Chapter IV
The Politics of Employing the Concept of Translation in the Act of Constituting a Single Linear Chronological History of Tamil Literature

This chapter attempts to argue the linear chronology of Tamil literary culture is a construct of the modern age, initiated and developed by the attempts for writing history of Tamil literature. Even prior to the attempts are initiated; the term Tamil literature is widely in currency, but not in the sense as it is practiced at present. In other words, the term Tamil literature has normally been used to indicate certain texts unlike all the texts composed in Tamil language down the ages. Only with the attempts of writing a linear history of Tamil literature, the limitation of the term has been extended to the present understanding. Therefore this chapter accounts various initiations to understand the literary activities in Tamil into a single linear order, by doing so it describes how an uninterrupted unified Tamil literary culture of more than two thousand years has actually been constituted. Further, as the argument emphasises that the single linear chronological structure of Tamil literary tradition is a construct of the modern times, the politics practiced during the act of constructing the order is one of the central concerns of this chapter. The concept of translation, either conceptually or as a concert product, is employed subtly to ‘retrieve’ certain old practices and their legacy into the modern construct of the linear history. This chapter thus discusses how the concept of translation is employed to constitute an uninterrupted literary culture of Tamil with subtly retrieving certain legacy of the old modes of practicing literature in Tamil language.
As the clarity in understanding the notions such as tradition, culture and history are merely constructed categories and that also becomes the centre of the approach, the study intended to focus on literary historiography in Tamil which would invariably discuss the ways through which the construction of history of Tamil literature had been established. The discussion in the previous chapter however explains the two broad modes of practicing literature in Tamil during the pre-19th century: traditionally practiced religion centred textual activities and the European mode of textual activities which was supported by the print medium. Further, how the European textual influences gradually transformed traditionally understood meaning of literature, literary activities and history into the modern/European meaning. The modern understanding of literature and text evidently brought any written, including the oral by translating it into the paper, documents in Tamil under the term ‘Tamil literature’ regardless any limitations mainly in terms of religion that were predominantly practiced during the pre-19th century. This act of bringing together into a common category, for the first time, introduced the very presence of many texts into multiply practiced literary activities in Tamil. However, multiple practices of traditional canonical structure were unable to accommodate the new category of Tamil literature which includes texts across religion, region and caste discriminations, conditioning that the text must have been scripted in Tamil language. In this context, centring the modern logic of text and literature, the attempt for categorising texts in Tamil had initiated which later constituted a single linear past for Tamil literature.

The focus of this chapter is therefore related to the nature, intention and politics of writing a linear historical Tamil literary past. Although the European textual activities are introduced to Tamil region as early as the 16th century and from then European practices are
gradually started influencing the traditionally practiced canons, the visible cleavage existed in terms of the subject matter and material aspect of literature only during the 18th century as discussed in the previous chapter. In other words, in spite of negotiations between the European textual activities and traditionally practiced multiple canons, they, the two modes, existed and continued their legacy. Contrarily, various socio-political changes and the rise of educated mass and thus readership in Tamil indeed compelled to relook at the textual activities in Tamil down the ages. However, the European modernity has gradually scripted the funeral lines to the traditionally practiced canons. The traditional Tamil scholarship entered into the modern attempts to write a linear history of Tamil literature. Further, the attempt to understand the literary past has invariably linked with the religion-centred traditional Tamil literary practices. Writing history includes the religion based past in its construction, but in the modern/rational cover. To put it differently, the traditionally dominated discourses are subtly justified adopting the modern logic and thus allowed to be continued their monopoly even in the modern structure.

Two major activities played a central role in Tamil literary historiography. The first one is related to the publication of texts in Tamil. When traditionally practiced scholarship travelled away from religiously endorsed canons and started adopting the new understanding of Tamil literature, the texts across religions were put together and the arrival of these texts strengthened Tamil literary sphere. The mainstream Vaithika centred scholarship took the lead to publish the texts in Tamil belonged various canonical structure. The second one however associated to the temporal consciousness of the texts. The central concern of this chapter discusses these two points in detail. Before doing so, it discusses the background of the chronological consciousness among Tamils.
However, this chapter is itself a history; a history of the history of Tamil literature, particularly discusses the history of how the structure of Tamil literary history through which our present knowledge on the very idea of Tamil is constituted. Therefore, this is a study on history 'making', i.e. historiography. The linear historical consciousness among Tamils, as the term historiography is understood at present, regarding their literature and their literary past has a short history of only two centuries. From the 19th century the attempts to write history/ies of Tamil literature were actually started. As discussed in the previous chapter, the European textual practices particularly translations have influenced the multiply practiced literary activities in Tamil and as a result the concept of text and also the understanding about Tamil literature are largely changed. The printed texts, formal education and the translations of text books subtly redefine the age old meanings of text and the notion of literature which was defined by the affiliation of religious world views during that period. Although multiply practiced literary activities were influenced by the European textual practices in Tamil and as a result the limitation of the old ways of practicing literature had largely changed. However, the linear way of imagining Tamil literary past was actually started only during the mid-19th century.

Prior to the 19th century, Tamil literary production and its related activities were largely in the hands of religions. These religions and their world views determined the nature and the purpose of the literary production. Therefore, the texts in pre-modern times had been produced and understood in relation with their affiliation to particular religious philosophy. The various religious world views and contradictions among them serve the content of literature. Further, the concept of literature and texts were practiced as an integral component of religions, used as an effective mean to spread the religious values. Contradictions and the
rivalry attitude among the religions limit the practice of literature into many canons. One


canon of a particular religion was unaware of the texts practiced in other canons. Thus the


literature of Tamil prior to the 19th century was scattered in nature and very much limited to


the religious politics of that age.


As discussed in the previous chapter, the translations from the European languages


although inclined towards Christian religious faith, considerably influenced the multiple


canons of Tamil literature. The European’s textual practices and their technology such as the


printing press, prose style and formal schoolings were gradually shifting the soul of literary


activities from the religious clutches and made attempts to reorder the literary practices and


also understand them. For instance, the print fixed the script of Tamil language. Scholars in

Tamil studies argue that the script of Tamil language is kept on changing in every century

until the 14th century. Another scholar printed Thirukural book in seventeen different scripts

form representing the trajectory of changing the form of the Tamil scripts down the ages.63

But from the 16th century onwards Tamil script is fixed and not changed largely due to the

print. The prose style is another vital thing that questions the hegemony of poetic form in

Tamil literary practice. However, the European’s interaction with Tamil language initiates

the changes in understanding regarding what is literature in Tamil against the religious

centred canonical practices of that age.


The attempts for understanding the multiple ways of practicing literary canons into a


single unified Tamil literary tradition, for the first time, organise texts into a single order

regardless of their religious canonical limitations. Thus, the act of writing history of Tamil


63 (Sarojini Pakiyamuthu 2000)
literature accommodates the texts from various pre-modern canons and re-arranging them into a linear-chronological mode. In other words, the attempt of writing history of Tamil literature would be the act of erasing various canonical boundaries of the texts drawn by the religions/sects and re-ordering them into a chronological pattern. Since this chapter travels around the attempts and the formation of the structure of the Tamil literary history which is commonly accepted among the scholars at present, it primarily centres around the 19th and 20th centuries because these two centuries are the time limit in which the attempt for writing a linear history of Tamil literature is initiated and further developed. The justification for this temporal limitation is subtly connected with the purpose of the study, i.e. the consciousness of ‘Tamil’ as understand presently is the product of the attempts of writing history/ies, initiated during 19th century. The background of this consciousness is related with various social changes like the beginning of the formal education system; paper as a new material that facilitated writing; print’s presence and its consequences such as easy accessibility and adoptability etc., and also many debates and discussions regarding the term ‘Tamil’ during the late 19th and the 20th centuries.

