CHRISTIAN POETS AND TAMIL CULTURE

BY

T. DAYANANDAN FRANCIS

A GOLDEN JUBILEE PUBLICATION

The Dr. S. Radhakrishnan Institute for Advanced Study in Philosophy
UNIVERSITY OF MADRAS
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GENERAL EDITOR:
Dr V. A. DEVASENAPATHI

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THE Dr S. RADHAKRISHAN INSTITUTE
FOR ADVANCED STUDY IN PHILOSOPHY
UNIVERSITY OF MADARS
1978
The Department of Philosophy was started in the University of Madras in September 1927. In August 1964 it was raised to the status of a Centre for Advanced Study in Philosophy by the University Grants Commission. From 1976 it has come to be known as the Dr S. Radhakrishnan Institute for Advanced Study in Philosophy.

Since its inception in 1927, this Department has kept in view two major objectives: (1) the Study of Indian systems of thought and (2) the study of other systems of thought. Last year the Department arranged for a course of special lectures in furtherance of these objectives.

It was very kind of Dr Samuel Amirtham, Principal, Tamil Nadu Theological Seminary, Arasaradi, Madurai to suggest the name of Dr Dayanandan Francis for a course of lectures on Christianity and Tamil Culture. Dr Dayanandan Francis is a Professor on the staff of the Theological Seminary. Besides his specialisation in Theology, Dr Dayanandan Francis is also a fine scholar in Tamil. The Institute is thankful to him, not only for delivering the lectures but also for giving us a gist of these lectures in English for the benefit of those who do not know Tamil. The Institute has great pleasure in publishing these lectures in its Golden Jubilee Series. The present volume gives the gist of the lectures delivered originally in Tamil.

The Institute wishes to thank the Government of Tamil Nadu, Dr Malcolm S. Adiseshiah, the Vice-Chancellor, and the other authorities of the University of Madras for the financial aid given for these publications. The Institute is appreciative of the interest evinced by the University Grants Commission in upgrading the parent Department into a Centre for Advanced Study in Philosophy, financing it for ten years and for its subsequent and sustained interest in the progress of the Institute.
The Institute is grateful to Professor S. S. Suryanarayana Sastri for laying the foundations of the Department on sound lines and to Dr T. M. P. Mahadevan, former Director of the Institute for building the Department over a period of three and a half decades by his devoted services.

The General Editor wishes to thank his colleague Mr P. Balasubramanian for seeing these lectures through the Press and the Rathnam Press, for the prompt and neat execution of the work.

Madras
March, 20, 1978

V. A. DEVASENAPATHI
PREFACE

I am deeply grateful to Dr V. A. Devasenapathi, Director, the Dr S. Radhakrishnan Institute for Advanced Study in Philosophy, University of Madras for giving me the opportunity of delivering three lectures on 'The Impact of Tamil Culture on Christian Poets, Vedanayaga Sasthriyar and Krishna Pillai.' In the following pages I have tried to show how the Tamil Literary traditions and the religious conventions have influenced these two poets who have made their own contributions towards indigenisation and inter-religious understanding and fellowship.

I am thankful to Prof. P. Jotimuthu who helped me with the translation of the Tamil Text. My thanks are also due to Dr R. Balasubramanian, Professor of Philosophy, University of Madras who with Dr Devasenapathi has edited the text of my lectures and to Mr P. Balasubramanian who saw the matter through the Press. I am grateful to Dr. Samuel Amirtham, Principal, Tamil Nadu Theological Seminary, Madurai for the constant encouragement given to me in my undertakings.

I am fully aware of the limitations of this small book and I alone am responsible for the shortcomings.

T. DAYANANDAN FRANCIS
**CONTENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreword</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Tanjai Vedanayagam Sasthriyar in Tamil Literary Tradition</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Tanjai Vedanayagam Sasthriyar in Tamil Religious Tradition</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Krishna Pillai—&quot;The Salvation Poet&quot; (General Introduction)</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Krishna Pillai in Tamil Literary Tradition</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Krishna Pillai in Tamil Religious Tradition</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Notes and References</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are many religious works in the rich and prolific Tamil Literature. The compositions of some Christian poets are among them. *Tembāvani* composed by Viramāmunivar (Beschi) of the 18th century is regarded as fine epic poem. Of the poets who succeeded him in the last century Vedanayagam Sastriyar, H. A. Krishna Pillai and Mayuram Vedanayagam are outstanding. They are popular among the Tamils. There are many others who are well-known among the Tamil Christians. The following deserve mention:


Many of these poets are converts to Christianity. Their love and devotion to the new found faith is discernible in their writings. Some of them have gone to the extent of ridiculing other religions. Nevertheless, even they did not try to abandon anywhere the literary merits, theological ideas, phrases, thought forms and usages found in Hinduism which they had embraced before. On the other hand, they had endeavoured to make use of them to adorn their works. We can boldly assert that these poets would not have embraced Christianity if there had been a rule that one could become a Christian only if one gave up Tamil, Tamil literary conventions and the trends of religious
literature. These poets had a great desire to produce works equal to the Hindu religious literature and to adore Christ with the garlands of words and ideas found therein. One is able to find this in many of their poems. Here are a few examples:

G. S. Vedanayagam reveals often in his work *Amalaguru Sadagam* his yearning to get united with Jesus. In one stanza he gives expression to the idea that his head should rest at the feet of Jesus and that he should vanish. Desiring to carry into Christianity, the reputed Śaivite idea of feet-head relation (ਦੱਢੀ ਧਾਰਨਾ) he sings as follows:

‘In order that this wicked one might vanish in Thy image like a piece of iron burnt in fire, and that I settle under Thy feet upon the cross so that the nail on Thy feet might pierce through my head.

The poet visualizes his Immaculate teacher nailed to the cross. He wishes that his head should settle under His feet. His longing is that this settlement should be very firm and enlivening. So he beseeches that the nails piercing through the feet of Jesus should pierce through his head. He believes that when this kind of oneness is attained his image will vanish like the iron in the furnace and the image of God will enshrine it.

This poet offers to the Christian literature of the entire world through the devotion of the Tamil country the idea of the head of the devotee settling under the feet of God. At the same time he makes it clear to the Tamils, including the Christians, the fact that the devotion of Tamil Christians is not an import from the West but belongs to the Tamil soil.

Here is another poem. This is found in ‘*Tiruvāṟu! Mālai*’ of Māyurām Vedanayagam. He visualizes the scene of the Jewish soliders scourging Jesus and disfiguring him. Even the fact that
Jesus kept quiet in the midst of such cruelty done to him did not seem a wonder to him. Instead something else astonished him. He relates it as follows:

"O King of celestials, it is a wonder that when the Jews beat You and disfigured You the blows did not fall on the worlds under Your feet."

The scene of the story of the Lord Śiva carrying earth for broken pieces of cake as His hire presents itself to the vision of the poet. The picture of 'Tiruviḻaiyādal Purāṇam' which depicts the blows on Lord Śiva falling also on the king and his subjects forms the background for the poet. So he wonders that what ought to happen did not happen.

Here is yet another poem V. P. K. Sundaram pictures as follows the beautiful form of the shepherd in rhythmic poetry bringing out the theme of the 23rd Psalm.

"The Divine Shepherd wears grace as his garment,
Plays on the flute and creates beauty;
He enfolds us like mother, offers himself,
Stills our thoughts and tends us."

This poet while picturing God as a shepherd, did not fail to visualize him playing on the flute. David, the author of the 23rd Psalm, was a shepherd in his youth. He was well-versed in playing on a lute—a stringed instrument. There is no mention of his playing on the flute in the Bible. But this poet visualizes his shepherd in the form of the cowherds of our land, especially that of Krishna.
Some of these poets have endeavoured to introduce to Christianity not only words, phrases and ideas but religious conventions of Tamil Culture particularly in the mode of worship. The following is the composition of poet Satyanathan which the Tamil Christians use very much in their worship in the Church.

"I, your slave stand before your presence;
With lifted hands on my head I pray to you
You are loving as a mother and so
Do not be angry with me, your servant".

It is the wish of this poet that when devotees sing this song in the church, they should have both their hands lifted up over their head in worship-ful attitude. But Christians while worshipping in the church, sing this song sitting, holding the song book in their hands. Dr. Savarirayan Jesudasan emphasised that this song should be sung as a rule, standing and with hands over the head. He introduced this method at his Christukula Ashram.

Now we shall consider two of the Tamil Christian poets. These were men well-versed in Tamil culture. They have made their literary contributions along the religious conventions of the Tamils. We shall deal with the background of their lives, the literary excellence of their religious works, their religious ideas and their theological thinking based on Tamil culture.

Two Great Poets:

These two poets belong to the last century. One is Vedanayagam Sastriyar (1774–1864) and the other one is H. A. Krishna Pillai (1872–1900). They both belong to the Protestant church. Both of them were born in the district of Tirunelveli. Krishna Pillai was 37 years old when Sastriyar died. He might have heard about him
and read some of his works. But there is no evidence of their meeting each other.

Vedanayagam was born of Christian parents. When he was twelve years of age, the Rev. C. F. Schwartz (1726-1798) took him to Tanjavur with him and brought him as his own son. One day the boy Vedanayagam asked the clergyman Schwartz for some book to read. He gave him *The Psalms of David*—a collection of divine hymns of the Old Testament times. Vedanayagam read the book with great interest. His son N. Gnanadicka Sastriyar observes that his father became a divine poet since those poems appealed to him in his youth.

One could see the stamp of the Psalms in the songs of Sastriyar. He was attracted by the poet David, the author of many of the songs in the book of Psalms. Vedanayagam mentions David’s name in many of his songs. He addresses Jesus in his songs ‘O Son of King David’ and ‘O Inspirer of King David’. In one of his songs, he calls Jesus ‘One whose words are true, King David of the Jewish race’.

Vedanayagam had his theological studies from one Dr. John at Tarangampadi for two years from 1780. Since he studied in a Lutheran school one could see in his works many ideas of that denomination. The Fabricius translation of the Bible, which was in vogue at that time attracted him very much. (The first edition came out in 1717). The word *Theos* for God in original Greek New Testament was translated as ‘Parāparan’ in the edition. Vedanayagam has made a profound use of this phrase. One of his songs begins with the line ‘Has the earth become heaven? Has God Parāparan become man?’

He has entitled one of his early works as ‘Parāparan Mālai’. He calls God as ‘Parapara Vastu’ which is equivalent to ‘Parāparam’ used by Tāyumānavar. When Vedanayagam was a school teacher for sometime, he should have studied Tamil grammar and literature and works on Tamil Prosody. It is apparent that he paid special attention to musical composition. From that time all his works became people’s literary composition. He composed
works like Jnanakkummi, Jnanattelaṭṭu, Pralāba Oppāri, and Perinbakhaḍal (இனந்தைக் கற்று, இனந்தை தெருந்து, பற்றை தெருந்து, பிரலாபா காப்பு) based on the popular works of that time. He composed them in such a way that any one could easily learn and sing them.

A few lines from Jnanattelaṭṭu serve as a good example:

“Sleep, O Son, who came to do away with the sinful deed, resulting from the forbidden fruit in the garden”

Where are the celestials? Where are the heavenly residents? Where are the ones who guard you? Are you an orphaned Son?”

Similarly, the songs in Parlabha Oppari also appear in easy style:

“O, sinners, will not any of you come to see Him dead on the cross and hanging?”

“O, my dear and beloved Christians, won’t you follow me, weeping and crying?”
The songs of the Siddhas also had attracted Vedanayagam. He has composed songs also along the lines of S'ivavākkīyar, Pāmbāṭṭi Siddhar and others. In one of the songs he raises the question, “Is there any justice, or equity in the saying that there are four castes among men, while there is no caste or likeness among the tall trees, animals and birds?”

