inspiring personality of Tuṅjattežuttaccan the poet, the philosopher and the saint.

Distinction in one field is rare enough. Distinction in diverse fields is rarer still. Is it a wonder therefore, that the people of Malabar deified their saviour ?

## APPENDIX I.

### *Līlātilakam.*

#### *General.*

This is a treatise on Malayāḷam grammar and rhetoric written in Sanskrit, with examples etc. in Malayāḷam. The author is unknown. It is assigned to the 15th Cent. A.D. (Introduction to the work by A. K. Piṣārōṭi p. xxviii). It consists of eight chapters called "Silpam". The first three deal with the language and the rest discuss literary principles.

*Chapter I.* Deals with 'Maṇipravāḷam'. The introductory portion discusses the nature of the Malayāḷam language in general and its affinities with the Dravidian family of languages. The author refers to Tamil as *Cōla Bhāṣa*, and expresses the astounding view that the Kanarese people and the Telugus are not Dravidians, as their alphabet is different. Then 'Maṇipravāḷam' is defined as Bhāṣa samskr̥tayōgam, and four varieties of it are considered.

(a) Uttamam (good). In this Malayāḷam should be given prominence and Sanskrit a subordinate place. The dominant sentiment (Rasa) should be emphasised. This is again sub-divided into three.

(b) Madhyamam (middle), in which equal importance is attached to the languages combined and the meaning and the sentiment.

(c) Madhyamakalpam (indifferent) (4 varieties), in which either both the languages are disproportionately mixed or the sentiment is defective.

(d) Adhamam (bad), in which both the languages, i.e., the mixture, and the sentiment are equally deficient.

*Chapter II.* Analyses the composition of the words in the Malayāḷam language and classifies them as (1) deśi (indigenous) (2) samskr̥tabhava words borrowed from Sanskrit but having Malayāḷam formation, i.e. Tadbhava compounds. (3) Samskr̥tarūpa, Sanskrit words used in their original form, i.e. Tatsama compounds.

*Chapter III.* Deals with the rules of Sandhi.

*Chapter IV.* Is concerned with *Kāvya dōṣas*. Defects in literary compositions.

*Chapter V.* Considers the *Guṇas* or beauties of literary compositions.

*Chapter VI.* Discusses the *sabdāṅkāra* or ornaments of style based on sound.

*Chapter VII.* Discusses *Arthāṅkāra* or ornaments of style based on meaning.

*Chapter VIII.* Discusses the nine sentiments (*Rasas*) in literature.

## APPENDIX II.

### *Tamiḻakam.*

It is not quite clear from ancient Tamil classics what this term exactly signifies, whether it was applied to areas where Tamil was spoken or whether it meant territories under Tamil sway. An examination of different accounts points to the latter. There is however, some definiteness about its extent.\*

According to Kanakasabhai<sup>1</sup> Tamiḻakam consisted of thirteen Nāḍus, including Vēn and Pūḻinadus that lay at the northern and southern extremities of what is known as Kēraḷa or Malabar. In the opinion of one commentator<sup>2</sup> of Tolkkāppiyam they must be replaced by Oḷinaḍu and Ponkar nāḍu, which were definitely outside Malabar.

M. S. Pūrṇalingam Piḷḷai gives us a different picture. He says, "Tamil land was bifurcated into Śen (classical) Tamil and Koḍum (vulgar) Tamil land,"<sup>3</sup> and Malayāḷam is referred to as a language spoken in one of the nāḍus under the secondary category. Kollam (Quilon, a seaport on the Malabar coast) is mentioned as one of the adjacent districts bordering on Tamiḻakam. In 'Maṇimēkhalai' "Muciri" (Cranganore) appears as a country different from that with which its author was familiar.<sup>4</sup> Ptolemy speaks of "Limurike" (Tamiḻakam) and Kerobothros (Kēraḷaputra) separately.

These different accounts indicate that the Tamil country and Malayāḷam country were considered different in those days and that the extent of the Cēra empire was not the same throughout. In the light of these facts the conclusion that "Malayāḷam had not grown into a separate dialect at this period and that only one language, Tamil, was spoken from the Eastern to the Western Sea" does not appear to be well founded. The matter however, needs further investigation.

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\* See V. R. R. Dikshitar, *Silappadikāram*, p. 346.

1. *The Tamils Eighteen Hundred Years Ago*, p. 12 (1904).

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Tamil India*, p. 5, 6.

4. *The Tamils Eighteen Hundred Years Ago*, p. 16.

### APPENDIX III.

The distinctive features of the Malayālam language which are not noticeable in Tamil.

- |   |       |                              |                                  |
|---|-------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Excessive nasalisation (Anunāsikātiprasaram). This refers to the tendency in Malayālam to nasalise by assimilation a hard consonant that follows a nasal.  | e.g., | Tamil.<br>Tintān.            | Malayalam<br>Tinnān.             |
| 2. Palatal Hiatus (Tālavvādēśam). This is a change of dental to palatal nasal when preceded by a high vowel, attended by dropping of the latter.  | e.g., | Tamil.<br>Alaintān.          | Malayālam.<br>Alaññān.           |
| 3. Contraction of vowels. (Swarasamvaraṇam). This relates to the principle of contracting vowels and includes change of final <i>ai</i> to <i>a</i> . In Tamil this signifies only a peculiarity in pronunciation. In Malayālam it serves a definite grammatical function and affects the meaning in the case of verbs. | e.g., | Tamil.<br>Kaṇṭu.<br>Malai.   | Malayālam.<br>Kaṇṭu<br>Mala.     |
| 4. Omission of personal endings (Puruṣabhēdanirāsam).   | e.g., | Tamil.<br>Avan<br>Vantān.    | Malayālam.<br>Avan<br>Vannu.     |
| 5. Retention of archaic forms (Khilōpasamgraham).<br>(Note: Tamil has dropped the old infinitive suffix which Malayālam has retained).  | e.g., | Tamil.<br>Kuḷikka<br>vandēn. | Malayālam.<br>Kuḷikkān<br>vannu. |
| 6. Mutilation or syncopation of sounds (Angabhangam).   | e.g., | Tamil.<br>Atinutaiya.        | Malayālam<br>Atinṭe.             |

(*Kēraḷa Pāninīyam* by A. R. Raja Raja Varma, p. 22, 49).

## APPENDIX IV.

### *Matriarchy in Malabar.*

Matriarchy in Malabar is called Marumakkattāyam. It is a compound word composed of two parts—Marumakan—nephew, and Tāyam—system of inheritance. According to this system a man's nephew is his legal heir and not his son. It is prevalent universally among Nāyars and a section of Nambūdiris, Īzuvas and Moplachs of N. Malabar. As in the Matriarchal society, the uncle or Kārṇavan is the important member of the joint family, and is responsible for the maintenance and welfare of the other members. This does not mean that the father has no responsibility whatever for children. There are certain ceremonies like rice-giving, marriage, and death-purification which the father should attend and during which he should distribute presents and share general expenses. Though women generally live in their own families, Taravāḍs, as they are called, it is open to them to live with their husbands by mutual agreement. In such cases, the husbands usually build a separate house for them.

#### *Marriage.*

Marriages are arranged by mutual consent, but can be dissolved at the will of either party, if the union does not turn out to be happy. There is no restriction about re-marriage and there is no widowhood. It is left to individual discretion or taste. But generally those who have children prefer not to marry again unless forced by pecuniary considerations. There is also the custom in some places by which the relations of the deceased husband look after the needs of the wife and children if she remains unmarried.

The freedom of divorce enjoyed by the women of the Marumakkattāyam family is very often misunderstood by many writers as a sign of looseness in the marriage tie. But they fail to realise the fact that this freedom is very rarely abused and is conducive to harmonious domestic relationship. As F. Fawcett has rightly observed "Nowhere else is the marriage tie more jealously guarded and its breaches more savagely avenged."<sup>1</sup>

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1. *Nāyars of Malabar*, Madras Government Bulletin, Vol. III, No. 3, p. 228.

It is generally believed that the Nāyars of Malabar practise polyandry. Although there have been isolated instances it has never been a universal custom among them as it is among the artisan classes of Malabar and a section of Īzuvas. Both the latter by the way, are patriarchal. This aspect has been clearly brought out by O. Candu Menon in his able dissenting minute to the Report of the Malabar Marriage Commission (1894).

### *Inheritance.*

It may be observed that the system does not prevent the father from making any provision for his wife and children during his lifetime, if he so desires; and in actual practice such cases are quite common. The position of the women is thus doubly advantageous, and they are economically independent. They are entitled to a share in the property of the joint family by right, and they acquire property from their husbands by convention. This convention has recently been legalised by an act of the Madras Government and by legislative enactments in Cochin and Travancore. The present position is that wife and children are entitled to a share of the self-acquired property of the father along with his mother.