The act of replacing the religion-centric canons by constituting the chronology as a new centre although appears to be ‘beyond religious hegemony’; it also subtly sets the base for the dominant tone of pre-modern period to be continued as it was earlier and also with more assertiveness in the ‘new’ order. The typical example of this kind would be the continuing dominance of the Vaitika religion in the Tamil literary history. Many literary historians of Tamil accept the claim that the dominant tone of Tamil literary world is set by
the Vaitika\textsuperscript{64}, especially the Caiva\textsuperscript{66} sect. (Civattampi, 2010: 174-75; Arunaccalam, 1974: 176) Various reasons are at centre in constituting the hegemony of the Vaitika literature over the other sects/religious literature in Tamil and also the process of normalising the Vaitika discourses as Tamil’s own discourse. Even though many possible speculations are explained by various scholars to substantiate the Vaitika dominance on Tamil literature, there are no clear arguments which explain how Tamil became the possession of the Vaitika sects or the other way round. But interestingly, the actualization that ‘the Vaitika sects are the sects of the Tamils’ own’ has continuously been reiterated by the literary histories of Tamil and by doing so, they constitute the discourse of Tamil which carries the meaning of ‘the Vaitika-Tamil’ bond as normal one and also the popular. However, although many reasons are provided by the historians to substantiate, it is visible that the literary history of Tamil is overall dominated by the Vaitika sects. The continuation of the Vaitika religious supremacy from the pre-modern times to the modern historiography is largely made possible by a shrewd deployment of the term translation. The notion of translation has effectively been used by the Vaitika religion to retrieve its dominance in the process of writing the history of Tamil literature.

Therefore, this chapter argues that the very idea of Tamil literary tradition is a constructed conceptual category, principally initiated and developed by the attempts of writing history of Tamil literature. Although the acts of writing a linear history of Tamil literature are largely influenced by the modern western thoughts and also appear to be an

\textsuperscript{64} The word Vaitika denotes the Vedic in Tamil.

\textsuperscript{65} The word sect refers to the Tamil words ‘Malam’ and ‘Camayam’. These Tamil words are translated as religion in the present context. But here instead of religion the word sect is used to denote the various Vaitika School of thoughts. Whenever Buddhism and Jainism are referred the word religion and sect are used interchangeable based on the context.

\textsuperscript{66} One of the sects of the Vaitika School which reveres the god Shiva as the Supreme Being.
independent by setting away from the religious domination, they subtly incorporate the old order and its hegemony into the modern history. Therefore, the act of writing history adopts certain techniques by which it argues that the history of Tamil literature is modern and at the same time it allows the traditional monopoly of hierarchal system to play the role as it was in the pre-modern order/s into its structure. Thus this order of modern history became the politics. On one hand the history of Tamil literature erases the limitation in understanding the nature and purpose of literary production in Tamil, imposed upon by the religious world views. It also subtly reorders and translates the pre-modern hegemony of the Vaithika religion into modern order as it is the actual nature of literary activities in Tamil. Moreover, modernization of the old understanding as the nature of Tamil literary practices employs the concept of translation to meet its politics. However, the transformation of the hegemony of the old modes into modern has subtly been done by the process of selection and rejection of texts in Tamil language.

Nonetheless, the inception of writing history of Tamil literature is invariably connected to the act of modernization, which was commonly accepted phenomenon among the scholars and historians of Tamil studies. As noted earlier, the entire activities related to history of Tamil literature are primarily initiated during the 19th century and all these activities are closely centered on the printed texts and the colonial pedagogical system. This intimacy between ‘modern’ systems such as colonial educations, print technology and so on, primarily introduced by the western colonizer and the attempts of writing literary history in Tamil clearly marks the importance of the western influences in the very act of literary historiography. The various attempts related to history of Tamil literature are largely dated back to the times where the print based textual activities started dominating the literary
activities in Tamil language. Unlike the pre-modern modes of textual practices, the print centered European textual practice understands the meaning of text and literature in a broad sense.

Contrary to this, some arguments are proposed that attempt to argue the historical consciousness among Tamils has a long history of more than at least fifteen centuries and arguing that the historical sense of the Tamils is only related with the western influences and ‘to begin at that historical point of time (that is late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries), and take it as the beginnings of the study of literary history in Tamil, which would be too much of an Eurocentric view of Tamil literary history.’ Even though these arguments trace out the various events to locate Tamil’s consciousness regarding history in the pre-modern times and thereby their knowledge on the literary past could possibly be dated back some centuries ago, especially many centuries prior to the influences of the western thoughts into Tamil, the substantiating evidences proposed to prove the claim to be caught up within a particular religious activities. Moreover, the events quoted as evidences are highly mythical and non-chronological in the order. The emphasis is in constituting the time limits of the historical consciousness among Tamils prior to the western influences have a different politics. And that shall be discussed in detail in the following pages.

Therefore, by the influences of the modern thoughts, the very meaning of Tamil literature is extended to all texts, conditioning that the texts have to be scripted in Tamil language. This new meaning of Tamil literature was introduced and further developed in the same order, principally against the religious centred canon/s of the pre-19th century by the

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67 (Sivathamby 24)
attempts for writing a linear history of Tamil literature. Numerous texts and scholarly articles that discuss the history of Tamil literature are invariably reiterating the impression that the literary activities in Tamil maintain an uninterrupted continuity of more than two thousand years. Further, the purpose and the scholarship of these writings are actually pitched in their logical ways of finding some connection among the various centuries’ literary practices and by doing so a linear continuous structure of Tamil literary past is discovered.

None of the scholarly works are not only stridently articulating that the concepts like tradition, culture and literary activities as a single whole are mere conceptual constructions than that of something ‘real’ in nature existed per se, but also failing to discuss the fact that the origin of understanding Tamil literary past in a linear chronological mode began only during the 19th century, principally by the influences of the modern thoughts. In turn, the writings related to the history of Tamil literature are simply bypassing various politics around the literary historiography. By doing so they invariably emphasis the singularity of Tamil literary past and as a result the studies that concentrate on the origin and the developments of Tamil literary history writing become a less focused field in the academic/intellectual domain. However, this chapter attempts to break the silence behind not discussing the genesis of the chronological consciousness among Tamils in detail. By doing so, it argues that the continuous production of texts in Tamil language is indeed an age old activity, but not as ‘Tamil literature’ because the very idea of ‘Tamil literature’ is a conceptual category that has actually been emerged by the influences of the modern thoughts and also by the attempts of constituting a linear history of Tamil literature.

Moreover, a linear historical understanding of Tamil literature as mentioned above is developed by the influences of the European textual activities in Tamil language. More than
five centuries of continuous literary activities of the Europeans in Tamil speaking region subtly influence the multiple literary practices in Tamil and as a result the texts in Tamil language are necessitated to be arranged in a linear order during the 19th century. However, Robert Caldwell68, is regarded as the first scholar and historian who drafted a linear chronological order of centuries old literary texts in Tamil. His magnum opus *A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South-Indian Family of Languages* was first published in 1856 discusses the uninterrupted literary activities of Tamil language over the ages under the subtitle cycles. He identifies the earliest extant literature in Tamil belongs to the Jaina cycle and that was followed by one after another cycles and at last describes the 19th century literary activities under the subheading ‘modern writers’ as the seventh cycle in the chronological ladder. Following the works of Robert Caldwell, notwithstanding some books were appeared both in English as well as Tamil language concerning the history of Tamil poets and also the literature of Tamil language.