Here is a song modelled on Pāmbāṭṭi Siddhar.

“Dance, O snake, rise up and dance, O snake, Praise the Lord Christ, and dance O snake! Don’t hide and run away, or deviate from the lasting, true and firm path. Stand erect and sing, O snake, Look at the beautiful feet of God and dance rejoicing. O, snake, dance ‘the Almighty one, the Holy one, cast His glance and took compassion”.

The one work which made Vedanayagam very famous is his Bethalēm Kuravanji. He must have studied such ‘Kuravanji’ plays like Tirukkutrāla Kuravanji which was very much appreciated by the people at that time, Sarabēndra Bhūpāla Kuravanji, Kumbēsa Kuravanji and others. He must have seen these plays enacted as well. As a result of these, he composed Bethalēm Kuravanji in 1800.

He has introduced in his work the whole pattern of the Kuravanji drama and characterization of the personal. The processionist is Jesus. The one who falls in love with him is ‘the Daughter of Zion’ This phrase indicates the people of Israel in
the Bible. In Christian tradition it is used for the Christian church. The poet gives her the name of Déva Môhini or ‘Lover of God’. His creation corresponding to ‘Singi’ is faith. According to the definition of Kuravanji drama, she approaches the daughter of Zion with a basket and a wand in her hand and describes to her the beauty of the hills in the Bible and the fertility of the land of Canaan. She understands the feelings of the daughter of Zion and tells her the good news that she is going to be wedded to the Processionist.

The husband of Visvasa Singi is Jñāna Singan. He catches birds with net and noose with the help of ‘noovan’. The poet has made use of him metaphorically. He is pictured here as bringing the birds of men to Jesus.

Since Singi, who set out on divination did not return for a long time, Singan is very much distressed and laments, and even offers to reward those who would tell him of her whereabouts. At this juncture Singi returns home. While welcoming her he piles on her question after question to which she gives him pointed answers. He rejoices when he comes to know whom she had been to and what rewards she had come back with. The play ends with a benediction.

It is to be noted that Vedanayagam has composed his work largely modelled on the Tirukrutralakkuravanji of Tirikudarasappak kavirayar. He has mentioned in the Introduction that he composed it with a view to propagate it in the district of Tirunelveli where the Kuravanji of the Kavirayar was frequently enacted. Further, he presented his Kuravanji in places like Tanjavur and Madras where he did evangelistic preaching with his group of singers. Not only the form of Kutrålakkuravanji but also its musical melody, phrases of the chorus, arrangement of words, and forms of thought have been used by Vedanayagam suitably to Christianity. I would like to give here, only a few of those instances. While Vasanthavalli was after Kutrālanāthar with whom she fell in love, even the moon light burns her. She blames the moon. Here is a line from her song:

**Vasanthavalli**

> Even the moonlight burns her, she blames the moon. (V)
“Is it not by your mockery, O bright moon, that you waned like a snake?”

Vedanayagam makes his Deva Mohini sing in the same pattern:

“Because of your haughtiness, Bright moon, you waned and got diminished.”

When one goes through these lines, it seems that Sastiriyar accepts the puranic version of the cause for the waning of the moon. But in a subsequent section the poet makes it clear that since she has fallen in love with Christ, the New Adam of the new age, she ridicules the old age and all that goes with it and the sinful nature of the Old Adam:

“Did you not get very haughty, O old Adam? Hence you lost your greatness and got your fall!”

Kutrālakkuravanji while announcing the coming of Singi, describes beautifully her ornamentation.

“With a scented tilaham, on her bow-like forehead, having adorned her scented hair with kadamba flowers, and painted her piercing eyes, with a wand in hand and carrying a basket, comes the lovely woman”

Modelled on this, Sastriyar gives the following description of the Bethālēm Kuravanji.
"Putting on the dress of righteousness, wearing the garland of prayer and scripture, the spiritual ornaments and worshipping the Ancient and Holy one with true wisdom."

Kutralakkuravanji refers to resident Siddhas and sages while describing the richness of her mountains. Bethalém Kuravanji also speaks of Siddhas residing in her mountains.

"The mountaineers cast their glance and call the celestials; the Siddhas traversing through space pay visits and bestow supernatural powers."

Bethalém Singi describes as follows:

"The celestials come together and sing praises, all the mighty Siddhas do great penance."

Tirikudarasappar describes beautifully the feelings and doubts in the mind of Singan who pines for his Singi. Vedanayagam follows him and tries to portray the conflict in the mind of Singan with Christian background.

Kutrāla Singan laments as follows:

"Has she followed those who drink all the arrack in the bottle and the toddy in the pot?"

Bethalém Singan also sobs whether she is unconscious after the drink.

"She got bread from one vessel, and getting the wine from another, did she drink it, in haste and stand in rapture?"
(The food and drink mentioned here are the elements of the Eucharist) When the Kutrāla Singan sees his wife he filled with joy and enquires about her new ornaments. He asks her whence she got them. This dialogue is presented in many couplets. Here is one of them:

"O Singi, why is a big viper lying over your feet biting!
O Singa, this is an anklet which I got for divination at Salem!"

The Singan of the Bethalēm hills also enquires similarly his wife who has returned. One of his questions and the answer she gives are given in two couplets by Vedanayagam.

"O Singi, what is wrong with your knees? Why are they all black and swollen?"
"O Singa, this is because of praying to Christ without ceasing!"

Since this work was introduced to the Christian Churches through evangelistic preaching, Vedanayagam was honoured with the titles 'The Evangelistic King of Poets' 'A Biblical Scholar' 'The great wise Emperor of poets' (சோதிருக்க கவிஞரா; குத்தக விளக்காளி; மகாதேவம் சோதிருக்கராகை)

Sastriyar brings out in many ways the relation between Christ (the Lover) and the Daughter of Zion—the Church (the Loved) in the two works Aranādindam and Jñānavulā.
In Āraṇādindam Jesus leaves the heavens and comes to the earth in search of his bride. He goes seeking her in the guise of a human being. He reveals to her the longings of his heart. But the daughter of Zion refuses to accept him. Since he is persistently following her, when at last he knocks at the door and calls her, she is pleased to receive him and opens the door for him. But she gets agitated when she does not find him. She roams all over the place searching for him and waits for his coming. She finds him at the end.

Sastriyar has composed this work along purānic lines. The opening scene of this work depicts beautifully the dialogue between God, the father and Christ, the Son in heaven. The poet has endeavoured to give in the form of a picture such Biblical ideas as Christ is the Son of God, one who was offered by God to the world and the one who is seated at the right hand of God.

When the poet portrayed the scenes of Christ meeting the daughter of Zion, the scenes of Murugan meeting Valli as a huntsman and an old man while she was keeping watch over the millet field should have presented themselves to his mind. For at the beginning of the section ‘The Bridegroom meets the Bride’ he introduces the subject as follows:

"While the beautiful Daughter of Zion was keeping watch over the garden of the Kingdom of David, the Lord of creation, putting on the guise of a man went there, met the girl and conversed with her in affection!"

"நம் கருனிக ராணாக்கினி
மிகுதிக கிளம்பர் அரணி
காலி கருனிக்கார் சம்பா
கருனிக குரோக்கா குரு
சம்பாதிக மங்கூக
சோகூத குஞ்ஞா ஒசோ
மாமலாறா சோகூக்க
பரதுருமா கருனிக நாரிக
பரதுருமா பரதுருக்கா வலா""

The poet describes the dialogue between Christ and the Daughter of Zion after the pattern of folk songs in ornamental
style. When Christ approaches her while she was watching over the Vineyard, she asks him as follows:

"Which is your town, master? Where are you from? and what brought you here? What right have you to seize my hand? Will my people allow me to go alone? Will not the unjust Jews put you to death?" (19.12,14)

Christ answers her as follows:

"I left the heavens, forsook the throne
Came over to the earth, found no place to lay my head
Even if my life is in peril, will I forget you O Zion?
Even if I cease to be, I'll give my life for you." (19,20,17)

Jñāna Andādi is a composition of hundred stanzas. The poet mentions in the Invocatory stanza that he composed this work as a commentary on the 'Song of Solomon' in the Old Testament. H. A. Krishna Pillai also has composed a similar work. It is called Anmapralābham. Prof. Sathiasatchi examines a few sections of these works. Speaking about Jñāna Andādi, he observes:

"Tanjai Vedanayagam has thus portrayed in letters the loving relation between man and God, that inward relation which is felt by thought and mind but invisible to the eyes".

Vedanayagar who has produced works along the line of minor literary compositions, has also composed many songs based on Tevāra melodies and Tirupukazh rhymes. He was attracted by Tāyumānavar and has composed some of his songs in his style. These are found in his work Jepamālai. Sastriyar has mentioned in the introduction that he has produced this work like the order of worship which westerners have introduced into Tamil Christian.
congregations. There are 42 sections in this work containing orders of worship and devotional songs based on the Tamil tradition. Sastriyar says that he had been working at it for 45 years from 1810 to 1855. It was his desire that the orders of worship in this work be popularized among Tamil Christians. But only a few of the songs in this order of worship are in use today among the Tamil congregations.

Here is a song in Jepamalai which Vedanayagar offers in Nindāsthuthi (Praising in the apparent form of abuse).

"You don’t have a way of escaping if one seizes you sincerely in prayer and crucifies you in mind by piercing nails on your hand and feet! Granting, O benevolent One that you will escape by Your power; If I shut you up again in my heart, where can You go rejecting me?........"

This verse is comparable with Mānickavāsagar’s beautiful way of conveying the idea by expressions like ‘திருவாசகம் பூதக்கை நந்திக்கூற்றுக்கற்றியில்’ and ‘மூன்றுள் மனிதநாம திருத்தம் முன்னேக்கும் கலந்தான் தாயாரும், கண்டத் போல, கண்டத் போல’

In a section Japamālai called ahappatru (அஹ்ப்பட்டுறு) a series of songs, Vedanayagar has given expression to the longings of his heart. The first song runs as follows:

"O knowledge, lustre of true wisdom, King of the Celestials, O God the beginningless, embodiment of the ten attributes and
qualities of divinity. You became a man in order to get hold of me, a bondsman to the devil. Lord, Jesus, the Teacher Who rode on an ass, do come into my heart”.

He has given many such rhythmic melodies in *Japamālai*. It will be appropriate to quote her a song which reminds us of Arunagirināthar’s impressive rhythmic style.

“You who shine as the bright Sun upon the mountain, grant Your grace so that I may not be deluded either by the thought of sweet, young women or by taking their love to be true. O Lord, give me the refuge of Your fragrant feet”.

Similarly, following the unique Tamil prosody of Tayumānavar, Sastriyar has composed his ‘*Karunaiyānanda Vaṭīvam*’ after the pattern of ‘Cimmayānandaguru and Saccidānanda Sīvam’. In this section called Divine Act (Sāpamāvud) there are eleven songs. In one of them he sings as follows:

“You will raise a crop without the seed and cause the rain to fall without the clouds. You will give light without the Sun and walk in the firmament; You will resurrect the dead, dry-
and perishing bones to prophesy; You will crown again Israel and make him prosperous in Canaan......Grant Your grace that I, a senseless ass, may have Your Vision, U Triune God, the embodiment of grace and bliss ".

The idea of "raising a Crop without the seed" expressed in the first line of the song is found in Tiruvăsagam. Vedanayagar like Mānīckavāşagār marvels at the divine act of creation and sustenance of the universe by God. Resurrecting the bones and rehabilitating Israel are illustrations of the marvellous power of God in the Old Testament. Mānīckavāşagār in his characteristic humility compared himself to a poisonous mango tree. Following him, Vedanayagar also compares himself to an ass. In the last two lines, he reminds us of Tāyumānavar's command of words.