## APPENDIX V

### *Tiśai-Col.*

Words borrowed from the twelve countries bordering the Śen-Tamil Land are classified by Tamil grammarians as *Tiśai-col*<sup>1</sup> and among the examples given we find the following words:—

#### Tamil

- தாய்மை *Taḷḷai*, (mother)—Kuṭṭanāḍu (Malayāḷam).  
அச்சன் *Accan*, (father)—Kuḍanāḍu (Malayāḷam).  
செறு *Ceru*, (field)—Aruvānāḍu.

(*Tolkāppiyam. Col ; 400*).

(COMMENTARY)

The word *Ceru* seems to bear a family resemblance with *Ceru man* by which appellation the community that works in the field is called in Malayāḷam. Under the same category can be included words like *Cerumi* (a young girl,—Kuḍanāḍu dialect) and *Putai* (cover—Malai nāḍu dialect).<sup>2</sup> The former appears as the feminine gender of ‘*Ceruman*’ in Malayāḷam. The interjection ‘*ita*’ (ഇതാ in Malayāḷam) which has puzzled Tamil grammarians is a familiar expression in Malayāḷam meaning ‘Here it is.’ When these words are classed as loan words surely the language to which they belong, cannot be considered to have been derived from Tamil.

1. R. P. Sethu Pillai, *Tamil, Literary and Colloquial*, p. 35.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

## APPENDIX VI

### *Kiḷippāṭṭu or Parrot-song :—Its Origin*

*Kiḷippāṭṭu* or parrot-song is a very popular metre in Malayālam. Eḷuttaccan is believed to be its inventor but the view hardly bears scrutiny. No poet worth the name will think of using a new metre for his poem with which no one is familiar. He will in all probability choose one that is already popular and ensure public attention to his work. The fact that a well-known and much-respected poet like Eḷuttaccan chose a particular metre for his literary composition is enough to give it a status carrying with it all the sanctity of an invention. It is however, more reasonable to assume that the metre was given a new name *Kiḷippāṭṭu*, after he associated it with *kiḷi* (parrot) whom he asks in all his poems to narrate the story. The fact that Eḷuttaccan was responsible for the new name in course of time threw the original inventor into oblivion,—probably there was no inventor, it might have developed as a folk-tune—merging the two functions in himself. Such confusion often happens in literature.

Various reasons are advanced to justify the method of Eḷuttaccan in which parrot is an inevitable factor. One such is that he is thereby forestalling the blessings of Saraswatī to whom he makes an indirect appeal through the parrot which adorns the lap of the Goddess of Learning. Another story is that the famous Śuka Mahārṣi the mythical boy-saint and the author of the *Bhāgavatam*, is propitiated thereby as his name also begins with Śuka (parrot). There is still another based on the sweet voice of the parrot which is supposed to impart that sweetness to the literary work which it is called upon to commence. The arguments are hardly convincing although it must be admitted that the last has some poetic flavour about it. The first two prompt the question why Eḷuttaccan preferred a round-about way to a straight course. Neither the Goddess of Learning nor for that matter, the boy-saint will have any reason to complain if their blessings are directly applied for. In fact Hindu Gods do not seem to get tired of their devotees addressing them straight like *Narāyaṇa* and *Kṛṣṇa* and neither of them is the worse for it. The parrot, is no doubt, a pet of the Hindu home in which it is a visible medium between the known and the unknown. Its familiarity with the members of the household with whom it can hold communion in their own tongue

coupled with its capacity to fly in regions beyond human reach, invest it with a mystic charm and render it an appropriate agency to transmit mythological stories whose uncertainty constitutes their peculiar attraction. This aspect might have appealed to the yogic mind of Ežuttaccan.

*Kilippāṭṭu* has four main varieties. In this connection I should like to sound a note of warning. When dealing with Dravidian prosody scholars are apt to draw parallels between the classical and the Dravidian systems of scanning or notation, without realising the fundamental difference between both. In classical languages syllables which compose metrical units have been assigned artificial sound values which are not capable of expansion. In Sanskrit, *vṛttams* are determined according to the number of *gaṇas* or combination of syllables contained in the four lines of a stanza. For instance, *Indravajra* must have three *gaṇas*: Ta, Ta, Ja and two *gurus* (long-syllables). They are fixed. In Dravidian metres which are very often set to music and can be recited in different tunes, syllables are made long or short according to the requirements of the tune.<sup>1</sup> For example:—a popular metre like ‘*pāṭṭu*’ or *gātha* can be recited in four or five different tunes. The ordinary tune is indicated thus:—

— — —	— — —	— — —	— — —
ഇന്ദിര	തന്നടെ	പുഞ്ചിരി	യായാരു
Indirā	tannūṭē	punciri	yayōru

— — —	— — —	— — —	—
ചന്ദ്രിക	മെയ്യിൽപ	രക്കയാ	ലേ
Candrika	meyyil pa	rakkaya	le

When it is sung for *Kaikōṭṭikkali* it varies as follows:—

— — —	<sup>3</sup> — —	— — —	<sup>3</sup> — —
ഇന്ദിര	തന്നടെ	പുഞ്ചിരി	യായാരു
Indirā	tannūṭē	punciri	yayōru

— <sup>3</sup> —	<sup>3</sup> — <sup>3</sup>	— — —	<sup>3</sup>
ചന്ദ്രിക	മെയ്യിൽപ	രക്കയാ	ലേ
Candrika	meyyil pa	rakkaya	le

1. A. R. Raja Raja Varma, *Vṛttamanjari*, p. 42.

Six syllables which are pronounced as short in the former have been lengthened for the sake of the tune in the latter. This principle applies to Malayālam metres like *Thullālpāṭṭu*, *Vanci-pāṭṭu*, etc., which can be sung in different tunes and their notation differs when the tune changes. This peculiarity explains why the Dravidian metres have not lent themselves to systematisation as in the very nature of the case it is not possible to frame rules for general application. A few attempts made in recent times seem to ignore this fundamental fact and give the reader a wrong impression about the general principles of prosody in these languages.

The main varieties of *Kilippāṭṭu* are briefly noticed below. The most popular one is *Kēka*. The following example will give an idea of its structure.

ശ്രീരാമ	നാമം	പാടി	വന്ന	വൈ	കിളി	പ്പണ്ണെ
Śrī Rāma	nāmam	pāṭi	vanna	pain	kili	ppenṇē
=24 syllables						(mātras)

This line consists of six feet and 24 syllables with a caesura—pause after the 3rd foot. The second line also is of the same magnitude. *E.g.*

ശ്രീരാമ	ചരി	തം	നീ	ചൊല്ലിട	മടി	യാതെ
Śrī Rāma	cari	tam	nī	collīṭu	maṭi	yāṭē
=24 syllables						(mātras)

Another variety is *Kākāḷi*<sup>2</sup> in which one line consists of three feet having five syllables each with a pause after the 2nd foot.

ശാരിക	പൈതലേ	ചാരുശീ	ലേവരി
Śārika	ppaitalē	cārusīle	vari
=20 syllables (mātras)			

കാരോമ	ലേകഥാ	ശേഷവു	ചൊല്ലുനീ
Kārōma	lē kathā	śēṣavum	collunī
=20 syllables (mātras)			

*Kaḷakānci* is the third variety. In this couplet two lines are not of the same length and syllabic value. If the two or three feet

2. This is capable of considerable expansion; the next metre and *gāṭha* are supposed to have been evolved out of it.

of *Kākaḷi* are each converted into five laghus (short syllables) we get the first line of *Kaḷakānci*. The second line is the same as that of *Kākaḷi*.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ സുരവരജ	~ ~ ~ ~ ~ സുതനമഥ	~ ~ ~ ~ ~ നിന്നുവി	~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ഷണ്ണനായ് ണ
Suravaraja	Sutanumatha	ninnuvi	ṣaṅṅanāy-
= 20 syllables (mātras)			

~ ~ ~ സുഷിച്ഛ	~ ~ ~ മായമ	~ ~ ~ റിഞ്ഞിട്ടി	~ ~ ~ രാവാനം
Sūṣhiccu	māyama	riññiṭṭi	rāvanum
= 20 syllables (mātras)			

Other varieties of *Kākaḷi* are minor ones and do not fundamentally alter the structure of the metre.

The last is *Annanāṭa* which consists of six feet in a line each composed of two syllables, one long (generally the second) and the other short. *Annanāṭa* literally means the gait of the swan and has all the majesty associated with that bird.

~ ~ ഹര	~ ~ ഹര	~ ~ ഹര	~ ~ ശിവ	~ ~ ശിവ	~ ~ ശിവ
Hara	Hara	Hara	Siva	Siva	Siva
= 18 mātras					

~ ~ പുര	~ ~ ഹര	~ ~ മുര	~ ~ ഹര	~ ~ നത	~ ~ പദ
Pura	hara	mura	hara	nata	pada
= 18 mātras					

One common feature of all these varieties of *Kilippāṭṭu* is that they are all couplets with the second letter of both the lines rhyming each other. In the case of *Kaḷakānci*, the initial letter must serve this purpose. In *Kēka*, both the initial and the second letters sometimes rhyme. The second letter-rhyme is called *Dvitiyākṣara-prāsa* in modern Malayālam, which, by the way, is a common feature of all Dravidian couplets, such as *Dvipadi*<sup>1</sup> or *Dvipada* in Telugu

1. A *Dvipada* verse is made up of two lines as the name itself indicates. Two kinds of *ganās* are used in Telugu metres; the *mātra ganās* and the *akṣara ganās*; the former being mostly utilised for the indigenous metres, while the latter *Vṛttas* borrowed from Sanskrit. *Dvipada* comes under the indigenous metres along with *Sīṣa*, *Gita*, *Akkara*, etc. Each of the two

and Kanarese and *Īraṭi edukei*<sup>2</sup> in Tamil. In other languages they are of a uniform type like the Blank verse in English. Only in Malayālam the varieties noticed above have been developed.