For instance, the preface written on 06th June 1930 to his book *Illaiyia Varalaru* (History of Literature), commonly considered as the first history of Tamil literature in Tamil language, Kāntimatinā Cuppiraṇaṭiya Pillai69 not only acknowledges some of the works that are published prior to it in the same line of thoughts but also explains the reasons for considering them not as a proper or complete ‘history of literature’ in spite of their close similarities with history and Tamil literature. By emphasizing a lineal and chronological

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68Robert Caldwell (7 May 1814 – 28 August 1891) was a missionary and linguist, who academically established the Dravidian family of languages. He served as Assistant Bishop of Tirunelveli from 1877.

69Kāntimatinā Cuppiraṇaṭiya Pillai (1888-1945), popularly known as Kaa.Su.Pillai. He is a renowned Tamil scholar and lawyer by profession. He is well-versed in English, Tamil, Sanskrit and Malayalam and authored more than 50 books and articles in Tamil and English.

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mode of order, one of the mentioned pioneering works, *Tamil Pulavar Carittiram* (History of Tamil poets) by Cutmikam Kumāracāmippulavar⁷⁰ has been sent out of the premises of the ‘history of literature’. Further, Pulavar’s work is accused for not including ‘some of the appropriate’ poets in it, whereas other work titled *Tirāvīṭa Pirakācikai* by Capāpati Nāvalar⁷¹ is also excluded in the same manner by stating that ‘as though it has accounted the nature of some of the best works, it could not be considered as the complete history of Tamil literature’. He also mentions about his difference of opinion with an uncompleted book titled *Tamil Varalaru* (The History of Tamil) by Srīnivācapiḷai of Thanjavur. Further, he acknowledges a concise yet the proper history of Tamil literature in English drafted by M.S.Purnalingam Pillai⁷². Notably, all the works he identifies as the writings that are related to the history of Tamil literature are invariably the products of the 19th century. Moreover, the nature, mode of approach and the tone of these works are subtly exposing the western influences in them.

However, Pillai’s introduction though acknowledges the role of the western influences in the very act of writing history of Tamil literature and refers the works that are composed prior to it in the same line of thoughts, indeed not principally engaging with the various issues of the history of writing the history of Tamil literature, i.e the issues of literary historiography in Tamil. The huge amount of literature in the Tamil language and its history

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⁷⁰ Cutmikam Kumāracāmippulavar (1854-1922), was a well-known Sri Lankan Tamil scholar and poet. He along with other activists was instrumental in the revival of native traditions in Sri Lanka that had been long dormant during the previous 400 years of colonial rule by various European powers.

⁷¹ Capāpati Nāvalar (1845/1846-1903), was famous 19th century Tamil scholar from Jaffna. He contributed a lot to Tamil and Caivism, associated with the Caiva mutts of Tamilnadu.

⁷² Munnirpallam Sivasubramaniam Purnalingam Pillai (1866 -1947) was a Tamil writer, scholar, historian and Dravidologist. In 1904, Pillai published A Primer of Tamil Literature, the first comprehensive study of Tamil literature as a historical narrative. The narration was strongly imbibed with a Dravidian supremacist point of view.
produced over the past two centuries are largely narrating either the content of the texts or the text’s chronological order in the structure of the history of Tamil literature without addressing any of the issues of the literary historiography. Nonetheless, the focused studies on the Tamil literary historiography become the important sources mainly because when the very attempts of writing history are considered as the process by which the structure of the Tamil literature is actually constituted, the nature and the covert intentions of these attempts are inevitably turning into the centre of the discussion.

Nevertheless, his views on the concept of the history of literature is explained by his reference about ‘the history of literature of a languages is a reference text which clearly exposes that the literature are the life chart of the people’73 and also by his note that ‘these kind of the history is well written in English like the European languages, and even Sanskrit also has this kind of history written by an Englishman and others’ are evidently discussing the influences of the west in the very understanding of the idea of the history of literature. However, the writings and the debates on the history of Tamil literature are quite evidently explaining the very act of literary historiography is a colonial modern phenomenon. The reference of ‘modern’ here is not to denote a particular temporal limit alone, but also indicating the subtle ‘newness’ in understanding the very ideas such as history, literature and the new modes of perceiving these ideas by centering the extant written sources and also by writing new materials in colonial times.74

The literary historiography in Tamil therefore is not only the act of mere historicizing the literature and by doing so a linear chronology is constituted, but also be employed as a

73 (Cuppiramaqiya Pillai 2)
74 Ibid 2-3
tool through which the politics of the historicizing could be traced down. In other words, the
enquiry into the process of literary historiography is not only explaining the order of literature
as produced by the act of historicizing, but also offering subtle hints that narrates the politics
of historicizing literature. And as a result an order of the literature is produced in a particular
fashion and also exposing the covert intentions for that particular order. The idea of writing
history is therefore a political act of establishing ‘the past’ in the present realm. The politics
of constituting ‘the past’ is primarily centering on the issues of the present and the
constructed past in many instance works as a mere supporting event to the politics of the
present.

Interestingly, another subtle yet important issue that is largely unfocused in the
discussions concerning to the history of Tamil literature until now is one of the prime focus
of this chapter. The issue is the notion of ‘Tamil literature’ itself. Against the commonly
understood notion that the act of literary historiography in Tamil is only arranging the
literature that are already existed as a one complete whole into chronological order, this
chapter tries to discuss that the notion of Tamil literature as we understand it today is
constituted by the very act of writing literary history in Tamil. In other words, this chapter is
arguing that the literature in Tamil language is translated as ‘the Tamil literature’ only by the
attempts of writing history. However, this mode of understanding is not denying the very
presence of the long literary past of the Tamil literary activities; rather, it initiates a
discussion that explains the various modes and understandings of the literary activities of
Tamil language over the centuries are coming together for the first time by the attempts of
drafting the history of Tamil literature. And by the act of this coming togetherness, the
oneness of Tamil literary tradition is actually constituted. To put it differently, the act of
literary historiography initiated during the 19th century by the colonial modernity makes an attempt to possibly gathering the literature of Tamil language that are indeed diversely existed and practiced over the ages in terms of religions, regions and castes into a single space and trying to stitch a linear chronological order as ‘the Tamil literary tradition’. The various inclusions and exclusions that are involved in the process of making ‘the Tamil literary tradition’ is one of the focal issues of this chapter.

While the discussion and the debates on the history of Tamil literature are located into the colonial modernity as mentioned above, the concept of translation becomes one of the centers of the entire argument. In other words, the idea of the western influences in the very act of writing the literary history is primarily related to the activities of translations between Tamil and other western languages. Apart from translating various modes of literary activities primarily practiced during the pre-modern times into a single linear Tamil literary tradition, the act of writing history of literature is also translating the content as well as the material aspects of Tamil literature which is very closely related to the concept of the west through its process. The continuous engagement of the western modes of textual activities into the multiple ways of textual engagements in Tamil, mainly through translations are not only introducing new genres to Tamil, but also influences, affects and redefines the Tamil’s concept of ‘text’ and literature largely. Translations, predicting of chronological literary tradition and the act of literary historiography are therefore subtly connected with each other.

As discussed earlier, the central concern of this chapter is however discussed in two ways: the first part accounts various attempts for imagining a linear history of Tamil literature, starting from Robert Caldwell’s writings to the construction of the present understanding. By carefully analyzing various structures proposed, the study traces out the
intention behind such imaginations and their politics in Tamil literary sphere. The second part deals with how by using multiple techniques the historiography retrieves the Vaithika religious supremacy into the newly constituting structure and also how it justifies the Vaithika monopoly as normal. Further, the chapter concentrates on the employment of translation in the process of constructing a single unified Tamil literary past.