The confessional songs of Vedanayagar are based on the Confessional model of the saints of Tamil Nadu. He laments that he is a great sinner. Though he might not have committed all the sins that he mentions, he accepts the sins of others as his and makes his confession on behalf of all sinners. It is worth noting here what Professor Devasenapathi says while talking about great saints. He observes: "The saints in their large heartedness blame themselves for the faults of others and thus indirectly show the need for self-examination ".**
Here is a song from Jepamālai in the section of ‘Confession of Sins’ as a typical example:

“I am a grave sinner from head to foot, puffed up with haughtiness and lust. I roamed about with a longing for Union with women, indulged in boasting. I did not respect the elders and obey them. Everywhere I did evil deeds, speaking lies to earn a livelihood. O, Lord Jesus, plead with God that He be merciful unto me, a miserable sinner”.

In this song Vedanayagar makes his supplication to God through Jesus.

Vadanayagar is now very much known among Tamil Christians only through his musical compositions. He has composed nearly five hundred lyrics on spiritual subjects in different kinds of melody. One can find in these the forceful style in which the choice ideas are presented. The following lines are typical examples of Sastriyar’s songs.

(O Holy God, O sun who appeared as new Adam to do away with the sin of Adam) He who put on the holy guise in the lineage of Adam, the sinful.
Sastriyar was a contemporary of Thyagaraja the singer- and melodist par excellence. (1767—1847). They lived within a distance of a few miles. Both of them were very much honoured by King Saraboji of Tanjavur. Sastriyar would, undoubtedly have had opportunities of listening to the songs of Thyagarajar. D. W. Devanesan has published a lyric of Vedanayagar along with a lyric of Thyagaraja and shown how Sastriyar heavily draws on terms and expressions from Thyagaraja.

I give below the pallavi or refrains of both lyrics.

Sujana Jivanā—Suguna bhūṣana Rāma Sujanā (Thyagaraja)
Parama Jivanā—para vimōsanā dēva parama (Vedanayagar)

Following Thyagarajar, Sastriyar too has mentioned his name at the last line of each of his song. The Western missionaries who had come to work at Tanjavur at that time did not like it. So they ordered that the last lines bearing the name of Vedanayagar should not be sung during Church worship. Sastriyar followed the practice of the saintly poets of our country like Tukaram in adding his name in the last line of his lyrics. The Western missionaries argued that when devotees sing in the presence of God, there is no need for any man's name to be mentioned. Sastriyar has used in the last lines of some songs expressions like "Saṃsāra bhāvan ā…" Some might have felt that such expressions could be easily interpreted in a double sense. The fact that Sastriyar has addressed Jesus in many songs as "Saṃsāra bhāvanā" did not seem proper to them. Devanesan observes: ""It is hard to justify that he addressed only Christ as Vedanayaga." It is worth mentioning here that Sastriyar has mentioned his name in the last line of certain songs with a sense of humiliation.
This is how the poet has composed the last line of a song:

(The song of the angels is a benediction to You; but the song of Vedanayagam, what kind of song is it?)

Sastrayar was very familiar with the Tamil literary tradition and has tried to enhance Christian literary forms and contents to some extent.

I wish to finish this section with the tributes paid to him by Dr. G. U. Pope (1820-1903) and the Rt. Rev. Robert Caldwell (1814-1891) two eminent Tamil Scholars.

While speaking about Christian Tamil Literature Pope refers to the names of De Nobile, Fabruccius and others and goes on to say, “There has been at least one real native Christian poet, Vedanayaga Sāstriyar of Tanjore whose writings should be collected and edited."

Bishop Caldwell observes in his reminiscences, “In the year 1841, I met in Tanjore the celebrated Tanjore Poet a native of much ability and great practical power, the author of prodigious number of lyrics, many of which will probably always hold their place in the public and private use of the Christians of the Tamil Country".
TANJAI VEDANAYAGAM SASTRIYAR IN TAMIL RELIGIOUS TRADITION

Just as Vedanayagam Sastriyar had a liking for Tevāram, Tiruvācagam, Tiruppuhazh and other hymns besides minor literary works in Tamil, he had a liking also for the excellent religious ideas contained in them.

He did not hesitate to adopt the religious ideas of our country to explain Biblical ideas. When we look at this in the context of his times his attempt seems to be a bold one. No where has he made use of Hindu religious ideas to the detriment of Christian fundamental doctrines. He has used them only to clarify the basic ideas of Christianity. He has welcomed such Hindu religious ideas and phrases as are akin to Christian ideas and has introduced them to Tamil Christians through his songs. Only those who are broad minded and have a keen sense of understanding could understand his intention.

In Tamil Christian Lyrics Sastriyar's songs are found in great number. The reason for not including many more of his songs in it is the fact that the editors thought that the Hindu religious ideas and phrases in them might confuse the Christians. Nevertheless, it is to be appreciated that they have included in the hymnal songs those containing such phrases as following:

Sastriyar has made use of the word Ōm very much in his songs. The third section of his Jepamalai has the caption Ōm Pranavam... The last line of the ten songs in this section ends with Ōm nama (ॐ नाम) The first song begins with “उपानंतु श्रवयो भक्तिः प्रेमवेशस्त्री भक्तिः हृदयम तन्त्र सम्बन्धम् हृदयम् नाम हि नाम” The last line of the ten songs in this section ends with Ōm nama (ॐ नाम) The first song begins with “उपानंतु श्रवयो भक्तिः प्रेमवेशस्त्री भक्तिः हृदयम तन्त्र सम्बन्धम् हृदयम् नाम हि नाम” The word Ōm has been removed in
the revised edition of Tamil Christian Lyrics. The phrase ‘га’ has been revised as ‘gom’ which does not mean the same. When Sastriyar used the ōm he had in his mind what John had when he described Christ by the Greek word Logos which means ‘word’. He enlightens this subtle thought by such phrases as “தம்பரம் விளங்கி விளைந்து வந்தே”.

Sastriyar who subscribes to the monotheistic understanding of God considers that the names ‘Father of Jesus Christ’ ‘Jehovah’ Siva’ and ‘Allah’ indicate the one God, the Supreme Being, when he points out “அம்நீரை என்றை ஏனையின் பகுதியானது தம்பரம் விளங்கி வந்தே”. Sastriyar sings the praise of God with that larger vision of Manickavasagar who sings, “தம்பரம் மதிப்பும் முன்னதான அருளும் விளங்கி வந்து வந்து இருந்து வந்து வந்தே”.

The statement of Martin Buber, the Jewish philosopher “All God’s names are hallowed” deserves consideration in this connection. Sastriyar has made use of the above-mentioned names of God in a manner in which no other Christian poet has ever dared to do. Here are some examples:

“தம்பரம் மதிப்பும் முன்னதான அருளும் விளங்கி வந்தே”

“அம்நீரை என்றை ஏனையின் அருளும் விளங்கி வந்தே”

“தம்பரம் மதிப்பும் முன்னதான அருளும் விளங்கி வந்தே”

“தம்பரம் மதிப்பும் முன்னதான அருளும் விளங்கி வந்தே”

“அம்நீரை என்றை ஏனையின் அருளும் விளங்கி வந்தே”

“அம்நீரை என்றை ஏனையின் அருளும் விளங்கி வந்தே”

He held that ‘Allah’ ‘Budha’, ‘Sivam’ ‘Sadasivam’ ‘Parabrahmam’ ‘Jehovah’ ‘Trinity’ in these lines refer to God, the Supreme Being. Further, he thinks that these names are applicable to Jesus Christ Who is extolled as the Son of David and as the Second Person of the Trinity.

In Sastriyar’s songs words and phrases illustrative of God’s Character, His nature, His qualities and His function are found
in hundreds. When we examine those which he very often uses, we could see that they are adaptations of usage and traditions of our land. He has been influenced very much by the phrase 'Sachidananda which indicates God's existence, intelligence and bliss succinctly. Particularly he wonders at the omniscience of God which indicates his transcendence and the limitation of man's knowledge. He describes God as colarum mejrañar (அன்புடைய பிரமாணர்) avivin uruvagiya mūlar (அன்புடைய அருளும் முளர்) ānanda jīnāna sorūrār (அன்புடைய அன்ற சோறுரார்) He shows that God is pure intelligence and subtle being by using the phrase 'ambara dēva cidambaranādār' (அம்பரா மேற்காக சிதம்பரகண்டர்) Sastriyar has tried to explain the Biblical idea that God is spirit, by such phrases as kārappadāda arūpan (கார்பப்படவா அருப்பன்) ‘cadamilān’ (செடமிலான்) ‘parisuttarūbi’ (பரிசுந்தரும்). The poet who sees God as Omnipresent and as One Who bestows all goodness, has not failed to extol heaven as His abode:

When he describes the Omnipresence of God he uses the theological phrases ‘topappadaviyāban’ (தொப்பாப்படாவியாபன்) ‘Oridattitādān’ (உதிர்த்தித்தாதன்). The same he tries to do in the words of bhaktas. A typical example is as follows:

The poet who sees God as Omnipresent and as One Who bestows all goodness, has not failed to extol heaven as His abode:

'Māgamanadāla vilāsan' (மாகமணாலா விலாசன்) 'Vinḍalattuk-kappāl Veḷicattulāvū paramanandalattuk kērubin vāraṇattan (விந்தலூட்டுக்கப்பக்கல் வெளிச்சற்று பரமாணாலட்டுக்க கைருப்பின் வாரணா வாரணர்).’ With phrases like these he reveals the thought that God is in heaven. He describes His heavenly forms in many ways. ‘சாப்பு தேவீந்திரன் மையது.’ He says that God is sitting there majestically in the form of Trinity:
All the celestials worship and praise God, the heavenly father Who is seated so majestically. He also says that Christ the Son also worships Him:

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Thus, of the three persons of the Trinity, God the father, the first person is praised exclusively at times.

Sastriyar mentions that the twelve disciples recite the scriptures in the holy realm where God dwells in majesty:

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He says that the Standard of God has been hoisted in the same place. Sastriyar calls it the ‘Standard of Cross’. He describes God as ‘Siluvaikkoqiian (இலுவாக்கையன்)’ and ‘Siluvattuvasa virudā’ (இலுவாக்கையன் விருடா)’

When the poet mentions that those who sing praises to God and those who serve Him in heaven are countless:

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and ascribes it to Jesus.

In describing the nature of God, he has followed three approaches, namely the theological, the devotional and the visual or purānic approaches. He finds that these three approaches are interdependent and intertwined in Tamil religious literature adopts them in his writings.

While speaking about the greatness of God, the idea that God is most ancient and most modern seems to him an excellent idea. He sings:

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following the utterance of Manickavasagar who sings:

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It is noteworthy that a similar concept is found in the Bible. The very first book in the Bible begins with the words ‘In the beginning God...’ and the concluding chapter of the last book contains the words “Behold I make all things new”.

The following are the phrases which Sastriyar uses extensively when he speaks about the greatness of God.

- ‘நீதிமுகப்பெருந்து ’
- ‘முன்பாசத்துக்கும் காவியங்கள் ’
- ‘நீண்டு’
- ‘எண்ணறல் ’
- ‘பால் மல்லிக’
- ‘தம்புதானு ’
- ‘தம்புதானு’ ‘தம்புதானு’
- ‘தாயார் ராஜகோணா’
- ‘ஒளி ஆடை ஓடை கலவர்’
- ‘உன்னை ஆடை ஓடை கலவர் ’
- ‘குறுகியம் முக்கியம் ’
- ‘குறுகியம் ’

Of these ‘Sarvēsvaran’ was very much in use in the Roman Catholic Church and ‘Parāparan’ in other Churches in those days. While Sastriyar describes God in many places as ‘andam ādi illān’ he also makes references about God as ‘alba omēga’ (Alpha and Omega).