Ever since Ežuttaccan raised *Kiḷippāṭṭu* to the literary level its votaries have been numerous. For nearly a century after him almost all the notable works in Malayālam were written in that metre. Even Kuncan Nambiar (150 years after) who was fond of *Tuḷḷal* thought it worthwhile to write his *Nalacaritam* in *Kiḷippāṭṭu* metre, although for his own satisfaction he used the same theme for a *tullal* composition also. Till the rise of the neo-classical school towards the end of the last century, *Kiḷippāṭṭu* was supreme in Malayālam literature. The neo-classicism showed a preference to Sanskrit metres. It had but a brief existence after which it yielded to the impact of national consciousness which induced a return to the indigenous metres a generation ago.

In the new dispensation *Pāṭṭu (Gātha)* being easier of the two is having a better deal than *Kiḷippāṭṭu* which however is having due recognition.

lines is made up of three Indra *ganas* and one *Sūrya gana*, the *yati* or caesura-pause falling on the first syllable of the third *gana* of each line. These two lines of a *Dvipada* are bound up with what is called *Prāsa*, i.e. the second letters of these two lines must be the same or correspond with each other. This couplet with such a *yati* and *prāsa* is called a *Dvipada*. In a work any number of such couplets may be composed one after the other, sometimes also one running into the other. Such a work is called a *Dvipada Kāvya* as distinguished from a *Prabandha* or *Campu Kāvya* which is generally made up of *Vrttas* with passages of prose coming between now and then. If *Prāsa* is dispensed with it is called *Manjari Dvipada*.

(Note by K. Ramakrishnayya, M.A.)

2. *Īraṭi*.—“Metre of *Kural-venbas* furnishes the best examples of *Īraṭi* or couplets which are sometimes composed of seven *cīr* each consisting of two or three syllables of which the last *cīr* must be *āsaiccīr*. Each word is one foot. This is the general rule; but words closely connected as in apposition, may be taken together as one foot. Thus the first couplet consists of seven feet, each a single word except எழுத்தெல்லாம் (*Ežuttellām*) which is two words apposition. In the *Kural* these *cīr* are of three kinds. *Āsaiccīr* (அசைச்சீர்) *Iyarcīr* (இயற்சீர்), *Vencīr* வெண்சீர் They consist of one syllable, two syllables and three syllables respectively.”

“Rhyme in Tamil is in the beginning of the line and is strictly the *identity of the second letter*, the first being of the same metrical quantity.”

(Dr. Pope's *Introduction to Kural*, pp. xxvi-vii.)

## APPENDIX VII

The following is the story about *Kālī* current in Malabar.<sup>1</sup>

“*Kālī*, according to Kēraḷa legends, is the daughter of Śiva and not his consort as believed in other parts of India. Once the *Devasura* war ended in the total extinction of the Asura race. Only two women of the line *Dānavati* and *Ārūmati* managed to hide themselves and survive the great calamity. They invoked Brahma by penance, and requested him to bless them with progeny. As a result of the boon *Dānavati* gave birth to *Dānava* and *Ārūmati* brought forth *Ārūka*. The latter secured numerous boons from Brahma so that he could not be killed by God or man or during night or day. As he did not ask for immunity from women, *Pitāmaha* cursed him to meet his end at the hands of a woman, at sandhya (evening) which is neither day or night. He grew to be a formidable menace to the *Devas* whose women were forced to be servant-maids to his wife *Manōdari*. Once he waylaid *Nārada*, who divided his time between the presiding deities of the holy abodes by singing their praise, and asked him to sing his glory instead of that of *Śiva* and *Viṣṇu*. *Nārada*, after leaving *Ārūka*'s presence, made towards *Kailāsa*, and reported to his patron deity the insult offered to both of them by *Ārūka*. Since the *Asura* king had not solicited immunity from women, the Gods *Viṣṇu*, *Śiva*, *Brahma*, *Subrahmaṇya*, *Dharmarāja* and *Indra*, each created out of their immanence<sup>2</sup> a goddess and conferred immense powers on ‘the Mothers’ to challenge *Ārūka* and kill him. On their way they were joined by *Vētaḷam*, the huge ghost whose thirst for blood was never quenched. With a big army they raided *Ārūka*'s palace, with the result that the *Asura* king became furious and drove them away. *Śiva*'s rage at this unexpected turn of events knew no bounds; and there rushed forth, immediately from his eye of fire, a prodigious figure of a woman who was called after her colour *Kālī*—or ‘the Dark Goddess.’ The situation was explained to her, and she with an enormous force advanced towards *Ārūka*'s territory. A terrible fight ensued, and even *Kālī*

1. Dr. C. A. Menon, *Dr. S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar's Commemoration Volume* 1936, pp. 237-38.

2. They are called *Vaiṣṇavi*, *Māhēsvari*, *Brāhmi*, *Kaumāri*, *Vārāhi* and *Indrāṇi* after their progenitors.

was found to give way when *Umā*, knowing that *Dārūka*'s prowess depended upon two *mantras* given him by Brahma, disguised herself as a Brahman woman approached *Manōdari* who was the only person who knew the *mantras*, and requested her to teach the sacred utterance to her so that they might chant them together for the victory of her husband. Believing her, *Manōdari* disclosed the *mantras* to *Umā* who immediately disappeared. Brahma had told *Dārūka* that, if the *mantras* were revealed to any individual except his wife, their efficacy would immediately vanish. *Dārūka* knew by intuition what had happened, returned to his palace, and warned his wife of the consequences of her indiscretion. He afterwards made a desperate stand which culminated in his death at the hands of *Kālī*. She then returned to *Kailas*, the fury of destruction still raging in her. Śiva immediately asked *Gaṇapati* and *Nandi* to be at the gate as children, so that, at their sight, the motherly instinct of *Kālī* would prevail over her ferocious aspect. After expressing satisfaction at her conduct in the war against *Dārūka*, Śiva asked her to go to *Malanād* (Malabar), where she would receive eternal homage from the people as his daughter.<sup>3</sup>

3. This summary is based upon the version contained in *Bhadrolpati Kilippattu*, which is a notable literary work. The same legend with a few variations in details, is recorded in a number of sacred songs which are generally sung at the various rituals, particularly at *Kalampattu* in which the figure of *Kālī* is drawn on the floor by means of powders of different colours, and *pūja* is offered. It is interesting to note that this legend seems to be the contribution of *Kēraḷa* towards the 'Mother Cult.'



*Arguments about the authorship.*

The work as it is, falls into two parts; the first consisting of chapters one to ten (exclusive), and the second comprising the last three *skandhas*. A comparison of the two establishes the superiority of the first in point of literary excellence. In the second part, mistakes and incorrect renderings are far in excess of those found in the first. In the tenth chapter there is an invocation to the God *Vighnēśwara* as if it is the beginning of a new work. It lends itself to the suggestion that from the 10th chapter onwards it is by a different author. If it is a continuation by the same author, there is no need for an invocation of that kind. Besides, we find two or three subsequent attempts to render the remaining chapters (10 to 12) of the *Purāṇa* by different authors. The earliest seems to be by *Puṛayannūr Nambūdirippāḍ* (18th century A.D.). If there had been already a complete Malayālam *Bhāgavatam* at this time by the author of the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇam* and *Mahābhāratam*, it is doubtful whether *Puṛayannūr Nambūdirippāḍ* would have attempted a translation of the 10th chapter. It is clear from his silence regarding the previous chapters that there was already a *Bhāgavatam* with nine chapters. A later attempt is by *Punnaśśēri Nambi* who rendered the *Ekādaśam* into Malayālam.<sup>3</sup> In the Introductory portion of Nambi's work, he mentions that a "*Rāmādāsan*" had already composed the *Bhāgavatam* in Malayālam up to the tenth chapter. His reference to "*Rāmādāsa*" is somewhat puzzling. In "*Brahmāṇḍapurāṇam*" and "*Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇam*"—*Ezuttaccan* refers to himself as "*Rāma-Śiṣya*" and "*Rāma's brother*". The substitution of "*Dāsa*" for "*Śiṣya*" raises the question of identity in a new form. Two alternative interpretations are possible. Either identical persons are indicated by the two expressions or they refer to two distinct individuals. According to the common usage '*Dāsa*' need not exclude '*Śiṣya*'. It is also probable that it is used as a caste appellation as *Śūdras* are very often referred to as "*Dāsas*".<sup>4</sup> In that case it might refer to *Rāma* himself, *Ezuttaccan's* elder brother. But *Dāsa* sometimes means a devotee who can also be a disciple. If it is taken to imply disciple it need not necessarily refer to *Ezuttaccan* as it is clear on the testimony

3. The latest attempt is by *Ezuvattu Nanu Kutty Menon* (1825 A.D.) who may be regarded as the modern representative of the *Ezuttaccan's* school of poetry. It does not afford any clue in the matter under discussion.