As explained earlier, the linear-chronological mode of writing history by re-arranging the order/s, brought a visible change in the physical structure of the pre-modern understanding on the Tamil literature. The multiple canons of the pre-modern times become a single linear tradition in the modern order. The religious endorsed literary activities are now translated into the rational way of knowledge practices among Tamils. The God’s grace for being a literate is sidelined by considering it as a mere myth. Even thousands of Vaithika texts which were considered as monumental achievements during a century before become the unnoticeable texts at present. Interestingly, all the events through which the Vaithika, particularly Saiva monopoly was practiced, are largely changed into the modern history except the Vaithika religious hegemony. Various strategies have been employed by the literary historiography in Tamil to retain the age old religious supremacy into the modern rational structure. This hierarchy of pre-modern times is thus continuing in the modern historiography by employing various strategies of inclusion and exclusion of texts into then practiced ‘main stream’ canon, setting the notion of translation as a scale of measurement. The notion of translation in the literary historiography is however more in terms of its conceptual level than that of the concrete product. In other words, the word translation in the Tamil literary historiography has been used more as a process or as a vibrant act than as the references or the accounts of the translated texts. Hence, the focus of this research is not
merely the discussion on the notion of translation in textual level alone, rather it concentrates more about its strategic usage to include and exclude texts into the order of Tamil literary history.

The publication of texts which are not practiced by the Vaithika affiliated mainstream literary activities during the 19th century become one the central phenomenon in the history of Tamil literary historiography. This attempt brought out many texts from non-Vaithika background, rich in content and elegant in language. The number of texts from non-Vaithika affiliation is comparatively less and yet stands as a potential threat to the mainstream literary practices. However, the publishing endeavors initiated by Tamil scholars are subtly transformed the potentiality of non-Vaithika texts into the interpretations which deeply stem into Vaithika world views. In other words, the distinct nature of texts which were not practiced by the mainstream activities posed lots of impasse to interpret them. Inapproachability of these texts had been marked by the absence of their practice down the ages by the rise and the domination of the Vaithika religion. The continuous domination of the Vaithika religion among Tamil over more than ten centuries indeed forced the literary production of other religions. Further, the texts from non-Vaithika affiliation found at present were the remains of the ancient times. The early editors such as U.Ve.Ca, Tāmōtaram Piḷḷai and others explained the problems in understanding the non-Vaithika texts and the methods followed by them to interpret the texts evidently explain how those texts were translated into

75 C.W. Thamotharampillai (1832-1901) devoted his energies to the work of editing and publishing some of the oldest works of classical Tamil poetry and grammar. He published Tholkappiyam, Nachinarkinirai urai (1895), Tholkappiyam Senavariyur urai, (1868), Manimekalai (1898), Cilappatikaram (1889), Pattupattu (1889), and Purananuru (1894), all with scholarly commentaries.
meaningful literature by the employment of textual methods largely practiced in the Vaithika Mutts.

Nonetheless, the potentialities of the non-Vaithika texts were subtly nullified by the modern commentaries and notes by the editors who are commonly belonging to the mainstream literary culture. But, although less in number, the texts from non-Vaithika order predated the existing literature of the Vaithika affiliation. In other words, due to continuous Vaithika religious supremacy on the socio-political activities of Tamil over the past ten centuries, other religions were almost stopped producing and promoting the literary activities. Further, the scattered texts of non-Vaithika order were also either omitted or interpreted closely to the Vaithika structure. The commentary activities popularly practiced in-between the 10th to 15th century A.D, subtly brought the Čañkam Literature and Tolkāppiyam close to the mainstream literary practices. Nevertheless, the texts from non-Vaithika order evidently exposed the fact that they were temporally ancient in comparisons with the mainstream texts. However, the ancientness of non-Vaithika texts had potential to sideline the Vaithika mainstream practices in terms of the old religion acquaintance with Tamils.

Therefore, the traces for the Vaithika-Tamil bond are always related to the origin of Tamil language. Particularly the very existence of these two things is commonly erased and the intimate affinity between the Vaithika religion and Tamil language is argued to be one and the same. Although the Vaithika religious world view argues that the Tamil language is created by the God himself, the existing literature reveals that the Vaithika religious supremacy on Tamil was started with Bhakthi literature. However, it is a general understanding among scholars and historians that the Čañkam literature is now the ancient
extant literary corpus in Tamil language and it was followed by the Didactic literature of ‘the Black period’ and then the Bhakthi literature. Many literary historians accepted unanimously that the Caṅkam literature is the ‘bardic’ corpus; maintaining almost no relationship with the religions/sects; explaining human feelings and their life activities such as love and war.\(^76\) This section of Literature was followed by the Didactic literature which was opposite in nature to the Caṅkam corpus. The moral-ethics was the base for this literature and the nature of love and war was vehemently criticised by the Didactic literature. Immediate after this, it is said the Bhakthi literature had started and this was regarded as ‘the renaissance of Tamil’.

The connection between the non-religious Caṅkam Tamil to the Bhakthi-Vaitika Tamil was linked by the historical events. Between these two sections, as many historians narrated, the Tamil country was ruled by the Kalipera\(^77\) and the Pallava\(^78\) dynasties, both were not Tamils in their origin. Moreover, they supported Jainism and Buddhism as well. Tamil kings were lost their territory and only during the time when Bhakthi movement flourished the Tamil rulers were crowned again as the kings. One of the well received and acclaimed book by Mu. Varatārājā’s A History of Tamil Literature (1988) narrates the nature of the Caṅkam and the Bhakthi literature as follows:

After the Caṅkam period, Jainism and Buddhism gained popularity in Tamil country. As a result, importance was given to ascetic life rather than to domestic life. People despised mundane pleasure and prepared to lead a life which would guarantee them a place in heaven...the body of ethical

\(^76\) (Zvelebil 20)
\(^77\) Rulers of the northern part of present Tamil Nadu. They ruled during the 3\(^{rd}\) to 6\(^{th}\) century CE. They are considered as non-Tamils by birth and they mainly belonged to Jainism.
\(^78\) They are also the rulers of northern Tamil Nadu, reined between 3\(^{rd}\) to 9\(^{th}\) century CE. There are many ambiguities regarding their genealogy.
literature that arose between the Caṅkam and the Bhakti movement period should be set aside for obvious reason, while evaluating the trend and the growth of Tamil literature during the Bhakti movement period. It could be realised that Bhakti literature has grown by adopting the essential aspect of Caṅkam literature. The Akam poetry, which discusses the love of an unnamed hero and heroine, was modified to portray the devotee’s love of god in devotional literature. While the heroism of kings had been the theme for Puram poetry, the God’s miraculous deeds became the theme of Bhakti poetry. As the Caṅkam poems eulogise the munificence of philanthropist, so the devotional literature portrays the gracious acts of God. Description of nature forms the background for the love poems both in Caṅkam and Bhakti literature. In the case of the former, the natural scenery of the meeting of the chief character will be described. Whereas in the later scenery the beauty of the place where the temple is located will be described. (36)