The ideas of Manickavasagar such as ‘நூற்றாண்டு அந்தம் அறியப்படத்தைக் காண்க’ ‘நூற்றாண்டு அந்தம் அறியப்படும்’ ‘அறியப்படத்தைக் காண்க’ are worthy of comparison. When Vedanayagar refers to the collective attributes of God, he uses the religious phrases of our Land:

- ‘தொழில் தொழில் முதலான ’
- ‘நூற்றாண்டு பாதுகாக்கி’
- ‘பாதுகாக்கிய வருத்து ’
- ‘தொழில் தொழில் முதலான ’

Vadanayagar indicates the divine qualities by sacred marks also. The following are worthy of mention:

- ‘நூற்றாண்டு ஒலியம்’ ‘புராம் பத்மானம்’ ‘குறுகியம் முக்கியம்’
‘Kanmarivu’ indicates the eye of wisdom (Kaṇna Maṇis Kiñcana). ‘Kazhaladu irándum’ indicates the sacred feet and ‘kadippadam nángu’ indicates Sálöham, Sámipam, Sàrúpam and Sàyuçchiam. To this list, he adds the five wounds of Jesus on the Cross as marks of God.

He sings in Jnána Ula under the heading ‘Divine Play’ (Jñána Ula) in forty nine lines of God’s call and guidance of such saints as Abraham, of the covenant relationship, he had with the people of Israel and of the sacred activities of Jesus in the Bible. He addresses Jesus as (Abraham). Evidently he was attracted by the phrase ‘Tiruviláiyádal’ which Śaivism uses to describe God’s relation with His devotees and His greatness in guiding them. He regards the theophanies in the Old Testament and the incarnation of Christ as types of ‘Divine play’ (Divine Play).

Scriptures serve as aids to have knowledge of God. Sastriyar points out the truth that God is the origin and source of the scriptures through such phrases as ‘Vedam parama prakáram’ ‘Káma náma añgámañgá kalpatára’ ‘Sahasra ýác manavagam kámpita’ Thus he teaches that Theology is precisely scripturology. He enlightens us through this that the acceptance of the Bible as word of God, is to take it as ‘Śabda pramāṇa’.

When Sastriyar praises God as the creator he brings to our notice an idea of our land which is not found in the Bible. In Genesis, the first book of the Old Testament there are references to creation. In the third chapter of the book it is stated that man was formed out of earth. According to the religious notion of our land man possesses a body which is composed of the five elements. The body is the microcosm of the entire universe. Here is how Sastriyar sings about God, the divine architect:

"Kaṇna Maṇis Kiñcana Kaṇna Maṇis Kiñcana
Utsavam Mooram...
Aval│ñáñam│Sañáñam│Bhalam│ñáñam│Kalpatára’..."

"...Piyam Mooram
Utsavam Mooram Mooram Mooram Mooram Mooram Mooram..."
In order to show that man is the Crown of God’s creation, is a temple, a ‘moving temple’ where God lives he also sings as follows:

Sastriyar divides sin, the evil deed into three kinds:

In the above lines we find how the three types of sins are clearly distinguished by Sastriyar. ‘गृहांशीय साधूपार’ may denote the evil deeds of childhood or it may refer to the Old Testament idea ‘I punish the children for the sins of the father’. ‘गृहांशीय पार’ denotes sins man commits in the present life ‘अगामियम’ (अगामियम) ‘गृहांशीय मार’ is the sin committed by the first man and transmitted to mankind, the sin which goes by the name ‘original sin’. There is found in the Bible a classification of sin analogous to Sañchita, prarabdha and āgāmiyam. Sastriyar carefully points out the ideological differences between the doctrines of Hinduism and Christianity.

Nextly we shall consider the beautiful way in which Sastriyar finds Jesus Christ in the background of Tamil religion.

The contemporaries of Jesus called him ‘Galileam’ (of the province of Galilee) or Nazarene (Of the Town of Nazareth). Some Western Christian poets have called him ‘The man of Calvary’ and ‘The Lord of Calvary’. But only in Sastriyar we find the manner of speaking of him in association with the name of the place of his birth. He praises Jesus as ‘मुस्तफाबदता अभिमान’ and ‘मुस्तफाबदता अभिमान’. Though Jesus was born in that place he was not much associated with it. The greater part of his
earthly life of 33 years was spent in places like Capernaum and Nazareth in Galilee and in places like Jerusalem and Jericho in Judea. There is not any specific reference in the four gospels that he went to Bethlehem. Nevertheless the poet calls him 'Of Bethlehem' according to the Tamil custom of calling a person after his native place like ‘Ārūrar’ and ‘Vādavūrar’.

In describing the incarnation of Jesus, Sastriyar finds pleasure in overdoing it and in narrating it along the *purānic* ways of presentation. He wonders at the incarnation of Jesus, the necessity of his leaving heaven and coming into the world in humble guise and extols the event raising two questions: “Is heaven the earth? Did God become man?” He does not stop with raising these questions, but dares to ponder over, in a legendary fashion, how Christ would have descended from heaven and all that he passed through coming down here. In one song he sings as follows:

“

Vedanayagar mixes the pure, supreme and subtle Biblical idea of the incarnation of Jesus with imagination and offers it in such a way that even ignorant persons can visualize it.
Now, one of the stanzas in 'Kadaltāvu Padalam' (கத்தலு பாடல்) of ‘Sundara Kāṇḍam’ (சுண்டரா காந்தம்) of Kamba Ramayanam deserves consideration in this context. While describing the speed of Hanuman, the son of Vayu in reaching Lanka after crossing the sea, Kamban says that he crossed over it in such a way that the gap between the planets and the stars ceased to exist:

Kambar wonders at the speed of Hanuman through space. Sastriyar conjectures the distance through which Jesus crossed. Both of them plunge us in astonishment. Both set before our mental eyes the great tremendous scenes of the Universe. Sastriyar reveals that the fountain of imagination of the Tamil religious poets is welling up in his mind as well.

Vedanayagar describes very well the teaching vocation among the manifold ministry of Jesus. He sings ecstatically in a worshipful mood: "நோக்கியை பதிவுசெய்ய குறும்பிவிடியே..." He praises Jesus in many ways like 'சூர்யே' 'துயானல்' 'சூர்யே சுபான்கு கர்க்கிரும்பாளே' and 'கேச சமணே' Jesus has initiated him and bestowed on him sacrament of baptism which is spiritual wealth (கீற்ற குருதியமைப்பு). Sastriyar makes it clear when he sings: "நீக்க குறும்பை சாவாத்தியகு குறும்பிவிடியே; கீற்ற குருதியப் பாவாத்தியகு குறும்பிவிடியே". From whomsoever one received his baptism, in fact, the one who gives it is his dear guru Jesus, is the conviction of Sastriyar. The Rev. Schwartz who brought him up and baptized him is always mentioned by him as 'Aiyar' (அயையார்). In his works the word 'Guru' is exclusively used for Jesus. The Śaivite doctrine of God which teaches that Śiva assumes the form of a human Guru and bestows grace on souls (8th Sūtra of Sīvajñāna Bōdham and the 5th chapter of Tiruvavuruppayan) invite our attention in this context.

There are numerous evidences in the writings of Sastriyar to support the fact that he never rejected in full the Tamil religious
traditions. On the contrary, as a Tamil he has gladly and proudly accepted them and used them as the most natural means of expressing his Christian faith.

On the basis of his literary and musical compositions we can regard him as a faithful follower of the devotional poets of Tamil Nadu. We could see in his songs the image of devotional literature of Tamil Nadu. Further, the contribution he has made towards the enrichment of Tamil devotional literature is discernible in his writings. He did not write his songs for the learned in particular. His songs were popularized among the common people in the original context. They are easy to learn and memorize.

Dr. R. P. Sethu Pillai, the great Tamil Scholar has written a short essay about Sastriyar in his book Christian Tamil Scholars. In it he mentions that one of Sastriyar’s songs captivated him. It is found in “Parāparan Mālai”. It is as follows:

Sethu Pillai observes that mercy and tenderness fill this song.

Similarly he quotes another song from Sastriyar’s Īnana Ėtrappāṭṭu and concludes his essay with these words: “That day will be great day for the Tamil country when she honours born poets like Vedanayagam and appreciates their poetry”. Here is the song he quotes at the end of his essay:

The wounds of Jesus on the cross caused by the piercing nails and spear have been the subject of devotion and theme of many Christian devotees. Vedanayagar was also attracted by that theme. He gives expression to his feelings in the form of songs. Here are two lines from a song:
These words are from his scared heart. There is a reference to St. Francis that when he contemplated the wounds of Jesus that he got these wounds on his hands. Vedanayagar mentions that the scars of the wounds of Jesus have been formed in his heart. One cannot but recall the inspiring lines of Subramanya Bharati,

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\text{in this context.}
\]

Not satisfied with getting the scars of the five wounds of Jesus in his heart, he invites his Master to come to him as follows:

\[
\text{Just as the devout poets of our land beseech Murugan to give them his beautiful vision, holding the spear and riding on the peacock, so also Sastriyar beseeches Jesus to appear before him with the scars of the five wounds, His identifying marks.}
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Christian theologians who examine the ideas of Sastriyar and his understanding of the Bible will judge him as a conservative or Fundamentalist. But there is no doubt that everyone will appreciate and welcome the manner in which he gives out his ideas with a broad mind steeped in Tamil culture. Someone who wrote an essay on Dr. Stanley Jones has remarked, “He has a conservative heart and a liberal mind”. This is applicable cent percent to Vedanayagam Sastriyar also.

The message Sastriyar to his successors through his writing is the challenge to create popular literature for the populace. We find the creative genius in the writings of Bharathi, Bharathidasan and Pattukkottai Kalyanasundaram in the present century similar to the works of the popular poets of the nineteenth century like Sastriyar. Of the Christian poets of this century, the reverends G. S. Vedanayagam, S. Paramanandam and N. Samuel may be regarded as the successors of Sastriyar.
KRISHNA PILLAI—"THE SALVATION POET"
(General Introduction)

We saw that Vedanayagam Sastriyar produced many small works following greatly the various minor literary works in Tamil. Krishna Pillai who came after him was greatly interested in epics and set himself to the task of producing a Christian epic. Vedanayagar went to many places in Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka with his group of singers and entertained Christians as well as non-Christians with his musical talents. But Krishna Pillai spent the greater part of his life as a Professor of Tamil in the district of Tirunelveli. He was not popularly known as a singer like Vedanayagar. He took delight in teaching Kambaramayanam and other literary works to college students for many years. He maintained friendship with some distinguished Tamil Scholars of his days. Hence his works appeared as full-bodied literary compositions.

He has drunk deep from Tamil epics to such an extent as to be appreciated as "Christian Kambar" and as one coming in the line of Veeramamunivar. Some complained that he did not write in a style easily understandable to all. Krishna Pillai did not fail to answer such critics. His epic "Rakshanya Yathirgam" was first published in 1894. In the introduction the poet says as follows:

"It would be fair if the critics had spent at least a tenth part of their time and effort in getting proficiency in English to the study of Tamil. It is not fair on their part to complain that they cannot understand a stanza without studying a Tamil book thoroughly at least for a year. Rakshanya Yathirgam is easily understandable to those who are interested in literature to some extent; it is not a work to be abandoned on the pretext of non-intelligibility".¹

Apart from the Tamil epics, the hymns of the saints also had greatly attracted Krishna Pillai. He has composed many hymns after the pattern of Tēvāram, Tiruvāsagam and Tiruvāimozhī. Many of them have been inserted in suitable places in Rakshanya
Yāṭhirigām. Like Sastriyar, Krishna Pillai was also attracted by the songs of Tāyumānavar. He has written many verses following Tāyumānavar. Since Krishna Pillai has composed his songs with a feeling of devotion, he is regarded as a 'divine poet'.