4. As '*Śarma*' for Brahmins, '*Varma*' for Kṣatriyas, and '*Gupta*' for Vaisyas.

of himself that Rāman had more than one disciple. On the other hand "*Rāmadāsan*" might be a name for one individual in which case the word need not be split into two parts as *Rāma* and *Dāsa*. No evidence is so far available in support of this assumption which has to rest on the interpretation making *Dāsa*, a caste appellation. The possibility of Rāman being the author of *Bhāgavatam* is not however, in keeping with his reputation as a scholar to which his younger brother has given eloquent testimony especially in view of the mistakes the work abounds in. The suggestion may also look strange in the light of the anecdote that *Bhāgavatam* was blessed by Eḷuttaccan in his old age, when one of his disciples composed it and handed it over for his revision and correction. As against these considerations, we have to take cognisance of the fact that *Bhāgavatam* is looked upon by a large number of people in Malabar with almost equal reverence which Eḷuttaccan's other works have commanded,—a circumstance which makes us hesitate to deny its connection with Eḷuttaccan and assign it to Sūryanarāyaṇan who equals Eḷuttaccan in sanctity. Probably it was not revised by Eḷuttaccan owing to his other preoccupations or demise and the disciple gave publicity of the fact of its having been blessed by the Master for the popularity of his work. In such circumstances confusion of identity in respect of the work and its author is possible with the passage of time.

One thing however is certain. The first and second parts are not by the same author, and considering the general level of composition in both, there is hardly any justification in assigning either the whole work or part of it to the great poet-saint who composed *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇam* and *Mahābhāratam*. The estimate of Eḷuttaccan formed by scholars like Dr. Burnell with *Bhāgavatam* as its basis is therefore, not only unjustifiable but also misleading.



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Rasikaraṅjini	.. Samasrṣṭikaḷ (Periodical)
Vaṭṭōḷi Kaṇḍar Mēnon	.. A Ballad.

## GENERAL INDEX

(Numbers refer to pages).

### A

- Abhimanyu, son of Arjuna, 133, 150, 151, 162.
- Acyuta Piṣārōti, a famous astrologer and teacher of Mēppattūr Bhaṭṭatiri, 62.
- Ācāryas, great teachers, 55.
- Ācāryavāgabhēdya, literally the word of Ācārya is unbreakable, 61.
- Adhyātma (esoteric) knowledge of the Supreme Soul, 106.
- Adhyātma Rāmāyana (Mal), 23, 35, 36, 37, 45, 50, 55, 60, 61; 65; Chap. III. 73-126, 127, 135, 138, 153, 162.
- Adhyātma Rāmāyana (original), 102.
- Adhamam, 167.
- Ādiccanallūr (in Tinnevely District, South India), 81.
- Ādi, beginning, 132.
- Ādi Kavi, the first poet (Vālmikī), 95, 117.
- Ādiparva (the first canto in Bhāratam), 80.
- Ādityahrdaya hymn (in praise of Sun God), 125.
- Āditya Varman, 17, 18.
- Adwaita, the doctrine of non-duality, 163, 164.
- Adwaitōpākhyānam, 163.
- Afghanistan, 7.
- Agastya, the great South Indian Saint and grammarian, 82, 83, 125.
- Agattiyam, the grammar composed by Agastya, 83.
- Agatty (on the Malabar coast), 82.
- Agrahāram (Brahmin village), 57.
- Ahalya, the wife of Gautama (Saint), 116.
- Aindram (First Sanskrit work on grammar) 82.
- Air (God Vāyu), 74.
- Aitarēya Brāhmaṇa, 66.
- Aivarnāṭakam, a drama on the story of Pāṇḍavas, 8.
- Ajñātavāsa, Life in disguise, 144.
- Akatti (a kind of tree) 82.
- Akṣa (Ravana's son, younger to Indrajit), 121.
- Ālōcanāmṛta, Anything that grows sweeter in the course of thinking, 110.
- Alwārs, Vaiṣṇava Saints of S. India, 71.
- Āmakkāvu, A place near Chowghat (S. Malabar), 47.
- Ambādi, the place where Kṛṣṇa was brought up, literally, village of the cowherds, 39.
- Ampalappuza, a place in N. Travancore, 46, 50, 103, 105.
- Ānanda Rāmāyana, 99.
- Āndhras, 80.
- Angada (Bāli's son), 94.
- Angiras (one of the seven sages), 74.
- Anu Gīta, A secondary Gīta, 134.
- Ankam fight, A dual—fight popular in Ancient Malabar, 29, 150.
- Antaka (God of death), 110.
- Apauruṣeya (divine), not done by Puruṣa (man), 128.
- Arabia, 67.
- Arabian Sea, 67.
- Arabic, 3, 67.
- Arab merchants, 67, 70.
- Aranyam (a parva or canto in Bhāratam), 128, 134.
- Archaeological Department, 88.
- Arjuna, 27, 43, 45, 86, 133, 135, 140; 142; 143; 144; 145; 146; 148; 150-1.
- Ārōmal Cēvakar, the great Īṣava hero of N. Malabar well-known in ballads, 29.
- Ārṅukkōyattāngal, 67.
- Arthālakāra, Figure of speech based on meaning, 168.
- Arthasāstra, An ancient treatise on Economics and Administration, 16, 93.
- Ārya-alphabet, 58.
- Ārya Bhaṭṭiyam, A treatise on Astrology, 63.
- Ārya-languages, 2.
- Āryan, 2-3, 78, 81 to 88, 98, 118.
- Āryan invasion of South India, 77, 78, 79, 82 to 88.
- Āryan—Pre and non-Aryan culture, 79.
- Āsāucam, 25.
- Āsōka (edicts of), 80, 82.
- Aṣṭāngahrdayam, 46, 157.
- Āstikam (a parva or canto in Bhāratam), 128, 130, 133.
- Asura, 102, 115, 119.
- Aśwatthāma, 137, 140.
- Āṭri (one of the seven sages), 74.

Attam, 87.  
 Augustus Caesar, 82.  
 Ayōdhya, 76, 93, 97, 124, 125.  
 Ayurārōgya Saukhyam, 61.  
 Ayyanār (Śastā), 85.  
 Ayyappan, 11.  
 Ayyi Pilliāsān, 14.  
 Āzuvāncēri, 157, 158.  
 Āzuvāncēri Tamprakkaḷ, 50, 154.

**B**

Babylonia, 81.  
 Bādarāyana (from Badaram), 82.  
 Bālakāṇḍa (a chapter in Rāmāyaṇa), 77.  
 Bāli—the Vanara king of Kiṣkindha, 84, 91 to 97, 115, 116.  
 Ballads, 10, 11, 29, 42.  
 Ballads of North Malabar, 10, 11.  
 Baluchistan, 80.  
 Bantas, 7.  
 Benares, 59, 103.  
 Bengal, 78.  
 Bepur (near Calicut in Malabar), 81.  
 Bhadrakāli, 11.  
 Bhagadatta, 45, 150.  
 Bhagavadgīta, 31, 33, 34, 75, 128; 139; 142.  
 Bhagavān Vēda Vyāsa, 128.  
 Bhāgavatam, 27, 37, 58, 59, 157.  
 Bhāgavata purāna, 38, 60.  
 Bhāgīratha's-Gangāvatarana, 77.  
 Bhakta, 145.  
 Bhaktamāla, 162.  
 Bhakti, Doctrine and cult of Bhakti, 50, 64, 65, 71, 72, 86, 124, 125, 141, 147, 162.  
 Bharata, 89, 90, 93, 112, 124, 125, 129; 130; 131.  
 Bhārata (Battle), 102.  
 Bhārataṃ, 37, 53, 79, 80, 110, 116; 126; 127, 128, 129, 133, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 142, 147, 151, 152.  
 Bhārata Campu, 27.  
 Bhārata Gātha, 42.  
 Bhārata Literature, 152.  
 Bhāratamāla, 33.  
 Bhāsa Samskr̥tayōgam, 167.  
 Bhāskara Ravi Varma Perumāl, 5, 16.  
 Bhattatiri (Mēppattūr Nārāyaṇa), 103, 104.  
 Bhavabhūti, 99.  
 Bhaviṣyātpurāna, 103.  
 Bhīma, 102, 146, 151, 165.  
 Bhīṣma, 133, 137, 139, 140, 146, 150, 151; 163.  
 Bhīṣmam, a canto in the Mahā-bhārata, 142, 150.  
 Bhōja Campu  
 Bombay, 78.  
 Brahma, 38, 75, 76.