Thus, the literary history of Tamil traces out the connection between the Caṅkam corpus and the Bhakthi literature by diminishing the importance of the literature produced during the ‘non-Tamils’ rule in Tamil country; based on their religious affiliation. Further, by establishing a link between the Sangam poetic structure and the Bhakthi literature, Mu. Varatarājaṇ constitues a linear tradition bypassing the literature of Jainism and Buddhism. Moreover, this description explicitly narrates the trajectory of the meaning of Tamil from non-religious Caṅkam corpus to the Vaitika religious loaded tone. This view became common among the literary historians who believed that ‘Tamil is the Vaitika’s language’.
Another important event through which the normalization of the Vaitika-Tamil bond is initiated would be the meaning of the word Tamil. The Bhakthi literature is noted for the usage of the word Tamil in multiple ways. Multiple meaning of the word is regarded as one of the strategic employment by the Vaithika religion to effectively sideline other religions/sects from Tamil identity. Thus, the clear shift in the usage of meanings of the word Tamil has started from the Bhakthi age and the continuous propagation of ‘those new meanings’ attributed to Tamil by the Vaitika sects gradually set the space for the emergence of the Vaitika sects as the religion of Tamils. Prior to the religious/Bhakthi movement, the word Tamil (based on the present chronological order of Tamil literary history) appeared some fifty four times, among them, five is from Tolkāppiyam, twenty times is from the Cankam literature and the remaining are from the Twin-Epics. The number of time the word Tamil is used prior to the Bhakthi literature is roughly four times lesser than that of the main works of Bhakthi period alone. The notable and subtle shift in the usage of the word in multiple ways brings the sense of Tamil closer to the Vaithika religion. In earlier times the word is used only to denote the meanings such as ‘rare’, ‘sweetness’, ‘rhythm’, ‘refined/accuracy’, and ‘coolness’, and also performs the role of an adjective to denote the kings and the people of the Tamil region. But, during the Bhakthi movement, for the first time, a religious tone is employed to Tamil. By emphasizing the Vaitika affiliation to the word, it is subtly used as a weapon to weaken the strength of the Buddhist’s and the Jain’s presence.

*Cilappatikāram and Manimekalai is considered as Twin-Epics. Cilappatikāram (The Tale of an Anklet) depicts the life of Kannagi, a chaste woman who lead a peaceful life with Kovalan in Puhar (Poompuhar), the then-capital of the Chola dynasty. It explains the inexorable working of fate where in spite of being innocent, the hero Kovalan gets punished and the queen of Pandya loses her life along with the king when the king realises his mistake of punishing Kovalan. Manimekalai is a 5th-century Buddhist epic created by Sithalai Sathanar during the 5th century. It is believed to be a followup of Cilappatikāram with the primary character, Manimekalai being the daughter of Kovalan and Madhavi. It contains thirty cantos describing the circumstances in which Manimekalai renounced the world and took the vows of Theravada sect of Buddhism, which is followed in Burma and Sri Lanka.*
in the Tamil country. This act of attributing a particular tone of the sects (Vaitika) to the word Tamil and subtly using that as a weapon against the other popular religion was in fact worked in the Tamil country and ensured the bond between the Vaitika sects and Tamils.

The continuous reiteration of the Vaithika loaded meaning of Tamil over the century constituted an impression that the Vaithika religion and Tamil are the same. In short, the nature, purpose and production of literature and also activities of scholarship in pre-modern times were reduced to mere a religious/sect’s world views and this secluded nature strictly deny the possibilities of acquaintance with the literature of other religions/sects. In general, the titles of the texts of other sects are rare exception to be known to the scholars of other camps and sometimes the titles are also ‘tabooed’ to be known. This common practice among all the religions/sects of that time created a consciousness that their religious/sect based canon of the texts were the only texts to be practiced and labelling other religious/sects texts were suppose ‘not be heard’, set the enmity and aversion towards the text of other religions/sects. This negative mind-set towards ‘the other’ texts gradually became the domination of the Vaitika sects and pushed the other’s text towards the margin and made them extinct. The Buddhist and Jain literature in Tamil is a typical example for this kind which is forced to extinct due to the supremacy of the Vaitika sects. Moreover, many texts in Tamil are the result of this religious/sect based separatism itself, mainly commissioned or supported by the religious mutt so as to propagate their religious values. This practice of reading particular religious affiliated/sect based texts, celebrating them and producing many more texts based on the same line over a period of time in Tamil set many canons in Tamil literature and constituted a vast amount of literature which creates the notion that ‘the Tamil is the Vaitika’s language’.
The Saiva-Tamil bond is always related to the origin of Tamil language itself. This origin centric consciousness subtly articulates the supremacy of the Vaithika religion in the act writing history of Tamil literature. A detail enquiry into various ways of attempting to constitute a linear chronological history of Tamil literature would evidently expose the politics of Vaithika, particularly Saivism in the very act. However, as noted earlier, the first attempt of writing chronological history of Tamil literature is attributed to Robert Caldwell. In his monumental work *A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South-Indian Family of Languages*, he describes Tamil literary past into seven cycles. He identifies the 8\textsuperscript{th} century A.D, is the starting point for literary activities in Tamil. Further, he attributes the early literary activities in Tamil to the Jains. According his categorization, the Vaithika religious activities were actually next to the Jains. The following would be his categorization:

- The Jaina Cycle (of the Madura Sangam) Ca.8\textsuperscript{th} C.A.D. To Ca 13\textsuperscript{th} C.A.D.
- The Tamil Ramayana Cycle 13\textsuperscript{th} C.A.D.
- The Saiva Revival Cycle 13\textsuperscript{th} C.A.D. – 14\textsuperscript{th} C.A.D.
- The Vaishnava Cycle The Same Time
- The Literary Revival 15\textsuperscript{th} C.A.D. – 16\textsuperscript{th} C.A.D.
- The Anti Brahminical Cycle 17\textsuperscript{th} C.A.D.
- The Modern School 18\textsuperscript{th} C.A.D. – 19\textsuperscript{th} C.A.D.

Notably, when Caldwell defines the category, most of the great literary texts from the Jain religion were hardly known. Further, the book where he discussed the category in detail would be a monumental one in the sense that the content of the work scientifically proves

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(Caldwell 130-158)
Tamil language belongs to Dravidian family of languages and maintains different trajectory of origin unlike the commonly believed notion that Sanskrit is mother of Tamil.

Some twenty five years after Caldwell’s classification of Tamil literary past, Ci.Vai.Tāmottaram Pillai proposed another structure of Tamil literary past in his preface to Viracakoliyam. Unlike Caldwell, Ci.Vai.Tāmottaram Pillai’s order of Tamil literature started from the time immemorial. He narrated the Tamil literary past into eight divisions. The detailed comparison between his structure and the order proposed by Caldwell would explain the politics behind the act of historiography. However, Ci.Vai.Tāmottaram Pillai’s structure goes as follows:81

- **Apōţa Period** refers the pre-historic, pre-script and pre-Akattiya times.
- **Aţcara Period** means the period of letters. It also indicates the time limit from the origin of Tamil letter to the time when Akattiya completed his grammatical treatise.
- **Ilakkañha Period** refers the time when the 12 disciples of Akattiya composed grammar texts.
- **Camutāya Period**, from 10th B.C to 150 B.C, when Three Sangams were active in the order.
- **Aņatara Period**, from 150 B.C to 50 A.D.
- **Camaņa period**, 60A.C. – 350 A.D.
- **Itikāca period**, 380 A.C. – 1150 A.D.
- **Ātira Period**, 1150 A.C – 1850 A.D.

81 (Ci.Vai.Tāmottaram Pillai 12)
Variations between these two structures would narrate many interesting issues centring on the attempts of writing history of Tamil literature. Caldwell's attempt begins from the extant literature of Tamil literature whereas Ci.Vai.Tāmōtaram Pillai describes the history of Tamil literature from the time immemorial. The temporal gap between these two structures is remarkably important in the sense that the origin explained in these orders explicitly portrays the politics of Tamil literary historiography. Further, in the order proposed by Caldwell locates the Jain cycle as the first one in the structure contradicts Tamil-Vaithika bond, the common perception of that age.