Tamil Christians honour him as the 'Poet of Salvation' and as the 'Poet of Redemption' since he has emphasized in his works the Christian doctrine of redemption. He has added the word "Rakshaṇya" as an epithet to the titles of his religious works calling them "Rakshaṇya Yāṭhirigām" 'Rakshaṇya Māṇoḥ-haram' 'Rakshaṇya Samaya Nirṇayam' and 'Rakshaṇya Kural'. Of these the first three have been published. 'Rakshaṇya Māṇoḥ-haram' is a collection of devotional songs. 'Rakshaṇya Samaya Nirṇayam' is Christian apologetics. In this work Krishna Pillai examines the religious and philosophical systems of our country. We could understand from this work how extensive is his religious knowledge and how strong is his profound faith in Christianity.

R. P. Sethu Pillai, having well understood the intension that Krishna Pillai had in the Salvation of the world which he denotes as 'Rakshaṇya' remarks as follows regarding his epic.

"Rama destroyed the evil that filled the earth with the might of his bow. Kaṇṇagi burnt off evil that filled the city of Madurai with the strength of her chastity. The Lord Christ, the Hero of Rakshaṇya Yathirigam wiped off the evil that covered this great world with the power of his great sacrifice. Hence Rakshaṇya Yathirigam is a rare epic which proclaimed the greatness of the sacrifice of Christ".

The word 'Rakshaṇya' or 'Rakshippu' which Krishna Pillai uses, denotes the change that takes place in life by the grace of God. When the 150th birth anniversary of the poet was celebrated at Madras for three days from the 22nd April, 1977, The Rt. Rev. Solomon Doraiswamy referred to this in his inaugural address as follows:

"The great poet Krishna Pillai realized that Salvation is not leaving one religion and embracing another. Salvation is a new
state—viz. coming to life from death, entering into great light from darkness. This is how he understood it".?

Krishna Pillai realized this truth in his own life and has expressed it in the following lines:

"I was dead in sin; thou hast made me alive by thy Spirit.

I Was blind and wandering in darkness and thou hast showed me the light which never fades.

Let me never, never forget thee.

Do thou live in my soul, sweet like the juice of sugar cane.

Thou art the tree of Life, laden with the ripe fruit of Thy divine grace......"

For Krishna Pillai salvation is not something that could be got in a second; but to be realized step by step all through one's life. He had known very well that ups and downs, temptations and disappointments and the like come one after the other as ecstatic moments and other kinds of spiritual experiences. He was firmly convinced that "while we are best by sin, we are upheld by divine grace". He got this conviction not only through the Bible but also through the work " Pilgrim's Progress " a translation of Pilgrim's Progress of John Bunyan (1620–1688) which he read in his youth.

He read the book for the first time when he was twenty nine years old. He must have studied it deeply many times subsequently. He began to write an epic out of it when he was about fifty three years old. He worked at it for fourteen years, changing a few scenes according to Tamil usage and adding literary excellence to it. Parts of this work were published every month in Narppōthagam (Entered by T. S.) the official organ of the Diocese of Tirunelveli. The entire work was published in 1894, six years before the death
of the poet by C. L. S. Madras through the untiring efforts of Rev. Walker.

Although the work 'Pilgrim's Progress', one of the Spiritual classics of undying fame has been translated into more than 120 languages, only a few English poets and our poet have made attempts at versification of the work. From 1687 up to 1924 some 23 English poets have attempted to render this work in minor poems or in the form of songs.

The Rev. H. A. Poppley, in his introduction to the second edition of Rakshanya Yāthisirigam has remarked, "Even though this work has been based on the work of John Bunyan, we can say that in this work, the entire history of the Christian life of the author has been depicted". Krishna Pillai has written his autobiography in compliance with the request of Walker in 1893, seven years before he breathed his last. One could understand to what extent Krishna Pillai has carried on his spiritual journey through great conflicts like Christian, the hero of Pilgrim’s Progress.

John Bunyan says in the Preface to his work, "This book will make a traveller of thee". The autobiography of Krishna Pillai shows that it is 100% true. The poet identifies himself with the character, Christian—the Pilgrim. He says that he reveals through Christian his own mental struggles. John Bunyan has also written a small book about his life history. This was the first book he wrote in prison. In this book he narrates candidly his temptations, sinful feelings and the illumination he got from the Bible. One could see in this book the active impulsions pertaining to the work "Pilgrim’s Progress"—a work born out of a dream. He writes this book with a sense of humility. He is amazed while he contemplates upon the abundance of divine grace bestowed upon him, the Chief of all sinners.

Krishna Pillai has composed the prefatory stanzas of his epic in an attitude of great humility:

“There is not any where in this world a sinner like me; and yet, the Lord Jesus Christ regarded me a cur worthy and redeemed
me; and so I have undertaken to weave with flowers the garland of Rakshanya Yāthisiram in chaste Tamil to adore His beautiful and sacred feet”.

In certain places in the epic the poet adds reverential confessions of sin not found in the original. Here is an example.

*Christian*, engaged in a long spiritual journey deviates from the path at a certain juncture and is baffled. At that time the *Evangelist* appears and guides him. He advises him to go up to the outer gate and knock at the door. Accordingly *Christian* goes to the gate and knocks at the door. John Bunyan describes this briefly in a few words as follows:

“So in process of time, *Christian* got up to the gate. Now, over the gate there was written ‘Knock and it shall be opened’. He knocked therefore, more than once or twice saying,

“May I now enter here? Will he within
Open to sorry me, though I have been
An undeserving rebel? Then shall I
Not fail to sing his lasting praise on high”.