Brahman, 154.  
 Brahma's darbar, 122.  
 Brāhman, 87, 103, 104, 120.  
 Brahmin, 35, 46, 50, 52, 53, 57, 58; 59.  
 Brāhmāṇḍa Purāṇa, 50, 56, 102, 103, 153.  
 Brahmarsi, 38.  
 Brahmāstra, 84, 140.  
 Brhadāśwa, 134.  
 British Malabar, 30.  
 Buddhist, 77, 87.

**C**

Caitanya, The great religious reformer of Bengal, 71.  
 Cakkāla Nāyar, 49, 104.  
 Cākkīyār, (Cākkayān in Tamil), 12, 17, 19, 20, 23, 27; 28; 29.  
 Cākkyārkūttu, the performance by Cākkyār, 19, 20, 28, 29.  
 Calicut, 21, 46, 67.  
 Campu-Bhāṣā Naiṣadha, 13, 24, 25, 27, 33, 105, 112.  
 Campu Rāmāyana, 13, 23, 27, 28.  
 Campu-manipravāla, 12, 13.  
 Camravattam, a place in S. Malabar, near Ponani, 50.  
 Candu, A Nayar hero, 29.  
 Candu Menon, the famous novelist in Malayālam, 172.  
 Candunni, A Cāver hero, 29.  
 Cannanore, 70.  
 Catholic Church, 69.  
 Cāvērs, people sworn to death, 68.  
 Cāvēr Panikkars, 29.  
 Cāvēr Songs, 11, 69.  
 Cēras, 67, 169.  
 Cēra Kingdom, 8.  
 Cēramān Perumāl, 65.  
 Cerukāla, 50.  
 Ceruṣṣēri, 13, 30, 38, 39, 40, 41; 42; 43; 44, 71, 161, 166.  
 Ceylon, 102.  
 Chandragupta, 82.  
 Chengannūr, 24.  
 Chitaldrug Dist. (Mysore State), 81.  
 Chittūr Tekkē Grāmam, 59.  
 Chowghat, 50.  
 Christians, 59, 67.  
 Cidambaram, 87.  
 Cītrakūta, 82.  
 Cīttūr, 8; 47, 50, 57, 59.  
 Cochin Maharaja, 57.  
 Cochin (State), 24, 25, 47, 50, 51, 57, 59, 62, 68, 172.  
 Coimbatore, 81.  
 Cōlas, 67, 80.  
 Cōla Bhāṣa, 167.  
 Comorin (Cape), 5, 78.  
 Cōziath House, 47.  
 Cranganore, 5, 8.

## D

- Daitya, 102.  
 Dakṣa, 37, 133.  
 Damayanti, 25, 26, 123.  
 Damayanti Swayamvaram, 27.  
 Dānava, 102.  
 Dance (art of), 87.  
 Daṇḍakāranya, 91.  
 Dante, 160.  
 Dārūka, 15; 156.  
 Dārūkavadhā, 11, 14, 15.  
 Daśaratha, 38, 89, 91, 101, 108, 118, 119, 120; Daśa = ten, 118.  
 Daśaratha Jātaka, 77.  
 December, 48.  
 Dekhan, 79.  
 Deśamam, 38.  
 Deśi, 167.  
 Deśika, 87.  
 Destiny, 139, 140, 141, 162.  
 Deśyabhēdas, 87.  
 Dēvas, 101; Dēvas (army of), 85.  
 Dēvaguru, 51.  
 Dēvanārāyanan, 158.  
 Dēvasura, 139.  
 Dēvayāni, 148, 149.  
 Dēvimāhātmnyam, 45, 155.  
 Dēvi Stōtram, 156.  
 Devotional Songs, 11.  
 Dhanu, 40, 48.  
 Dharma, 98, 110, 115, 122.  
 Dharmaputra 148.  
 Dhrtarāṣṭrā, 137, 140, 146.  
 Dikshitar, V.R.R., 169.  
 Drupadi, 80, 135, 136, 140, 142, 146, 151.  
 Dravida, 2.  
 Dravidian, 2, 4, 6, 7, 10, 15, 49, 75, 80, 81, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 105, 167, 104.  
 Dravidian Script, 104-105.  
 Drōna, 140, 146.  
 Dundubhi, 96.  
 Duryōdhana, 134, 140, 146, 165.  
 Duśśāsana, 136, 146, 150.  
 Dusserah (Season), 48.  
 Dvitiyākṣaraprāsam, 35.  
 Dwaipāyana, 128.  
 Dvāraka, 43.

## E

- Ēkādaśam, 60.  
 Elaine Sanceau, 70.  
 Embrans, 7.  
 English, 3.  
 Epic in Malayalam, 132.  
 Epigraphia Indica, 80.  
 Ernād, 22.  
 Etuka, A kind of rhyme 4.  
 Europe, 96.  
 European Scholars, 57, 79.

## F

- Feringhi (a Hindustani corrupted word for 'Franks'), 22.  
 Fire (Fire God, Agni), 74.  
 Folk-lore, 15, 43.  
 Folk Songs, 10, 11, 42.  
 French, 3.

## G

- Ganapati (Pillaiyār), 85.  
 Gandharva, 45, 104.  
 Gāndhāri, 140, 150.  
 Gangāvatarana of Bhagiratha, 77.  
 Gātha, 41, 42.  
 Gāyatri, 24.  
 German, 3.  
 Germany, 96.  
 Ghatōtkaca (Son of Bhimasēna and Hidimbi), 102.  
 Gīta, 32, 33, 128, 134, 138, 139, 142, 143, 144, 145, 164.  
 Gīta Gōvindam, 39.  
 Gods, 49, 90, 119, 120.  
 Gōdāvāri, 102.  
 Goddess of Learning, 75.  
 Gōkarnam, 104, 154.  
 Gōpālan, 51.  
 Gōpis, 44.  
 Gōvinda Mēnōn—Kattayāttu, 61.  
 Greek, 81, 82.  
 Grhya ritual, 78.  
 Guha, 125.  
 Gunas, 168.  
 Gunabandha (the blending of Gunas), 109.  
 Guru, 54, 55.  
 Guru-Matham (at Chittūr), 47, 48-51; 55, 59, 61, 63.  
 Gurumatham pamphlet No. 1. 60, 63.  
 Gurunāthan, 59.  
 Guruparampara, the Geneology of Gurus, 51, 55.  
 Guruvāyūr, 47, 64, 71, 137.

## H

- Hamilton, 68.  
 Hanumān, 65, 76, 84, 94, 95, 121, 122, 124, 125, 135.  
 Harappa, 80, 81.  
 Harikathā Kālākṣēpam, 19.  
 Harināmakirttanam, 62, 63, 156, 158.  
 Hariścandra, 141.  
 Hastinapura, 137.  
 Heart of India, 71, 164.  
 Hidimba, 102.  
 Hidimbi, 102.  
 Hindi, 106  
 Hindu, 58, 59, 67, 73, 75; 123; Civilization 88; Culture, 88; Gods, 76; Gods and Heroes, 78; Pantheon, 76; Religion, 85; Society, 103.

Hinduism, 162.  
 Hindustani, 22.  
 Himalayas in Indian Art, 87.  
 History of Kēraḷa, 25, 66.  
 History of Malayāḷam Language and Literature, 24.  
 History of Malayāḷam Literature, 41, 61, 153.  
 Homer, 160.  
 Hymn, 126.

## I

Ikṣwāku, 93.  
 Iṅkōvāṭikal, 8.  
 Illom, 24.  
 India, 40, 73, 80, 81, 82, 102, 118; 160;  
 India South, 9, 10, 44, 79, 81, 82, 83, 85, 86, 87, 88, 118.  
 Indian Art and Letters, 5.  
 Indian Culture, 79.  
 Indies Adventure, 70.  
 Indira, 40.  
 Indra, 74, 75, 100, 101, 121, 133, 162.  
 Indrajālam, 83.  
 Indrajit, 84, 85, 101, 121.  
 Indus Civilization, 81, 87.  
 Inheritance, 172.  
 Introduction to Hindu Scripture, 143.  
 Iravikkuttippilāippōrppāṭṭu, 8.  
 Īswara, 162.  
 Italy, 96.  
 Iyengar, C. R. S. (Translation of Vālmiki Rāmāyana), 102, 109, 110.  
 Iyengar, P. T. S. (History of the Tamils), 80, 83.  
 Iyengar, T. S. Sesha (Dravidian India), 81.  
 Īzava, 29, 171, 172.

## J

Jacobi (Prof.), History of Sanskrit Literature, 75, 77.  
 Janaka, 23, 37, 38, 77, 108, 161.  
 Janamējaya, 129, 131, 133, 137.  
 Jain, 87.  
 Jaina version of Rāmāyana, 102, 115.  
 Jamadagni, 154.  
 Janasthāna, 97, 98.  
 Jaya, 129.  
 Jayadratha, 162.  
 Jaṭāyu, 91.  
 Java, 83.  
 Jaya Dēva, 39, 71.  
 Jayam (Victory), 134.  
 Jāmbavān, 84.  
 Jānakī Parinayam, 99.  
 Jews, 58.  
 Jewish grants, 5, 7, 8, 16.  
 Jivātma, 138, 162.  
 Jñānappāna, 64.  
 J. R. A. S., 147, 162.