Following the model proposed by Ci.Vai.Tāmōtaram Pillai, Vi.Kō. Cūriya nārāyaṇa Cāstiri popularly known as Paritīrmā Kalaiitar narrated the three fold structure of Tamil literary past. This structure points the origin of Tamil roughly to some ten thousand years. The period division he followed goes as follows.82

- Earlier Period – 8000 B.C to 100 A.D.
- Medieval Period has been divided into two: First half is between 100 A.D to 600 A.D, whereas the following half is between 600 – 1400 A.D.
- Modern Period starts from 1400 A.D continuous till date.

Both Ci.Vai.Tāmōtaram Pillai and Vi.Kō. Cūriya nārāyaṇa Cāstiri locates the origin of Tamil in time immemorial. Contrarily the following structure by J. Vinson narrates the different model.83

- The period of essays, pamphlets and short poems - 6th, 7th century A.D

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82 (Civattampi 267)
83 Ibid 267
- The period of Jaina predominance, 8th century A.D.
- The period of struggle between Saivaites and Jainas - 9th c. A.D
- The period of Saiva predominance and 10th c. A.D
- The Vaisnava period 15th-16th, c. A.D.

Interestingly, the four different attempts to structure Tamil literary past evidently narrate certain points clearly. Among the four two models are proposed by the natives and the remaining are by the non-native European Tamil scholars. Both Caldwell and Vinson start their arguments based on the existing literature. During the time when Caldwell formulated his structure, only the first part of the text Tolkāppiyam was printed and the Cankam literature was largely unknown to the scholars of that age. Therefore, the literary history begins from the earliest available text Tolkāppiyam and commonly believed its association with the Jain religion. In turn, when Vinson was writing his model (1903) almost the major corpse of the Cankam literature is known among the scholarship. Contrary to the both, the native writers who belonged to the Caiva religion attempted to establish the origin of Tamil literary practices with the origin of the world. Further, as it narrated in the structure of Ci.Vai.Tāmōtaram Pillai, the early writing culture of Tamil language is associated to the saint Akatiyar. The very idea of the myth Akatiyar is none other than relating the origin of Tamil with the Vaithika religion.

As many historians and the scholars of Tamil studies argued, the structure of the history of Tamil literature that closely resembles that of the present order starts from M.S.
Pūrāṇaliṅkam Pillai’s writings. M.S. Pūrāṇaliṅkam pillai, in his A Primer of Tamil literature published in 1904, explained the following order of Tamil literary past.  

- The age of Sangams, upto 100 A.D.
- The age of Buddhists and Jains. A.D., 100-A.D., 600
- The age of religious revival., A.D. 600 – A.D. 1100
- The age of literary revival., A.D.1100 – A.D. 1400
- The age of mutts and religious institutions, A.D. 1400 – A.D. 1700.
- The age of European culture, A.D. 1700.

The same understanding of the structure is differently ordered by M. Śrīnivāca Aiyāṅkār in his Tamil Studies.  

- Academic (Cankam period)  
  a. Animistic, 600- 200 B.C.  
  b. Buddhist, 200-150 B.C.
- Classic (Chilapathikaram, Manimegalai – Pathupattu etc)
- Hymnal (Bhakti literature).  
  Brahmanic, 500-950 A.D.
- Translations (Kamba Ramayanan, Kachiappa Skantham, etc) 950 – 1200 A.D.
- Exegetical (Commentaries of Nachimnarkiniar Adiyarkunallar, etc)  
  Refomatory, 1200 – 1450 A.D.
- Miscellaneous (modern)

84 (M.S. Pūrāṇaliṅkam pillai 28)  
85 (Civattampi 268)
Modern, 1450 – 1850 A.D.

Following this, K.S. Srinivasa Pillai also explained the structure of Tamil literature, starting from the Cankam literature to the present.

The remarkable observation in attempting to structure the history of Tamil literature so far can be discussed as follows:

1) Prior to the attempt of M.S. Pūraṇalīṅkam pillai, the imagination about Tamil literary past is unclear mainly due to the fact that the ancient literature in Tamil language has been rediscovered and gradually entered into print during the closet of the 19th and the early decades of the 20th century.

2) The existing literature in Tamil during that age however located the literature of Jain religion oriented as the earliest extant literary practice in Tamil language. This Jain religious beginning of Tamil literary order evidently contradicted the Vaithika centered mainstream literary activities of that age.

3) To emphasis the Vaithika supremacy, the scholars made an attempt to narrate the history of Tamil literature, by foregrounding the myths as a source for understanding Tamil literature and by doing so the Vaithika-Tamil bond has subtly been retrieved.

4) Contrarily, based on the existing literary texts, writing the history of Tamil literature is started with the writings of M.S. Pūraṇalīṅkam pillai. And the following attempts aimed to find out the intimacy between the Cankam literature and the Vaithika religion. By doing so these attempts tried to narrate the genesis of Tamil literary
activities were associated with the Vaithika religion. The following argument proposed by Maraimalaiyatikal\(^86\) is typical example of this kind:

In his famous work, *Māṇikkavācakar varalārum kālamum* (The Time and the History of Manikavacakar) published in 1930, Maraimalaiyatikal describes: \(^87\)

- The Pure Tamil Period: starting from the time of Muruṉciyūr Muṭinākaraṉar who extended his hands to the war of Mahabharata to the first century A.D.
- The Buddha Period – 1\(^{st}\) to 4\(^{th}\) century A.D.
- The Jain Period – 4\(^{th}\) to 7\(^{th}\) century A.D.
- The Period of Saiva and Vaishnava religions – 7\(^{th}\) to 14\(^{th}\) centuries.
- The Brahmin Period – in-between 14\(^{th}\) to 18\(^{th}\) centuries.
- The English Period, starting from 18\(^{th}\) century to till date.

Unlike Ci.Vai.Tāmōtaram Piḷḷai and Vi.Kō. Cūriya nāṟṟaiṇa Cāstiri who attempted to establish the Vaithika-Tamil bond from the time immemorial and emphasising the myths as the source, Maraimalaiyatikal initiated attempts to interpret the earliest extant texts in Tamil were from the Vaithika affiliated origin. Many scholars like Kā.Cu.Piḷḷai, Vi.Celvaṇēyakam, S.Vaiyāpurip Piḷḷai, A. Citamparanēta Ceṭṭiyēr and others evidently attempted to interpret the Cankam literature in the Vaithika light.

\(^86\) Maraimalai Adigal (15 July 1876 – 15 September 1950) was an eminent Tamil orator and writer. He was a devout follower of Saivism. He has authored more than 100 books, including works on original poems and dramas, but most famous are his books on his research into Tamil literature. Most of his literary works were on Saivism. He founded a Saivite institution called Podhumilaik Kazhagam. He was an exponent of the Pure Tamil movement and hence considered to be the father of Tamil puritanism. He advocated the use of Tamil devoid of Sanskrit words and hence changed his birth name Vedhachalam to Maraimalai.

\(^87\) (Civattampi 268)
However, as explained thus far, the linear-chronological mode of writing history of Tamil literature by re-arranging the order/s, brought a visible change in the physical structure of the pre-modern understanding on the Tamil literature as a multiple canons that endorsed by the religions, but it subtly retains the tone of the pre-modern times intact by accepting the Vaitika dominance over the literary activities of Tamil language. Although the first attempt to structurally understand the linear Tamil literary past is associated with Caldwell’s writings, there seems certain amount of the holistic perception on the Tamil literature in terms of the historical continuity, roughly starts from the European’s attempts of collecting and attempting to understand the manuscripts of Tamil literature. This act became ‘the royal road’ for many social changes starting from the 19th century onwards, chiefly starting from Francis Whyte Ellis88 via St. George College89 and its press (1812) to Robert Caldwell’s (1814–1891)90 A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South Indian Family of Languages (1856) to Non-Brahmin movement/s to Paritimärkkalaiñar91 (1870-1903) to Tańittamil Iyakkam (Pure Tamil Movement92, Independent Tamil Movement).