Krishna Pillai creates a separate section “Opening the Gate” in order to describe this scene. He describes beautifully the scene where *Christian* stands knocking at the door of the gate and then pictures in ten stanzas in a heart—melting manner his supplication for opening the door. The songs which express the confession of *Christian* are composed by Krishna Pillai following the pattern of Jeyamkondar, author of *Kalingattupparaṇi* in which the author pictures the soldier’s returning late from the battle field knocking at the door of their wives to open the door to them. I quote here only two stanzas from Rakshanya Yāthisiram.

```
கதரிதம் கதரிதம் கதரிதம்
கதரிதம் மக்கள் கதரிதம்
பாளனின் பாளனின் பாளனின்
பாளனின் பாளன் கில்லே
ஏன் பொன்னு ஏன் பொன்னு ஏன்
ஏன் பொன்னு ஏன் களங்கள்
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I have chosen these two stanzas because the poet quotes them from *Rakshanya Yathirigam* at the conclusion of his autobiography where he states "I am a sinner by birth as well as by deeds."\(^{12}\)

An opinion expressed in the daily *Madras Mail* in 1892 about *Yathirigam* deserves to be quoted here: "The Pilgrim's Progress is to *Rakshanya Yathirigam* what the *Lives of Plutarch* is to the plays of Shakespeare".\(^{18}\)

Krishna Pillai introduces the author of the original work John Bunyan in the beginning of his epic. The way in which he speaks about the circumstances in which the original work was produced and the manner in which he introduces John Bunyan resemble the way in which Sekkilär introduces the *näyanmärs*. I quote here two stanzas from the ‘*Varalärtup paÉalam*’.

Byron, the English poet speaking about the power of dreams remarks "I had a dream, which was not at all a dream". J. W. Mackail speaking about the dream of John Bunyan comments on the similitude of dream to the clear vision of one who had probed life to the depths. Krishna Pillai as if summarizing the above ideas, clarifies the dream of Bunyan by means of a religious idea of our land viz. conscious sleep (*Yoga mitra* or *Arituyil*).

There are five sections in the epic containing forty seven chapters. The number of stanzas is 3622; 144 hymns have been added here and there. So this work contains about 3800 stanzas.
In the preface to this epic, the poet refers to this work as a Major Epic. (*Perumkāppiam*). Although this work is lacking in some minor component parts, the poet observes that it deserves to be regarded as a major epic, according to the following rules:

"குறிராணீயதமச் கருணாசிச் சுயன்காய்
மாணாயாள் மாகள் கலாமிட்டவர்" and
"சாத்து தம்பெண் சில கலாமிட்டவிதமும்
லங்கம் புத்தியா விலங்கியா புலம்"

He also says that his work mostly follows the *Kambāramāyaṇam* and its diction.

In the next lecture we shall see how Krishna Pillai has composed *Rakshaṇya Yāthirigam* as an epic steeped in Tamil Culture, following Tamil literary usage and religious model.
KRISHNA PILLAI IN TAMIL
LITERARY TRADITION

Krishna Pillai has composed his epic with literary embellishments following the epic poets Kambar and Sekilär to a great extent. One could see in many of his stanzas that his treatment of nature is similar to theirs.

While Kambar portrays the river Sarayu and Sekilär the Ponni, they make a divine aroma pervade their poems. Kambar describing the Sarayu sings as follows:

"இல்லை ஐயனை உமக்கு கல்விக்கு காய்ப்பு விதையும்
நெறியை வளந்து விளையில் விறந்து விளையனை
நெறியை வளந்து விளையில் விறந்து விளையனை
பல்வேள் வளந்து விளையில் விறந்து விளையனை காய்ப்பு விதை காய்ப்பு விதை காய்ப்பு விதை காய்ப்பு விதை காய்ப்பு விதை காய்ப்பு விதை காய்ப்பு "

"The water coming from the mountains mingles in the sea. But it spreads like the words and their meanings of many great religions, in which the Supreme being whom the countless scriptures cannot define, the ancient one diversifies itself into every fields."

While Sekilär describes Kāviri he compares it with Uma.

"அன்னன்னின் வலிச்சீர்க்கு வானுந்து விளையாட்டும்
சாம்பல்தீசு உமாவின் வந்தது வந்தது
அன்னன்னின் குச்சிக்கு வந்தது வந்தது
சாம்பல்தீசு உமாவின் வந்தது வந்தது வந்தது "

"By the grandeur of its descent from the beautiful mountain and by its gift with which countless good works are supported, it resembled the flow of compassionate grace of the Lady Who holds part of the Lord’s Body."

Krishna Pillai following these poets who compare the clear flowing river with God and His grace, describes in one of his stanzas, the divine river in heaven as follows:
"This river is like scripture, because it flows straight, it is pure and clear, destroys the forest of sin, helps the fertile growth of the paddy of Virtue and has the excellence of joining the ocean of eternal bliss".

It is remarkable that Krishna Pillai has added scripture to God and grace in the list of similies chosen to describe the river. Kambar mentions in one of his stanzas the various places the river Sarayu flows through:

"It flowed through gardens, groves of Shanbaga trees, through flowing ponds, fragrant gardens, through Madavi hedges and fields like the soul in body".

Following the trend of Kambar, Krishna Pillai portrays in a stanza the place where the river of bliss flows through, adding a spiritual nuance.

"The fertilizing, holy, eternal river of life branches out, fills all tanks, pools and ponds, wipes off the dirt from the land and enters the field of heart and mingles therein".

Not only does Krishna Pillai follow the ideas and imagination of Kambar, but he also borrows his words and phrases with pleasure and uses them in some of his stanzas; for example, he narrates the free life of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden as follows:
No one will fail to notice that the last line reflects exactly the following two lines of Kambar.

"There is no guard over things, since there are no thieves; there are no givers since there are no receivers".

Natural scenes remind Krishna Pillai of the environment of devotion and methods of worship.

Christian crosses over many obstacles on his long journey and reaches a grove which has in its midst a pool with clear water. The trees are tall, spreading their branches around. The poet is interested in the grandeur of the branches waving with wind. There he sees an environment of worship, of devotion and humility. He makes his readers see it through his poem:

"The exuberant grove resembles worshiping devotees in its grandeur of the trees standing firm in the ground, bending their branches low, shedding, tears of honey, opening the hands of their leaves......"

In describing a situation of pitch darkness, the poet brings in religious ideas one after another as similies. "The mass of tar-like darkness—Is it a mark of sin?...or intensity of God’s curse?...or a cave of danger and destruction..."
The poet, following Kambar in composing this epic, adopts his method of describing the scene of Rama’s leaving Ayodhya on learning that he was not to be enthroned. He narrates in a heart-rending manner the scene where Jesus leaves Jerusalem and makes his way to Calvary. The womenfolk of Jerusalem witnessing the cruel scene of Jesus carrying the cross shout and scream, shed bitter tears and spit out angry words. Krishna Pillai portrays it as follows:

“Alas what is this? Sheer injustice” they say, “Is undying virtue to drop and die?” they ask, “How is it the eternal One does not show his anger?” “Is there no end to the unceasing suffering souls?” they ask.

The stanzas describing the lamentations of these women are comparable to stanzas of Kambar in his Nagarninguppadalam (105—114).

The poet describes in his own characteristic style the incarnation and advent of Jesus with figurative embellishments.

He gives a new meaning for Puṭumagam (Puṭumā) a word meaning the earth.

“The name ‘Puṭumagam’ came to be in vogue since it (the earth) has put on the beautiful lotus—like feet of the Royal prince” (Jesus).

Similarly, when he contemplates ‘the wonder of Jesus’ leaving heaven and being born in this earth, he gives expression to it in a stanza through two beautiful similies:
“How wonderful it is that the deluge of the deep river of life came down and flowed into the pit of the earth below, and the mature eternal tree of life’s branch broke through space and bent over the earth”.

"Speaking about the weight of the cross which pressed down the body of Jesus, he says it was so cruelly heavy that it passes beyond thought.

“Looking at it every atom of the cross was made up of a mass of sin whose might was that of millions of great elephants”.

Like Kambar, Krishna Pillai is gifted with the skill to instill many kinds of feelings in small stanzas. In a poem of four lines he brings out three kinds of feeling.

Those who tried Jesus before he was crucified treated him disgracefully and cruelly. They scourge him, spit on him and insulted him. But he keeps silent as calmness personified. The poet brings this scene before us.

“Though he suffers untold pain, he does not utter a word painful to them. But his enemies do not sympathize with his patience. Heinous crime, O heinous crime”.

"
The poet brings out a feeling of sympathy in the first two lines, a sense of disgust in the third line, and a feeling of wrath in the last line.

Bunyan speaks in his work about two demons, Pagan and Pope, living in a cave and destroying many spiritual pilgrims:

"I espied a little before me a cave where two giants, Pope and Pagan dwelt in old time, by whose power and tyranny the men whose bones, blood, ashes etc. lay there, were cruelly put to death". But when Krishna Pillai describes this scene he does not like to attack boldly other religionists and the Pope as Bunyan does. He gives Tamil names to the Characters and introduces them without indicating whom they represent in the original. This reveals his cultured Tamil mind. He describes one of them as "an evil one, day-blind" (ஒடயூடையூதன் வேல்) and the other as "another Wicked one who destroyed the good" (சேமையை குறுலுந்து மரியதை வேலையுள் போய்ப்பர்கள்) (சிங்கான புதுமை; பால்லால் தலைத் தொண்டையூதன்; 75).

Since our poet was very much interested in the devotional literature in Tamil, one could see in his works the likeness of Tevāram, Tiruvāimoli and the songs of Tāyumānavar. Today Tamil Christians are making use of his lyrics in worship. There may be Christians who have not heard about Rakshanya Yāthirigam or read it. But we can boldly say that there are no Tamil Christians who have not sung or heard Krishna Pillai’s songs.

Our poet’s first compositions were for the worship at home to be sung as prayers by his children. In them humility and confession are beautifully brought out. Here are a few lines from one of them.

"O Jesus, I am quite ignorant of praying devoutly, grant me the good will to praise you intelligently".
"O Manuel, Son of God, I am a poor sinner. Your feet are my refuge. Be gracious into me and say: "Dont fear".

"May the scripture prosper; may the teaching of the true Guru prosper; may the songs of the imperfect composers prosper, may the feet of Christ prosper for ages".

Krishna Pillai has composed the forty five stanzas of this hymn in order that not only children but all could sing it. The stanza beginning with ‘May the scriptures prosper (முறை முறை) is the last stanza. It is composed along the lines of Sambandhar’s “May the priests prosper......” (முறை முறை முறை முறை முறை). Among the hundreds of hymns that Appar and To்நங்கராதூர் போடித்துறை have composed, the hymns wherein they both have made use of the same phrase at the end in the same melody has greatly attracted Krishna Pillai. Just as these saints in great humility have sung “why was I born?” (முறை முறை முறை முறை முறை). Krishna Pillai has made use of that phrase in twelve instances.

Appar sings as follows:

“I have not overcome the five senses, nor have I joined the company of those who have overcome. Hence I am far from the right path. So I am agitated in mind, O God how vile I am. To say ‘I live’, tomorrow I will not be. Why was I born?”
The following is the hymn of Tondaradippodi Alvar:

"I cannot adore thy beautiful feet with flowers at all times. I cannot speak of Thy holy attributes with unblemished words. My heart is not filled with love for Thee. I am hence helpless. I am not fit for Arangar. Why was I born?"

Krishna Pillai following these two saints sings as follows:

"O Lord, I am a vile creature who has no love for Your feet. Though I enter the congregation of the virtuous who love Your feet, I have not learnt the proper way, nor have I given up my wicked ways. Why was I born?"

We can understand to what extent Krishna Pillai was impressed by them when he uses 'Sogor' and 'mDeGar' from Appar and 'umri' of the Alvar.

Krishna Pillai has composed his Tiruvakaval on the pattern of the four Tiruvakavals of Manickavasagar and the Arupperumjodhi Akaval of Ramalinga Añigał. This has 106 lines, every two lines with one rhyme. This work was in the form of a manuscript.
for a long time. Recently Dr. V. Gnanasigamani has published it with a commentary. He is of opinion that the poet might have composed this extensively or he might have planned to do so.\(^{21}\)

The poet begins this small work with the words ‘இந்தவகடம’ following Sēkkilar.

‘இந்தவகடம் முன்னே மேற்குத்துள்ள யயாவம்