## K

Kabandha, 102, 123.  
 Kaḍattanād, 42.  
 Kaikeyi, 77, 89, 90, 110, 112, 114.  
 Kaikoṭṭikkalippāṭṭus, 42.  
 Kailāsa, 76, 100.  
 Kaivalyanavanitam, 63.  
 Kālāḍi, 45.  
 Kāladipam, 25.  
 Kālari, 40, 164.  
 Kalarivādukkal Bhagavati, 40.  
 Kali Chronogram, 61; 63.  
 Kāli (Goddess), 14, 15, 81, 156.  
 Kālidāsa, 1, 17.  
 Kālinātakam, 15.  
 Kāli temples, 16, 19.  
 Kāma Dēva, 113.  
 Kambar, 106, 113, 124.  
 Kamba Rāmāyanam, 16.  
 Kambaramāyana Caritam, 17, 43, 124.  
 Kamsa, 8.  
 Kamsa Vadham, 8.  
 Kanara, South, 7, 8, 38, 104.  
 Kanaka Sabhai, V., 6, 169.  
 Kanarese, 3, 6, 7, 8, 10, 83, 87, 102, 167.  
 Kanarese Literature (History of), by Rice, 102.  
 Kāṇḍa, 102, 103, 125.  
 Kannada, 119.  
 Kannaśśan, 13; 30, 35, 36, 37, 40, 41, 42, 71, 105, 106, 155, 161, 166.  
 Kaṇṇaśśa Bhāratam, 31.  
 Kannaśśa Gīta, 31; 32, 33, 34.  
 Kaṇṇaśśan family, 35.  
 Kannaśśa Panikkars, 31.  
 Kannaśśan Parambu, 30.  
 Kannaśśan Pāṭṭus, 30, 31, 35, 41.  
 Kannaśśa Rāmāyana, 13, 30, 33, 35, 38.  
 Kannaśśan School, 35.  
 Karma, 162.  
 Karunākaran, 51, 55.  
 Karuṇēśan, 31; 33, 34.  
 Karūr, 88.  
 Karṇa, 137, 146, 145, 150.  
 Kārttaviryārjuna, 154, 163.  
 Kathakali, 26; 33, 87, 119, 150.  
 Kasargode, 8.  
 Kaṭattanād Udayavarma Rāja, 152.  
 Kauravas, 45, 133, 136, 137, 140, 144, 161, 171.  
 Kausalya, 108, 111, 123.  
 Kautilya, 16.  
 Kavalappāra Nāyar, 56.  
 Kavanōdayam, 27.  
 Kāvērīppaṭṭiṇam, 88.  
 Kāvyaḍarsa, 168.  
 Kēraḷa, 2, 4, 7, 10, 11, 12, 15; 19; 22, 25, 29, 33, 34, 35, 40, 44, 46, 48, 56, 57, 65, 66, 67, 71, 80, 104, 154-164, 169.  
 Kēraḷa Bhāṣā Sāhitya Caritram, 6, 7, 10, 14, 22, 35, 41, 61, 153, 155.

Kēraḷa Caritram, 67.  
 Kēraḷa Kaumudi, (a treatise on Malayalam Grammar and Rhetoric), 2, 61.  
 Kēraḷa Nāṭakam, 46, 157.  
 Kēraḷapāṇinīyam, 6, 170.  
 Kēraḷa Paṣama, 70.  
 Kēraḷa Society, 70.  
 Kēraḷōpatti, 84, 157.  
 Kerobothros (Kēraḷaputra), 169.  
 Kēsavadāsa, 165.  
 Khaṇḍakāvyaṃs, 17.  
 Khāṇḍava, 133, 134, 139.  
 Khara, 85, 97, 116.  
 Khilōpasamgraham, 7.  
 Khōja, 67.  
 Kīcaka, 149, 151.  
 Kilippāṭṭu, 50.  
 Kīrāta, 86.  
 Kiṣkindha, 93, 96, 124, 135.  
 Koḍum (Vulgar), 169.  
 Koḍuñhallūr, 81.  
 Kōkila Sandēsam, 17.  
 Kōlattunāḍ, 38, 42.  
 Kōlattiri Rājah, 38, 39, 40, 42.  
 Kollam, 18; 169.  
 Kollam era, 825 A.D., 12; 65.  
 Kōlezuttu, 58.  
 Kōman, 29.  
 Korkai, 88.  
 Kōṭṭārakkara Tampurān, 33.  
 Kōṭṭayam, 38.  
 Kōṭṭayyat Rāja, 165.  
 Kōvunṇi Neḍungāḍi, 2, 61.  
 Kōya, 67.  
 Kōzikkōṭu, 22.  
 Kubēra, Lord Chancellor of Heaven, 100.  
 Kucēla, 43.  
 Kulāśekhharālwār, 71.  
 Kumāran (=Bachelor as applied to Subrahmanian), 85.  
 Kumbhakōnam edition of Rāmāyana, 124.  
 Kuncan Nambiār, 18, 19, 20, 21; 29; 52 53.  
 Kuññukuṭṭan Tampurān, 128, 152.  
 Kunnala-kōn, 67.  
 Kuruksētra, 45.  
 Kūṭastha, 34.  
 Kūṭiyatṭam, 12, 13.  
 Kūṭṭams, 2.  
 Kūttu, the performance by Cākkyār, 87.  
 Kūttukavi, 17.  
 Kṛatu, 74.  
 Kṛpāmkara Poduvāl, 62.  
 Kṛṣṇa, 38, 39, 41, 44, 45, 100, 131, 133, 135, 136, 137, 139, 140, 141, 143, 144, 146, 148, 150, 151, 156, 158, 159, 161, 162, 163.  
 Kṛṣṇanāśān (Nedumpurayil), 62.  
 Kṛṣṇanunṇi Nāyar, K., 67.

Kṛṣṇappāṭṭu, 13, 38, 39, 40, 41, 43, 44.  
 Kṛṣṇa Piṣārōti—(Attūr), 4, 10, 34  
 Kṣēmēndra, 152.  
 Kṣatriyas, 154.

## I.

Laksmāna, 54, 90, 97, 98, 113, 114, 125, 135.  
 Lakṣmīdāsaṅ Nambūdiri, author of Śukasandēsam, 17.  
 Lalitā, a fairy, 97.  
 Languages (South Indian) 79.  
 Lanka, 80, 96, 99, 100, 102, 121, 123, 125.  
 Lassen, 78, 130.  
 Latin, 3.  
 Legacy of India, 163.  
 Līlātilakam, 4, 6, 7, 32, 35, 168.  
 Limurike, 169.  
 Linga worship, Lingayat Cult, 86.  
 Literature, Tamil, 82, 83.  
 „ Kanarese, 102.  
 „ Sanskrit, 75, 77, 78, 79.  
 Lōkanārkaḅu, A famous Kāli temple near Vadagara (N. Malabar), 156.

## M

Mādhavan, 31, 32, 143, 162.  
 Madhyamam, 167.  
 Madhyamakalpam, 167.  
 Madras University, 11, 16.  
 Madura, 18.  
 Māffil, 67.  
 Mahābhārata, 19, 28, 45, 50, 53, 55, 56, 58, 60, 79, 80, 110, 116, 126, 127, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 135, 137, 138; 141; 146; 153, 154, 155, 156, 162, 163.  
 Mahābhārata, an Ethnological study, 138.  
 Mahāpillai, 67.  
 Mahēswara, 102.  
 Malabar, 1, 6, 8, 9, 11, 14; 17; 22; 23; 25; 28, 38, 40, 43, 44, 45, 47; 50; 52; 53; 57; 58; 59; 61; 65; 67, 70, 71, 72, 81, 84, 86; 105.  
 Malabar North, 29, 43.  
 Malabar polity, 2, 16, 39, 66.  
 Malabar, South, 8, 29, 46, 48, 49, 50; 66; 71.  
 Malayāla Bhāgavata, 60.  
 Malayālam, 15, 16, 18, 22, 24, 25, 28, 29, 30; 31; 32; 33; 36; 40; 41; 42; 44; 45; 47; 48; 49; 50; 53; 58, 60, 61; 80, 83, 87, 103, 104, 107, 119, 124, 127; 128; 167; 169.  
 Malayalam, origin of language and literature, 1 to 14.