Nonetheless, in spite of the fact that the vibrant socio-cultural transformation during the 19th and early 20th centuries, the debate about the nature, specificities and the historical continuity of the Tamil literature were the prime subject of the discussions and these discussions were carried out well before the first exclusive text on the Tamil literary history was published

88 Was a British civil servant in the Madras Presidency and a scholar of Tamil and Sanskrit.
89 The first college in Madras Presidency founded in 1812.
90 Was an Evangelist missionary and linguist, who academically established the Dravidian family of languages.
91 a Professor of Tamil at the Madras Christian College was the first person to campaign for the recognition of Tamil as a classical language.
92 A movement of linguistic purism in Tamil literature attempting to restore Tamil to its pure state, avoiding Sanskrit loanwords. It was notably initiated by the writings of Maraimalai Adigal and Paventhar Bharathidasan, G. Devaneyar Pavanar and Pavalarenu Perinchithiranaar.
and formulated as a ‘tentative’ structure of the literary history of Tamil as well. Hence, the literary history of Tamil due to multiple perspectives took a trajectory which starting from the ‘origin’ of Tamil with the presence of the God to the great glorious past of rich literature that disappeared into the ocean to the present structure of the Tamil literary history that begins with Tolkāppiyam, an earliest extant grammatical treatise in Tamil language. In short, the attempts at writing the literary history of Tamil can tentatively be categorised into three structures as follows:

1) The group of scholars attempted to draw the history of Tamil’s literature from the time of the Tamil’s origin itself. Many stories related with the Tamil’s origin are widely in circulation. Interestingly, almost all these stories are some way or other connected with the Vaitika sects, especially the Caivism. The early attempts of ‘making’ history/ies of Tamil literature were largely depending on these old myths. The structure of the history of the Tamil literature during the early years, as noted earlier, would begin with an absolute origin of Tamil language and also contained the narratives such as the God is also one among the scholars who established the literature of Tamil in the beginning stage. However, this tradition has been followed by many poets in later times. The Buddhist and the Jain intrusion happened in the later age and at last the Tamil was saved from the hands of the intruders during the time of ‘Bhakthi renaissance’. Thus, by studying the various attempts in the middle and the later part of the 19th century attempts at writing Tamil literary histories, a rough skeleton about their understanding on Tamil literature can be noted as: the entire Tamil and its activities had an absolute starting and this act was related with the God of the Vaitika sects. Later, a disturbance happened in the Vaitika way of life by Buddhist and Jains
intruders. Much later, the Vaitika values were reconstituted with the rise of the great Bhakthi movement and from then the spirit of the Vaithika religion continuous until now.

2) The second set of the history of Tamil literature is mainly associated with the scholars of the ‘pure Tamil’ movements. The mythological part of the origin of the language and other related super natural events of the early attempts were interrogated by the modern educated scholars of this movement. But, interestingly this phase also sets its genesis in the Vaithika religious past, particularly the great glorious past which submerged in the ocean⁹³ and hence it is impossible to access any of the texts produced during that age. The interesting point to be noted here would be that of the attempts at writing history, because the structure of this phase is not only textured through the texts of unknown, but also attempts at establishing the validation of these unknown texts by employing the scientific logic/s. The major contradictory element between this phase and that of the earlier one evidently lies in the act of eliminating the God from the act of participation and also the literary production in Tamil. And all other myths regarding Tamil are kept intact as they were commonly understood and it also attempts to validate the claims of these myths as ‘true’ by employing various methods of science.

3) The present structure of the literary history falls into the third category. All the mythological events and their narrations are considered as mere fabrications, stories which are more or less invalid and thus unacceptable. Even though touching upon many uncertainties of the Tamil’s past, the present history of the Tamil literature starts with an earliest extant text in Tamil, Tolkāppiyam; based on the belief that many texts might have

⁹³ (For further details, see Sumathy Ramaswamy, 2004)
been survived before it and this claim is also justified by the logic of the refined and condensed usage of the Tamil found in Tolkāppiyam which is argued that many years must have needed to attain the fine reformed language as found in Tolkāppiyam. Therefore Tamil literary past according to many scholars would go prior to the text Tolkāppiyam.

However, the three different points from where the attempts for writing the history of Tamil literature typically explained the changing trajectory of understanding the meaning of literature down the centuries. The evolution of the present structure of Tamil literature starting from the Diving origin subtly portrays socio-political transformations happened during the 19th and 20th centuries. The first phase of the Tamil literary history explained the domination of the Vaiñika religious monopoly over the literary activities in Tamil. It can be related and discussed with the social and literary production of the pre Non-Brahmin movement in the Tamil speaking world. The caste order and the literacy level of this phase would explain the nature of the literary productions and its distributions. Further, the discrimination in terms of caste subtly justifies the structure of the literary history that starts from the very origin of the Tamil language itself. Moreover, it also explains the shift in understanding ‘the Tamil’ from the stand point of the Brahminical centred understanding to the non-Brahmin/Dravidian categories. The shift in the Tamil identity could however be traced from the vast difference between the Brahmin and the non-Brahmin categories which has effectively been translated and politically asserted. As the result, the Tamil identity comprised all the non-Brahmin categories came into the front by excluding the Brahminical hegemony widely practiced during the late 19th and the early 20th centuries. This political consciousness which creates the identity of Tamil by distancing itself from the Brahmins evidently marked a clear division among Tamils in understanding their own past and in
certain extent gave rise to the ‘Vellalas’\textsuperscript{94}, a dominant non-Brahmin community to become the centre of Tamil scholarship. This act of identity formation became the base for the second phase of the Tamil literary history. Moreover, this identity indeed became the base for constituting the present meaning of Tamil and Tamils.

The third phase of the Tamil literary history as mentioned above comprises many debates and attempts at writing histories in present times. Even though this phase is avoiding myth and miracles of the Vaitika sects, it also largely carries the Vaitika legacy and its tradition in its structure. Nevertheless, this hierarchy of pre-modern times is thus continuing in the modern historiography also by employing various strategies of inclusion and exclusion of many Tamil texts in the ‘main stream’ canon, setting the notion of translation as a scale of measurement. The treatment of translation in the literary historiography is more in terms of its conceptual level than as the concrete product. In other words, the word translation in the Tamil literary historiography has been used more as a process or as a vibrant act than as the references or the accounts of the translated texts. The following pages argues, more than the description of translated texts, how the strategic employment of identifying and thus categorising certain texts and also tag them as translations helped the historiography to keeping the Vaitika dominance intact. Put it precisely, the study on the role of translation in the literary history would commonly be referring the study of the various activities of translation, mainly centring on the textual activities. Contrarily, the study on the role of translation in the literary historiography is more ideological and thus political in its nature.

\textsuperscript{94} They were originally an elite caste of feudal Tamil landlords in Tamil Nadu and Kerala states in India and in neighbouring Sri Lanka; they were the aristocracy of the ancient Tamil order. The term ‘Vellalar’ literally means ‘Lord of the land’.