அவிந் நீர்நசு அகிலா விளகாந’\(^{22}\)

The poet gives the first stanza of the first section of Rakshanya Yāthirigam as an invocatory song. It is to be noted here that the poet begins that song with ‘இந்த பங்கும் பூச்சுெடல் தெய்தற்’ following the invocatory song of Kambar which begins with ‘இந்த பங்கும் தோன்றா விளகை’.\(^{23}\)

In the first thirty lines of his Akaval the poet describes the majestic grandeur of God in heaven. In the following lines, he narrates the mighty acts of God and finishes with the word ‘சயகிக’ like Tamil religious poets. Here are a few lines in illustration:

\[
\text{தூர துறுத்து தம் காவதாம்!}
\text{சனிமூலம் மெட திருத்தாணல் பங்கும்!}^{24}\]
\text{அன்புகு மண்ட ஆனையில் பங்கும்!}
\text{மன்னருக்கு கருவிகள் என திற்கு பங்கும்!}^{24}\]
\text{மைத்தாக வைத்து ஜானியில் பங்கும்}
\text{ஆசாகம் மண்ட ஆனையில் பங்கும்!}^{25}\]

Krishna Pillai has written his prose work Rakshanya Samaya Nirṇayam following Tamil religious traditions. He has written this work adopting the method of presenting the religious tenets of other religions and refuting them as shown by Arulnandi Śivācariar in Śivajñāna Siddhiā. This work bears the sub-title ‘முன்ன குறித்து விளகாநூர், வேத குறிக்கும்’. In the list of works the poet gives as helpful in preparing this work, the following names of books: Upaniṣads, Bhāgavatam, Mahā Bhāratam, Śivadhar-mottaram, Viṣṇu Purāṇam, Kanda Purāṇam, Tattvanijānubhogasāram, Kaivalyanavanitam, Oliviloṭukkam, Siddhiār, Arangathandādi, and others. In this work the author explains the dogmas of twelve
religions in 126 pages. In the final chapters (‘தேவாரம்’
‘வேத்திரிகாம்’), he tries to establish Christianity as the religion of
salvation. Bishop Appasamy observes that it was Krishna Pillai
who was engaged in explaining Christian Theology by Tamil back-
ground after Robert De Nobili. It is true that in this work
Krishna Pillai attacks other religions. Especially he has attacked
image worship. In support he has sought the help of the writings
of Paṭṭinattār and Šivāvākiyār. Appasamy explains his stand as
follows: “Instead of expounding the Christian doctrine of worship
from the Biblical authorities alone, he has also used the insights
of the Hindu thinkers. His conviction is that God had revealed
himself also to them.”

This work is written in an obscure style followed by the
Tamil scholars of the past century. Krishna Pillai has used very
many Sanskrit words. The first edition of the work came out in
1898 and the second in 1956. It may be mentioned here that
this work is not as popular among Tamil Christians as Krishna
Pillai’s Yaṭhrigam and Manoharam.

KRISHNA PILLAI IN TAMIL RELIGIOUS TRADITION

Krishna Pillai tries to present the scenes of Christian’s long
spiritual journey in the religious background of Tamil country.
We may say that he has made Christian a Tamilian. He makes
him sing songs in Tēvāram metre when he gets a conviction of
his sins and when he gets an experience of devotion as a foretaste
of bliss. He makes him invite people addressing them as “our
kith and kin” (நம்பும் என்னோம்!) and “People of the world” (ஒல்குகர்
உலகே! ) in order to share with them his joy. Further, he makes
his Tamil Christian get some experiences which are not available
to Bunyan’s Christian.

In the circumstances when Bunyan wrote his work, there was
no necessity to make any mention about creation in the Bible
or the return of Israel from Exile in Babylon or the life of Jesus
or about descriptions of heaven in the Bible. He knew that most
of his readers were Christians. So, there was no need to explain
to them these things. But Krishna Pillai has inserted them all in
his epic at proper places. He had a longing to present to Tamil people Biblical material in poetic form. Since he has composed his epic following Kambar, he had longed to mention Biblical stories and incidents as Kambar has inserted minor episodes here and there in his Rāmayaṇam.

The evangelist whom Christian meets at first instructs him briefly, gives him a scroll and asks him to study it. This is found in the original of Bunyan. But Krishna Pillai makes the evangelist to speak at length to Christian about Biblical stories and history.

When Christian enquires the evangelist which is the way to the joyful city of salvation, the latter begins to describe the grandeur of heaven. This section bears the title Paramarājyappāḍalam (பாரம்ராஜ்யப்பாடலம்).

When Krishna Pillai describes heaven, the scenes of the celestial residences found in the purāṇas of our country present themselves to his view. There the cloud of grace raises up, draws the water from the sea of love, covers the mount of salvation and then pours down the rain of mercy, it is said. Hence the consequent surging flood of virtue is said to be flowing in that country as Jivagaṅgai:

"அத்தன்மையால் கிருட்டினரின் காரணமால் பல்வேறு நாடங்களில்

கிருட்டின் குள்ளற்ற குணாகந்த நேர்ந்து என்று

புரட்டுவும் கோயில்கள் மற்றும் பலரிசுக்கும் விளைவு நிகழ்கிறது

உண்மையாளர் சேமச்சேமச்சேமச்சேமச்சேமச்சேமச்சேமச்சேமச்சே").

Speaking about heaven, he could not but thing of the Karpaga tree. So he speaks about that as well. The heavenly host of angels and the redeemed who live there are said to be enjoying their stay under the shade of Karpaga tree. They are said to be spending their time in the service of God:

"கொம்பு கொண்டை காலியில் கிூம்பகமாற்கிறது கலப்பதாராக

தமிழும் வெள்ளமும் கேந்தர் கொல்லப்பட்டதான்")

Speaking about the construction of the Holy city, he presents it in the likeness of the sacred temples of the Tamil Country.
There is the shrine of the Holy one. Contiguous to it, he says, are the temple of the Son and the Hall of the Holy spirit. This holy city is praised by him as *uccitapaṭṭānam* (அச்சித்தா பாட்டாய்) and *ponnagaram* (பொன்னாகரம்). He calls it also as the ancient mount of Zion where the three peaks of Trinity shine forth. He gives a stanza wherein are mentioned the temple on the mount, the hall which is there, the inner shrine and the sound of three drums. He also calls this city *Saccidānandapuri* (சக்கி஦ாணநந்தபுரி).

When one goes through these stanzas, one cannot but think of the description of the *Saccidānanda* states of God by Umarupulavar in his *Sirappurānam* in the following words:

"ஞங்காரையம் ஃவங்வைவாம் அதிவிகர
சாக்ஶிக்கு தீமையும் அதிவிகரம்..."

Similarly, when one reads about *Karpagattaru* (கர்பாகத்தரு) and *Kumaran Kovil* (குமரான் கோவில்) one cannot but rejoice considering here also what Umaruppulavar says when he speaks about Abithalibu, the paternal uncle of the prophet Muhammad as follows: "இருக்க வலிபும் விளையாடி உணவில் விளையாடியன்" M. M. Ismail has quoted these lines. He comments that in *Sivāppuraṇām* the Arab land becomes the Tamil land. So far as Krishna pillai is concerned, heaven itself becomes the Tamil country!

The poet ascribes to Biblical characters some conventional behaviour peculiar to Tamil culture. For example, in describing how Adam and Eve led their domestic life very well in the garden of Eden, he says they worked hard, ate roots and fruits and bathed in the river. He further adds that they entertained the guests from the celestial regions:

"அடம் கொண்டும் எவோசும் தோள்ளை மைக்குப் பக்தா கோண்டு
சிக்கப்பாம் காத்தால் மறை தீயமிருந்த வரும்
அதிகாரம் காத்து பற்னகால்வியும் அமர் தாமுய தா
சுற்றுக்காலின் பராட்டியும் புனித சுயமிற்கியதம் துணைமாக்"
He sees Adam as a *Rishi* and Eve as a *Rishipatni* and remarks that they both were doing penance daily in the garden of Eden.

Devotion, Faith and Love show Christian the three places the library, the arena and the mount of bliss. The scene of their showing the mount Bliss resembles the scene of Rama showing many scenes in *Vanam Pugu padalam* (வனம் புகூ படலம்) and *Cittirakūḍappadalām* (சித்திரகுட்டப்படலம்). The last foot of these stanzas ‘parāy’ (பராய) ‘kāṇāy’ (காணை) of Kambar are adopted by Krishna Pillai also. As a sign of the establishment of the kingdom of God on mount Bliss, there are found scenes of grace. He lists one after another the scenes of the age of Truth, mentioned in the Old Testament of the Bible, at the advent of the Messiah.

In one of the stanzas, the Virgins of the Castle Beautiful show to Christian the sky—scraping temples, āśrams, the hermitages and huts.

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"மடனெய்க்கிற செயினியர் விலங்குகளை மகினமா
தோற்றாடி செயினியர் பாதுகாக்க மோதிசைத்திகின்றார்களோ
அமா என்ற தமனை என்ற அம்மனை அன்றுமோ
என்று கிழக்கை யாக்காசை குற்றுபோன் மோத்து!"
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In describing the blessings of the Messianic age, the poet follows the two divisions of Hindu religious life namely the domestic state and the ascetic stage. He longs to see the Hindu religious pattern in the Messianic concept.

In the same manner, the poet refers to ideas about Godhead. We saw in the previous lecture the *Saccidananda* concept of God that attracted greatly Vedanayagam Sastriyar. We noted that he used the term along with Christian God-names. Krishna Pillai associates the Godhead of *Sat*, *Cit* and *Ānandam* with the
Trinitarian understanding of God in Christianity. While associating it, he does not mean to say that *sat* indicates God, the father, *cit*, the Son Christ and *änandam* the Holy spirit. He pictures beautifully in one of his stanzas the complete merging in a profound way. The first two lines of the stanza composed in the style of *Tirumurai* run as follows:

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"�ந்தமுநிலந்தமசுதொருளியே
சிதமுநிலந்தமசுதொருளியே சிதமுநிலந்தமசுதொருளியே"
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The same idea is conveyed in another stanza thus:

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"ஸத்தருதுகத்தபிழை சான்பிள்ளாந்
சிதமுபத்தபிழை சான்பிள்ளாந் சிதமுபத்தபிழை சிதமுபத்தபிழை"
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In another context he refers to the Trinity as follows:

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"மலர்நாய் கந்தசத்து சுந்தரபிள்ளாந்"
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He describes God as *Saccidānanda Vēndan* (*ஸோதுந்தமாயிற்று வேண்டன்*) and the abode he dwells *Saccidānanda Puri* (*ஸோதுந்தமாயிற்று புரிவு*).

Now, by calling God the Father as *Saccidānanda Vēndan* he does not limit Him as *sat* but makes it clear that *cit* and *änandam* also are His attributes. So it is evident that his idea is that ‘God the Son’ and the Holy Spirit also should be understood as *Saccidānanda maindan* (*ஸோதுந்தமாயிற்று மண்டன்*) and *Saccidānanda nīvi* (*ஸோதுந்தமாயிற்று நிவிழு*).

The saints and sages of our land have often proclaimed the truth that God is unknowable. Some of their statements are worth noting here.

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"ஸ்திராக்கத் கந்தசியத் தெருமையான்"
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(He transcends speech and knowledge)—Appar.

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"நீதிமகத்திய நீதியம்" (ununderstandable wisdom).
"துணைப்பெரிய தூம்பு பாறுபெரும்" (the unthinking Supreme Being).
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(He transcends speech and knowledge)—Appar.
(He is the One whom the inhabitants of earth, heaven and the nether world and any outsiders cannot know)—Manikavasagar.

Similarly Sundarar Sings:

"அரீ தாமேலந அன்றவாள தம்பு அவர்களின் கிட்டின் சிவபைமல...

(He is the One rarely to be understood (even) by the unceasingly worshipping Vedic Scholars).

Bearing these thoughts in mind Krishna Pillai says, "However much the angels of heaven sing praises to God, they cannot understand fully the subject of their songs" and he raises this question. "How can the dwellers on earth know Him?"

"இன்ன தாமேலந தம்பு தம்பு அன்ற தம்பு அன்றவாள தம்பு அன்ற தம்பு அவர்களின் கிட்டின் சிவபைமல?"

Our poet has endeavoured greatly to explain, by means of words and phrases associated with Tamil religious ideas his faith that God approaches men and offers them His riches of grace through Jesus. For instance, let us look at one stanza:

இன்னைச்சரை சீமைச்சயம் சீமைச்சயம் சீமைச்சயம் சீமைச்சயம் சீமைச்சயம்

டுமனியுக்கிழ் குள்ளுரு சீமைச்சயம்

தமனியுக்கிழ் குள்ளுரு சீமைச்சயம்

தமனியுக்கிழ் குள்ளுரு சீமைச்சயம்

புரான்டு விசத்து பிசான்டு பிசான்டு

The phrases 'Divine look' (தமனியுக்கிழ்) 'Divine utterance' (சீமைச்சயம்) 'Divine touch' (டுமனியுக்கிழ்) and 'imparting divine grace' (புரான்டு) which occur in the first line of this stanza are the vocabulary of the Siddhānta indicating the actions of the Lord Śiva when he manifests Himself as the guru. Krishna Pillai ascribes them to Jesus with great enthusiasm.
Manickavasagar describes the greatness and accessibility of the grace of Siva thus: ‘the Celestial One coming down to the earth assuming the form of a divine guru’ (அது பாலூத்ததான் ஆனந்தம் வன்ற தோன்றும்), whenever the poet thinks of the incarnation of Jesus, he reveals his exultation mingled with wonder. He has endeavoured to express those feelings in a stanza based on the style of Manickavasagar. (அபிட்சு பாலூத்தம்) It is as follows:

It is clear that the poet tries to point out the human nature of Jesus by the phrases body of flesh (உடல் மாத மலர்) and ‘Divine form of flesh’ (அன்றி மாத முதலரி) having in mind the idea of incarnation and the holy appearance. In ten stanzas he addresses Jesus as ‘The great King Who assumed a human body, the holy guru of divine wisdom’