- Paramēswaran Pillai, Nantyar Viṭṭil, 34.  
 Paramēswaran Pōrri, 24.  
 Parangi (Caps), 22.  
 Parāsara, 149.  
 Paraśurāma, 82, 84, 91, 109, 154.  
 Pargiter, F. E., 101, 102, 132.  
 Paribhāsa, 129, 133.  
 Pārthasārathi, 145.  
 Pārvasi, 74, 76.  
 Pātālam, the under world, 43.  
 Pātāla Rāvaṇan, 118.  
 Pāṭhakam, Narration of puranic stories somewhat akin to Kūttu, 20.  
 Patriarchy, 9.  
 Paṭṭattānam Tadbhava of Bhaṭṭa-dāna, conferring of the title of Bhaṭṭa (the great scholar), 22.  
 Pāttus, 4, 32, 35, 41, 43, 87.  
 Paulōmam, 128, 130, 133.  
 Pāvakkūttu, A kind of shadow play by means of wooden figures, 16, 19.  
 Pavitramparam Saukhyam, 61.  
 Payyannūr Paṭṭōla, 8, 43.  
 Pāzūr Kaṇiyān, 56.  
 Percy Macqueen, I.C.S., 10, 29.  
 Persian, 3, 67.  
 Perumā, literally the overlord, some times it applies to God also, 8, 9, 11, 12, 15, 65, 66, 67.  
 Peṇumāngōd, 47.  
 Perumpatappu, the ancient name of the Cochin Royal family, (Cochin), 68.  
 Peruvanam, 24.  
 Phallus (Cult), 86.  
 Phoenicians, 81.  
 Pillai Raman, A., Kamba Ramayana Caritam, 113.  
 Pillaiyar (Ganapathi), 85.  
 Pisāroti, A. K., 167.  
 Podiyil (near Travancore) the mountain peak where Agastya is supposed to be residing, 83.  
 Ponkar Nādu, 169.  
 Pōlanād, 22, 67, 68.  
 Ponnāni (Taluq), 46, 66, 67.  
 Portuguese, 22, 39, 70, 165.  
 Prabandhams, 17, 18, 20, 29.  
 Prahasta, 122.  
 Ptolemy, 169.  
 Pūja, 71, 86.  
 Pūjāri, 69.  
 Pulaha, 74.  
 Pulastya, 74, 101.  
 Pulimukhattu Pōrri 62.  
 Puṇḍas, 80.  
 Punam, a famous Campu writer in Mālayālam, 13, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25; 26, 27, 39.  
 Pundras, 80.  
 Pūntānam, a Nambūdīri poet who was also a great devotee, 64, 159.  
 Purānas, 76, 100, 101, 103, 132.  
 Pūrnalingam Pillai, M. S.,—(Tamil India), 82, 86, 169.  
 Purūravas, 101.  
 Pustu, a dialect of Afghanistan, 7.  
 Puttūr, 29.  
 Pūzināḍus, 169.
- Q**
- Quilon, 8, 70.
- R**
- Rādha, 39.  
 Rādhākriṣhnan, S. 163.  
 Rāghavan (Rāma), 114.  
 Raghu, P. 93.  
 Raghu Rai, 113.  
 Rāja of Ampalappuza, 103, 104, 158.  
 Rāja Rāja Varma, A. R. Professor, 6, 170.  
 Rājasūya, 80, 136, 137, 139, 141.  
 Rākṣasa, 79, 85, 96, 97, 98, 99, 101; 102; 116.  
 Rākṣasi, 114.  
 Rāma, 22, 24, 37, 54, 65, 73—126, 135, 143, 154, 156, 157, 161.  
 Rāmācaritam, 5, 7, 8, 14.  
 Rāmācāryān, 155.  
 Ramachandra Dikshitar, V. R. 71.  
 Rāmāgita, 76.  
 Rāmākathappāttu, 5, 8, 14.  
 Rāma legend, 75.  
 Rāma lore, 77.  
 Rāman, 31, 52.  
 Rāmānanda, 103.  
 Rāmānāśān, 62.  
 Rāma Panikkar, 34, 35, 37, 38.  
 Rāman Pillai, A. 17, 113.  
 Rāmānujan, 54, 143, 163, 164.  
 Rāmānujācārya, 71.  
 Rāma-Rāvaṇa War, 14.  
 Rāmāśiṣyanālidam, 154.  
 Rāmāyana, 5, 14, 19, 27, 28, 31, 37; 47; 54; 58; 73—126, 134, 135.  
 Rāmāyāṇa North-western Recension of, 124.  
 Rāmāyan of Vālmiki (Griffith's translation), 24.  
 Rāmāyāṇa Campu, 106, 112.  
 Rambha, 100, 101.  
 Rāmēswaram, 103.  
 Rapson (Prof.), Author of Ancient India, 79.  
 Rasas (Nine), 147, 167, 168.  
 Rāsa Kriḍa, 39, 44.  
 Rasika Ranjini, 11.  
 Rāvaṇa, 76, 80, 84, 85, 90, 91, 96, 97; 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 113, 114, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 125, 155.  
 Reddy, C. R., 88.

Report of the Malabar, Marriage Commission (1894), 172.  
 Ṛg Vēda, 78.  
 Rice (History of Kanarese Literature), 102.  
 Riddle of Rāmāyaṇa by C. V. Vaidya, 97, 99, 100, 101.  
 R. N. Panikkar, 155.  
 Romain Rolland, 65, 71.  
 Roman Slang, 3.  
 Ṛṣis, 49.  
 Rūpārṇa, 26.  
 Rudra, 75.  
 Ruma (Sugriva's wife), 93, 94,  
 Russia, 96.

## S

Śabari, 162.  
 Śabdāṅkāra, 168.  
 Śabhā parva (a canto in Mahā Bhārata), 80.  
 Śagara, 154.  
 Śahadēva, 80.  
 Śahajāti, 116.  
 Śāhityacaritam, 10.  
 Śahasranāma, 128.  
 Śaivism, 83, 85, 87, 154.  
 Śaivaitees, 76.  
 Śaktan Rāja, 20.  
 Śaktan (Zamorin), 22.  
 Śāktēya pūja, 46, 47.  
 Śakti, 46, 85, 120.  
 Śakti Cult, 85, 155, 156.  
 Śakuni, 137, 146.  
 Śakuntala, 133, 148, 161.  
 Śalya, 145.  
 Sama Śṛtikal, 11.  
 Sambhavam (a parva or canto in Mahā Bhārata), 128, 133, 134, 135, 136.  
 Sambhōga Śṛṅgāra, 18.  
 Sampāti, 91.  
 Samskr̥tabhava, 167.  
 Samskr̥tarūpa, 167.  
 Sandēśa Kāvyaṃs, 13, 17, 18.  
 Sandhyas, 24.  
 Sangam theory, 82.  
 Sangam works, 82.  
 Śankara (Lord), 103, 143.  
 Śankarācārya, 45, 49, 61, 65.  
 Śankaran, 31, 32, 54.  
 Śankara Panikkar, 33.  
 Sanskrit, 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 25, 27; 28; 31; 32, 36, 38, 41, 42, 49, 58, 61, 82, 83, 87, 108, 128.  
 Santāna Gōpālam, 27.  
 Śānti, 69.  
 Śāntikkāran, Temple priest, 69.  
 Sannyāsin, 59, 103, 148.  
 Sapatnis—(The Sanskrit term by which wives of the same person are called), 108.

Saraswathi (the Goddess of learning), 45, 46.  
 Śarmīṣṭha, 102, 148, 149.  
 Śāsta (Ayyanar), 85.  
 Śāstras, 108.  
 Śātānanda, 77.  
 Śaunaka, 129, 132, 133.  
 Śauptikam, 133.  
 Śāvitrī, 123, 141, 142,  
 Śāvitrīmāhātmyam, 37.  
 Śen (classical) 169.  
 Śenāni (Commander-in-chief), 85.  
 Śeran Cenkuṭṭuvan, 8.  
 Serpent-sacrifice, 129, 133.  
 Śeṣagiri Śāstriar (Prof.), 85.  
 Śeṣa Kriya, 117.  
 Seven Sages, (Marīci, Atri, Angiras, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, Vasīṣṭha), 74.  
 Shahbazgarhi (version of Asoka's edict), 80.  
 Shakespeare, 1.  
 Śilappatikāram, 8, 109.  
 Śilpam, 167.  
 Sita (the furrow) 78.  
 Sita, 23, 24, 65, 76, 80, 90, 97, 98, 99; 100, 111, 113, 114, 119, 121, 123, 124, 155, 161.  
 Sitā Swayamvaram, 23, 27.  
 Śiva, 17, 19, 23, 37, 38, 74, 75, 76; 77; 80; 85; 86; 97; 106, 108, 110.  
 Śivaliṅgam, 76.  
 Śivarāja Pillai, K. N. (Agastya in Tamil Land), 83.  
 Do. K. N. Chronology of Early Tamils, 81, 82.  
 Ślēṣa, 19, 43.  
 Solomon, 81.  
 Southern civilization, 81.  
 South India, 79, 81, 82, 83, 85, 86; 87; 88; 118.  
 South Indian Languages, 16, 79.  
 South Indian Palaeography, 59, 72.  
 Śrāddha ceremony, 48.  
 Śrīmahābhāratam Ch. IV, 127—152.  
 Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, 103.  
 Śrī Vira rāyan, 22.  
 Śṛṅgāra sentiment, 44.  
 Strī (a parvam in the Mahābhārata), 133.  
 Studies in Tamil Literature, 71.  
 Subāhu, 91.  
 Subhadra, 43, 136, 148, 150.  
 Subhadrāharana Campu, 27.  
 Subrahmania, 85.  
 Śūdra, 49.  
 Sugrīva, 80, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 115; 116; 135.  
 Śukasandēśam, 17.  
 Sumbha, 155.  
 Sundaram=beautiful, 125.  
 Sundara Kāṇḍam (a canto in Rāmāyana), 125.  
 Sunday Chronicle (Madras), 87  
 Sun God, 74, 75, 125.

Sun worship, 125.  
 Supra (near Bombay), 81.  
 Sūryanārāyaṇan, 46, 51, 59, 60, 63.  
 Sūrya Vamśa, Solar line of kings, 76.  
 Sūrpanakha, 97, 98, 99, 113, 114.  
 Sūta, 129, 132, 133, 137.  
 Sūtras, 16.  
 Suyōdhana, 137, 139, 150.  
 Swargārōhaṇam, 44, 133.  
 Syrians, 58.

## T

Taccōli, The name of a house and a clan associated with the hero Odēnan, 29.  
 Taccōli Pāttus, 69.  
 Tadbhava, corrupt form, 167.  
 Tamil, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12; 14; 19; 32; 36; 79; 80; 81; 82; 83; 86; 106; 118; 167; 169; Koḍun, 5, 6, 8; Sen, 5, 6, 7, 8; Pāṇḍi, 6 Karnāṭaka, 6; Malanāt, 6.  
 Tamilakam or Tamizakam, the region under Tamil sway, 6, 106.  
 Tamils 1800 years ago, The, 169.  
 Tamil India, 82, 169.  
 Tamil Literature, 82-83.  
 Tanjore, 17, 21.  
 Tantra Sangraham, A Treatise on rituals, 63, 64, 158.  
 Tāntric Art, 48.  
 Tāntric Cult, 48, 63.  
 Tāntric Worship, 46.  
 Tāntrikan, One who is well versed in Tantra, 63, 158.  
 Tāra, 93, 94, 95, 115, 116, 135.  
 Tarakan Caste, 59.  
 Taravāḍu (House), 86, 171.  
 Taravāttamma, 86.  
 Tātaka, 85, 91, 98, 113.  
 Tat sama, Original form ><Tadbhava, 167.  
 Telugu, 3, 6, 10, 46, 50, 83, 103, 105, 167.  
 Tenkailāsanāthōdayam, A Campu composition, 19, 27, 62.  
 Terra *Tamilica*, 82.  
 Tilak, Bala Gangadhara, 143.  
 Tilōttama, A Celestial Nymph, 101.  
 Timur, 71.  
 Tinnevely, 18.  
 Tirunāvāya, An historic place in South Malabar where Māmānkam was held once, 11, 68.  
 Tirunāvāy temple, 66.  
 Tirūr (Railway Station), 46, 49.  
 Tiruvaḷayanād, the temple dedicated to the family deity of the Zamorins, 24.  
 Tiruvalla, 30.  
 Tiruvanci-kuḷam, once the capital of Cēras near Cranganore, 88.  
 Tiruvātira, A Malayāli festival held for 3 days in the month of Dhanu, 40.

E.—26.

Tiyyas, 9.  
 Tōlan, The famous satirist of Malabar, 4, 13.  
 Tolkāppiam, An ancient Tamil Grammar, 6.  
 Tolkāppiamuni, 6; 82, 83, 169.  
 Tōrrem Pāttukal, Devotional Songs, 11, 14.  
 Travancore, 7, 8, 10, 14, 16, 45, 50, 51, 67, 83, 165, 172.  
 Travancore Rajas, 14.  
 Trichūr (Cochin State), 19; 62.  
 Trippūnittura temple (Cochin State), 27.  
 Trivandrum, 18; 51.  
 Trkkantiyūr, 46, 47, 49, 64.  
 Trübner, 57.  
 Tulsidās, The famous Hindi poet, 106, 113.  
 Tulu, 7.  
 Tuñjan Parambu, 30.  
 Tuñjattācāryan, 63.  
 Tuñjattēzuttaccan, 72, 153, 155, 166.  
 Tuñjattu, 36, 49, 53, 56, 58.  
 Tuñjattu Śrī Guru, 55.  
 Tullal, 53.

## U

Ubhayakaviśwaran, Poet in two languages, 31.  
 Udanka, 133.  
 Udayavarman, 40.  
 Uddanḍa Śāstri, 17, 21, 22, 33.  
 Udyōgam, 141.  
 Ugrasravas, The Narrator of Puranic Stories, 129, 130.  
 Uma, 102.  
 Unnāyi Vāriar, 26.  
 Unnunīli Sandēsam, 13, 17, 18.  
 Unyāra, 29.  
 Upākhyānams, 127; 128, 134.  
 Upanayanam, The thread-wearing ceremony of Brahmans, 11.  
 Upanisads, 75, 143, 144.  
 Uparicara, 130.  
 Ūrakam, 24.  
 Ūrvaśi, 100, 101.  
 Ūttamam, 167.  
 Ūttara, 151.  
 Ūttarāmāyanam, 30; 33, 90, 155, 156.  
 Utram day, 48.

## V

Vāgbhaṭa, The Author of Astāngahrdayam, 157.  
 Vaidya, C. V. 96, 97, 99, 130, 143.  
 Vairāgya, 144.  
 Vairājya, 66.  
 Vaiśampāyana, 129, 130, 131, 133, 134, 137.  
 Vaiśnavācārya, 54.  
 Vaisnavic faith, 41, 162.

- Vaiṣṇavic Movement, 71.  
 Vaiṣṇavic philosophy, 60.  
 Vaiṣṇavism, 39, 74, 87, 103, 109, 157.  
 Vaiṣṇava Temples, 71.  
 Valayādhīswari, 24, 25.  
 Valmīkam, 75.  
 Vālmīki, 1, 23, 24, 28, 37, 38, 73, 74, 75, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 84, 85, 89, 91, 93; 94, 99, 100, 102, 103, 104, 105; 106; 109; 110, 113, 115, 117, 118, 119, 121, 122. 124, 126, 130, 155, 160.  
 Valluvanād, 11, 67, 68.  
 Vānar or Vānara=Monkey, 94, 96, 124, 135.  
 Vargese Māpila, 35.  
 Varnāśrama Dharma, 164.  
 Varthema, 25.  
 Vasco de Gama, 22, 70.  
 Vasista, 38, 74, 141.  
 Vaṭakkankūr, 17.  
 Vatakkān Pāttukal, Ballads of North Malabar, 11.  
 Vatteḻuttu, 58.  
 Vattōli Kandar Mēnōn, 29.  
 Vātsyāyana, The Author of a treatise on erotics in Sanskrit, 151.  
 Vēdānta, 142.  
 Vēdas, 12; 24, 25, 46, 101, 128.  
 Vēdic Rāma, 97.  
 Vēdic times, 87.  
 Vēnādu, 5.  
 Vengāḍam, 5.  
 Venkataswami, M.N., 113.  
 Vēttakkaran, 11, 85.  
 Vettattunād, 29, 51, 62, 67, 68.  
 Vibhīšana, 85, 116, 117, 125.  
 Vidura, 137, 140, 144, 146.  
 Vidura Vākkyam, 53.  
 Vidūsakan, 12; 13.  
 Vidyādharas, 102.  
 Vidyādhīpar, 34.  
 Vidyārambham Day, The day of initiation in letters, 48.  
 Vilwa leaf, 76.  
 Vilwamangalattu Swāmīyār, 56.  
 Vimāna (Puṣpaka Vimāna), 124.  
 Vindhya Mountains, 78, 79, 83.  
 Virādha, 102, 123.  
 Vira Kērala Varma, 18.  
 Vira Rāghava Cakravartti, 16.  
 Viraswarga, 117.  
 Virāta, 144, 151.  
 Viśiṣṭādvaita, 38, 163, 164.  
 Visnu, 17, 19, 27, 38, 40, 59, 72, 74. 75, 76, 90, 123, 154, 156.  
 Visnu Rāma (Cult of), 75.  
 Viśwāmītra, 38; 75, 77, 85, 91, 98, 101, 103, 108, 141.  
 Vivēkānanda Swāmi, 71.  
 Vrndāvana, 156.  
 Vrsaparvan, 102.  
 Vyāsa, 53, 83, 103, 104, 128, 129, 130; (Vēdavyāsa), 133, 136, 137, 140, 146, 148, 160.
- W**
- West (The Western Countries), 81.  
 West Coast, -Malabar, 84.
- Y**
- Yāga, 85.  
 Yajña, 86.  
 Yaksagāna, 87, 119.  
 Yaksi, A Nymph, 18.  
 Yatuka, A kind of rhyme, 35.  
 Yayāti, 102, 133, 148, 149.  
 Yōgi, 157.  
 Yuddhakānda, 5, 14, 116, 124, 125.  
 Yudhisthira, 134, 137, 141, 142, 146.  
 Yuvarāja, 90.
- Z**
- Zamorin (Śamūtiri in Malayalam), 11, 21, 22, 24, 25, 39, 57, 59; 61; 67; 68; 70.