To point out the Biblical idea that man is the crown of creation and that the rest of creation is all for him, he sings as follows:

Accepting the Biblical idea that although man was created fit to live in fellowship with God, he is now in a state where he himself has broken that relationship, the poet describes the stain of sin of the fallen man with various expressions.
In some places the poet tries to apply the *Siddhāntic* terminology ‘three fold *malas*’ (மாலாஸ்) to the background of Christian Theology.

While describing the false appearance of ‘The worldly wise’ (இன்னும் சார்பானை) a character in *Yāthisligam*, who is entangled in the desires of the world, the poet remarks as follows:

The phrase ‘Sixfold perversions’ (நூறு நேரேஷ்) in this stanza denotes the conventional six vices. (காவை, கண்மை, மையை, மையை, மையை, மையை). The expression ‘three fold *malas*’ (மாலாஸ்) is frankly interpreted as நாவம், கன்மம் and மையை by the commentators of *Yāthisligam.*

In another place the poet refers to the three *malas* as fetters, ‘with the fetters of the three *malas*’.

Speaking about the grip of sin, the poet calls it ‘the inherited human guilt’ (ஸ்ரீரேஷ்பர மசாலம்) and asserts that it could be removed by the grace of God. Describing the experience of Christian at ‘the pond of life’ (சேந்தாயகைம) the poet remarks,

The poet states emphatically that the natural sin, attached to human life from antiquity or the sin which comes through birth—however strong this fetter of sin might be—could be cut off by the power of grace of God. This saying of the poet is an adaptation of the thought of St. Appar. However big the heap of piled firewood may be, a tiny spark of fire will suffice to
burn it to ashes; likewise the heap of the sin of \textit{karma} could be burnt off with merely the name of God.

Krishna Pillai who is hailed as the Poet of Redemption is also a poet of the great devotion. In his \textit{Yāthirīgām} and \textit{Manōharam} he has included hundreds of devotional hymns. Most of them are confessions. In them are found very humble confessions expressed in terms and phrases such as the following:

‘I am the worst offender of all’, ‘I am one with a hardened heart’, ‘I am a lier’, ‘a cur’ ('

We find in him the attitude of humility and submission arising out of a conviction, “I am helpless in the presence of God”. I would like to quote a hymn of his written in the metre of one of Appar’s confessional hymns which begins ‘I do not sing Thy praise as a devotee’ (பாக்காவாதி பார்க்கின்றே கை பெருமை)

Krishna Pillai depicts in many of his songs the state of his close relationship with God through devotion by addressing Him as father, mother, intimate friend and master. Especially, posing himself as the wife, he describes in twenty nine stanzas the lamentations of the soul yearning for the coming of the husband. Here is one of the stanzas in which he shows the love of the soul for Christ.
The poet beseeches in one of his songs that God should take hold of him firmly and never let him loose, since he does not have the ability to holdfast to him.

When one reads these lines one is able to discover the poet's Vaiṣṇavite background in which the fact of the mother cat grasping its young one with its mouth is emphasized. It is apparent, that he conceives the idea of the young monkey clinging to its mother. Here is a stanza in which he shows how tightly he takes hold of Lord Jesus in his heart.

It is to be noted here that the idea of the devotee getting hold of God tightly and at the same time resting in the embrace of God Who is like a human mother feeding her baby is a Biblical thought which attracted Krishna Pillai in the book is Psalms, a devoted Hebrew Poet sings; 'My soul clings to thee; thy right hand upholds me'.

The bhakti poets of our land saw in the temples the significance of the sacred form of God, rejoiced over it and expressed the feelings of their heart in their songs. Likewise, Krishna Pillai also visualizes Jesus hanging on the cross and depicts elaborately the excellence of that holy vision. In a section entitled 'Vision of Faith' (Sīrō Balā) he describes in ten stanzas the vision of the cross as he sees it, following Peyālvār who saw the sacred form at Tirukōvalur and song as follows:
Krishna Pillai has also followed Appar who was given the holy vision at Tiruvaliyaru to which he refers thus:

"..."*48

He has understood quite well that the cross is a symbol of contradiction and paradox. He observes that things that cannot be united are blended together there. He is eager to point out that he who hangs on it helpless, abandoned by everybody, bearing a strong blow of defeat, is in truth the victor. In a stanza he brings out the idea thus:

He sees that the One hanging on the cross bleeding and head bowed down is the One Who crushes the head of the devil and pulls down his standard. Things that cannot be united, he sees united. He presents a new kind of scene before the mental eyes through the hymn. He shows that humiliation and exaltation are inseparable in the cross. Exaltation is not just embodied in humiliation. Humiliation is indeed exaltation. The poet has sung all the ten stanzas with this understanding of the Cross. He rejoices in ascribing to Jesus hanging on the Cross such figurative words as the bhakti poets of our land use in reference to the beautiful sight of God, as gold (அர்த்தர்), ruby (இயற்ற), pearl (ஆப்பட்டிள்), the over burning lamp (சதுர்வாள் விளக்கம்), nectar (அர்த்தர்), and sweet fruit (இமலக்கி). These are to be found in the following two verses.

*48

T-8
Following the Saivite Saints in their composition of ‘Namacivāya Padigam’ Krishna Pillai has composed eleven verses under the caption Tirunāmappadigam (சிற்றநாமப்பதிகம்). The first verse runs as follows:

We do not know at what stage in his life the poet composed this hymn. But there is an instance which took place at the last stage of his life, just a little before he breathed his last. This incident indicates to what extent the statements of his verses in “Tirunāmappadigam” were bound with his life and convictions.

Am Carmichael came to call on him at his deathbed. She was informed that the poet was unconscious. She wrote the name ‘Jesus’ (சீசு) on a piece of cardboard and held it before Krishna Pillai. His face brightened at the sight of it. He smiled and turned to raise his right hand. Those who were near helped him. He fixed his index finger on those letters and it remained there when his life departed.

When we read through this hymn with this background we can understand how inspiring are the words in the stanzas of Tirunāmappadigam.

Such stanzas are found in it.

Epilogue:

In the past century when many of the Tamil Christians disregarded deliberately Tamil culture and Tamil religious ideas
and practices, the literary services of Vedanayagam Sastriyar and Krishna Pillai are praiseworthy indeed.

Dr. P. D. Devanandan while describing the background of the religions points out the relation between creed, cultus and culture. Culture is wide and extensive. Many religions can come under its sway. In the background of their worship could be seen the pleasing and creative interaction. Creed will not easily yield to interaction. Nevertheless, there is a scope for rethinking which will result in what Hocking calls ‘Reconception’ of the doctrines of one religion in the light of the corresponding ones in other religions.

These two poets have beautifully related Christian Creed and worship with the Tamil cultural heritage in their works and have shown the importance of indigenisation for a meaningful presence of Christianity in Tamil Nadu.

It is true these poets did not endeavour to produce systematic theological works. But it may be boldly said that they paved the way for theologians like V. Chakkarai, Chenchaiah, A. J. Appasamy, Savarirayan Jesudasan and others of the present century to spread among Christians deeper understanding of inter-religious encounter and fellowship. In this respect, these two poets are pioneers in their own right to the present day Indian Christian Thinkers.
TANJAI VEDANAYAGAM SASTRIYAR IN TAMIL LITERARY TRADITION

1. G. S. Vedanayagam, Amalaguru Satakam, Stanza 81.
3. V. P. K. Sundaram, Arutpugazh.
6. Tanjai Vedanayagam Sastriyar, Christian Lyrics, Jepamalai, C. L. S., Madras, Stanza 188.
8. Ibid. Stanza 27.
9. Ibid. Stanza 80.
10. Tanjai Vedanayagam Sastriyar, Jnānattālāṭṭu, Stanza 15.
12. Ibid. 27.
14. Ibid. 22.
15. Tanjai Vedanayagam Sastriyar, Jnānattachan Nāṭagam.
17. Tirukuda Rasappa Kavirayar, Kutronla Kuravanji, Kann. 32.
19. Ibid., Palaiya Adam Taru, 1.
20. Tirukuda Rasappa Kavirayar, Kutronla Kuravanji, 50.
21. Tanjai Vedanayagam Sastriyar, Bethalem Kuravanji, Singi Natana Sindu, 2
23. Tanjai Vedanayagam Sastriyar, Bethalem Kuravanji, Malai Vaḷam, 1.
24. Tirukuda Rasappa Kavirayar, Kutronla Kuravanji, 120.
26. Tirukuda Rasappa Kavirayar, Kutronla Kuravanji, 125. 5. 6.
27. Tanjai Vedanayagam Sastriyar, Bethalem Kuravanji, Singan, Singi conversation, 6.
30. Ibid. 19. 20. 17,
T-9

In this book the author has introduced very well the works like *Jnāna Nondi Nadegam*, *Jnāna Thachan Nadagam* and *Jnāna Kummi*.

33. Ibid. Ahapatru I.
34. Ibid. 12. 5.
35. Ibid. 26-8.
38. Many of these are found in *தேவ இடக்கினியம் பக்கள்*, C. L. S., In சிரியக்கு இடக்கினியம் used by Tamil Christian Congregations. 74 songs of Sastriyar are included.
41. Ibid. 9.
46. Cited by S. Balasingam Satya in his preface to D. W. Devanesan’s *Tanjai Vedenayagam Sastriyar*, p. iii.

**TANJAI VEDANAYAGAM SASTRIYAR IN TAMIL RELIGIOUS TRADITION**

2. Ibid. 49.
3. Ibid. 12.
5. Ibid. 3. 1.
6. Ibid. 3. 10.
7. John, *Bible*, 1:1. 2,
9. Perinbakkādal, 10. 84.
10. Tiruvācakam, Tiruttellēnām, 1.
12. Jepamālai, 6. 3.
13. Ibid. 6. 3.
15. Ibid. 93.
16. Ibid. 93.
17. Ibid. 86.
18. Ibid. 3.
19. Ibid. 86.
24. Tamil Christian Lyrics, Stanza, 111.
25. Ibid. 93.
31. Āraṇādhintam, 8.
32. Jepamālai, 5. 4.
33. Perinbakkādal, 4. 37.
34. Jnāna Ula, 81.
36. Ibid. p. 6.
37. Ibid. 1–4.
38. Ibid. p. 6.
40. The Bible, Adhiyagamam, 1–1.
41. Ibid. Revelation, 21: 5.
42. Tanjai Vedanayagam Sastriyar, Tamil Christian Lyrics, Stanza 21.
43. Ibid. Stanza 234.
44. Tanjai Vedanayagam Sastriyar, Jnäna Ula, 172.
45. Tamil Christian Lyrics, 350.
46. Ibid. 27.
47. Ibid. 188 & 27.
48. Ibid. 20.
49. Ibid. 89.
50. Ibid. 12.
51. Ibid. 92.
52. Tanjai Vedanayagam Sastriyar, Jepamālai, p. 6.
53. Ibid. 1.1.
54. Tiruvācakam, 3–51.
55. Ibid. 5.97.
56. Ibid. 4.212.
57. Tanjai Vedanayagam Sastriyar, Jnäna Ula, 68.
60. Tanjai Vedanayagam Sastriyar, Jepamālai, 10.1.
61. Ibid. 1–10.
62. Ibid. 1–10.
63. Tanjai Vedanayagam Sastriyar, Jnäna Ula, 427–474.
64. Tamil Christian Lyrics, Stanza 81.
65. Ibid. 21, 86.
66. Tanjai Vedanayagam Sastriyar, Jepamālai, 5. 10.
67. The Bible (O. T.), 3. 16.
KRISHNA PILLAI—THE SALVATION POET

A General Introduction

4. Krishna Pillai, Rakshanya Manoharam, 3.4.
6. This book was in the form of Manuscript for a long time. Only recently Dr. V. Gnanasigamony has seen it through the Press. He has published the booklet with useful editorial notes.
8. Ibid. p. 10.
15. Ibid. pp. XII-XIII.

KRAMA PILAI IN TAMIL LITERARY TRADITION

1. *Kambarāmāyanam*, Bala Kandam, Ātrupadalam, 19.
7. *Kambarāmāyanam*, Bala Kandam, Naharapadalam, 73.
9. Ibid. Nidhanaparuvam, Marana choozhal irutha Padalam, 16.
10. Ibid. Kumaraparuvam, Ratshanya Carithapadalam, 320.
11. Ibid. Adiparuvam, Suvisesha Margapadalam, 23.
12. Ibid. 15.


22. Krishna Pillai, *Potri Tiru Ahaval*, 1,

23. Ibid. 40.

24. Ibid. 42.

25. Ibid. 51.


27. Ibid. p. 99.


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**KRISHNA PILLAI IN TAMIL RELIGIOUS TRADITION**


2. Ibid. 156.

3. Ibid. 125.


6. Ibid. p. 73.


8. Ibid. 8.


10. Ibid. Stanza 62.


‘*‘கைலையின் பெண்கள் திகையிற்றுக்குள் ஆழ்வு கல்கியில் குறிதி஥ுனா’.

“He saw a most pleasant mountainous country, beautiful with woods, Vinyards, fruits of all sorts, flowers also; with springs and fountains, very delectable to behold. Then he asked the name of the country. They said that it was Immanuel’s Land, and it is as common, said they, as this hill is, to and far all the pilgrims. And when thou comest there, from thence, said they, thou mayest see to the gate of the celestial city, as the shepherds that live there will make appear”.

(Pilgrims Progress, p. 47).
15. Ibid. Sirusti Padalam, Stanza 15.
17. Ibid. 29.
35. Ibid. Stanza 10.
36. Ibid. Stanza 1.
37. Ibid. Tiru Nāmap Padigam, Stanza 1.
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Indian Aesthetics  
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by T. P. Meenakshisundaran

In Tamil

என்னையின் விக்கின் குடியரசு  
 தலைவராக இருந்து வருந்து

முதல் இந்திய ஸ்மரணம்

எண்ணன் குருதியை

தமிழ். திருக்குத்தோட்டம்

சிங்கள் என்னையின்

முதல் தமிழ் பெரும்

சிங்கள என்னைின்

முதல் தமிழ்

சிங்களாட்சியான்

சிங்கள என்னைின்

முதல் தமிழ்

சிங்களாட்சியான்

சிங்கள என்னைின்

முதல்

In English and Tamil

Islam, Indian Religions and Tamil Culture  
by M. M. Ismail and S. M. Sulaiman
“சோதனையை எதிரியாலோர் ஒரு கருத்துக்கு கூறலாம் தனது போர்க்களிலிருந்து வந்த பொழுதுக் காலம் சிறியதாகவும் அதன் சிலையே.”

“புராணங்கள் விளக்கமற்று பராமரிக்க மறு காப்பிற்கு சிறியதாக இல்லை.”