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In short, in the beginning the Vaithika centred perspective of the Tamil literature was translated as the structure of the Tamil literary history, where the Gods presence was the centre of the Tamil. Myths and miracles have constituted the structure of the literary history. Whereas the second phase of literary history as explained above has erased the presence of the Gods, but not the myths about the glorious Tamil past. The main intention for keeping these myths intact with the Tamil literature would help the emerging non-Brahmin 'Vellala' caste/people to assert their Caiva values as the normal practice of the Tamils and by doing so, the Brahminical supremacy has subtly been side-lined from the Tamil identity. However, in third phase, though the concept of glorious past of the Vaitika sects were ruled out, the legacy of domination and the notion that the Vaitika is Tamils has been retrieved. However, the role of the translation in this process became the central part in retaining the Vaitika supremacy in the present structure.

**Translation as a tool to ‘constitute’ the others**

By excluding certain texts as translations and thus considering those texts as non-Tamil ‘origin’, the attempts for constituting the linear history of Tamil literature retain the Vaithika religious hegemony into the modern structure. As mentioned earlier, the writings of the Bhakthi movement vehemently criticise the Jain and the Buddhit religions and their literary activities. The central tone of the attack made by the Vaitika religion on the non-Vaithika religions is their incapability of articulating Tamil language. The continuous, strong and repeated attack against the Buddhism and the Jainism by the Bhakthi movement gave rise to the Vaitika sects and over a period of time due to the increasing supremacy of the Vaitika sects, the other religions were marginalised completely. Nonetheless, the main intention of the Bhakthi literature’s attempts to identify the people of the non-Vaitika sects
as 'non-Tamils', were primarily to degrade the popularity and erase out the non-Vaitika sects among Tamils completely. The same tone was retrieved by the literary historiography to 'label' the texts of the non-Vaitika sects so as to keep the pre-modern hegemony of the Vaitika sects intact.

However, the history of Tamil literature is more conscious to trace a non-Tamil source to the Buddhist and the Jains literatures in Tamil. The basic tone which constituted this assumption is the Vaitika-Tamil bond as the actuality, existed as such since the time immemorial. The texts from the non-Vaitika sources, mainly the texts of Buddhism and the Jainism are understood simply as translations, principally translations from Pali and Prakrit languages into Tamil. Contrarily, the texts of the Vaitika religion with easily traceable source/s and could possibly be established as a translation would not be considered as 'non-Tamil' due to the Vaitika-Tamil bond. This duality became one of the tactics through which many texts were eliminated as translation from the order of Tamil literature. The texts from the Bhakthi movement explicitly criticised the language of the Buddhist and Jains as:

"Speaking in a roaring voice in broken samskrit (Sangatha Paakatha) in which akamams and mantirams are contained, along with Paakatha. Doing acts intentionally and wandering like the big and angry elephants to make the people who follow the Vetams feel ashamed. When Aran in Tiruvalavay stands by my side as help I am not to be easily defeated by the Samanar who have accumulated dirt and who eat standing"°

° Thevaram: 3-39, 2 verse.
The Bhakthi literature’s accusation on the Buddhist and the Jain people regarding their Tamil pronunciation seems to be flawed. Many initiations in terms of the form and the structure of literature in Tamil were started by the Jains and the Buddhists. For instance, the many early grammatical treatises, the epics, Didactic literature and Glossaries are all the contributions of the non-Vaithika sects. The early epics in Tamil were divided into two broad categories; Five major and five minor epics. Of all the ten, none belong to the Vaithika tradition; indeed the Vaithika based epics in Tamil started arising much latter to these two categories. However, the understanding of epics in Tamil goes as “to propagate their theology, the Jains and the Buddhist competed with the Caivites and the Vainsvites and wrote epics like Perunikatai, Mērumantira Purāṇam, Cānti Purāṇam, Srīpurāṇam, Cintāmaṇi, Cūḷamaṇi, Vahlayāpati, Kuṇṭalakēci and Nilakēci ” (Varatārajaṇ 67).

However, not only the non-Vaithika religion, but also the Vaithika religion was associated with ‘the northern languages’. One of the main reasons for the similarities among the texts across the languages, particularly among the Indian languages was the religion. The careful examinations of the nature of the literary practices in Tamil over the ages are clearly narrating the affiliation and also the domination of the religious institutions in the act of producing and disseminating the literature down the periods. The major part of the literature in Tamil language is the product of the religions, principally aiming to disseminate the religious values and the philosophies among the people. Therefore, the dominant nature of the Tamil literature is somehow related to the religions, primarily either in the form propagating the religious values directly or in the form of narrating the myth or stories. Nonetheless, the great literary works in Tamil language, except the Sangam literature are commonly related to some religions.
For instances, let us briefly look at the aforesaid multilingual situations referred in the Sangam literature, the collection of poems primarily dealing with love and war themes and commonly believed to be composed in and around the beginning of the Christian era. The sea-trade is one of the well discussed events in the poems of the Sangam age. Many poems in this collection expose the trade relationship of the Tamils with the other continental merchants and also portray the other language speaking communities and their presence in the Tamil land, some of them are: Paṭṭiṇappālai\textsuperscript{96} describes the imports and the exports busily happened in the town of Kāviripūmāṭṭiṇam and narrates the multilingual life style of the city in detail.\textsuperscript{97} Like the same, Akanaṅūru\textsuperscript{98} portrays the port city of Musuri where the Westerner’s ships used to come with lots of gold in order to purchase the pepper by exchanging them.\textsuperscript{99} Many instances as this could be quoted from the Sangam literature. Apart from the sources in Tamil language, the trade relations and the multilingual nature of Tamil port cities could be well discussed by the help of the Tamil-Brahmi scripts inscribed potteries found in the Greek, Roman, Arabian, Chinese and Indonesian cities of the ancient age. Moreover, the papyrus manuscripts believed to be written in the early Christian age kept

\textsuperscript{96} Pattinappaalai, is a part of Pattupattu collection of Cankam literature, contains 301 lines composed of the akaval meter. It is authored by the poet Uruṭṭirangamnanar in praise of the Chola king Karikala. It belongs to the Akam, or subjective themes of love and human relationships and utilises the location of the story to sing praises of the ruler.

\textsuperscript{97} Lines 118-141 and 216-248.

\textsuperscript{98} Akanaṅūru, a classical Tamil anthology belonged to Sangam literature namely Ettuthokai. It contains 400 Akam (subjective) poems dealing with matters of love and separation. Other names for Akanaṅūru include Neduntogai or Nedunthokai ("the long anthology"), Ahappattu, Ahanamuru, and Agamanuru.

\textsuperscript{99} Poem 149 lines 9-11.
preserved in the museum of Vienna and the Ganizah\textsuperscript{100} paper manuscripts are some of the sources that explained the trade relations of the Tamils with the others in detail.

Along with the multilingual situations of the urban-trade spaces in the Sangam age, the references about the characters of the Mahabharatha and their representations in the Sangam poems are subtly attracting our attention. In \textit{Kalittokai}\textsuperscript{101}, the various events narrated in the Mahabharatha have been used as metaphors: the action of Bhema rescuing the Pandavas from the fire in Arakkumāḷikai (Palace of Lacquer or Lakshagraha - 25:1-4), Karna is the son of the Sun (108:13), the event that narrates Dhuchadana holds the hair of Draupadi (101:18-20), the battlefield (104:57-59), Bema kills Dhuchadana (101:18-20), Bema tears off the thighs of Duryodhana (52:2-3) and so on. Interestingly, the names of the characters discussed in the poems are found in Tamil: Nūṟṟuvāṉ (Duryodhana), Kuruṅkaruttīṽuvāṉ (Beema), Pacuṅkaṭtāṽuvul (Rudra), Kūntakai niṭṭiyāṉ (Dhuchadana). These Tamil names seem to be derived more from their actions and the characteristic nature than that of the proper names. If it is accepted that the Sanskrit is the source language for the Mahabharatha, then the translation aspect of these names found in the Sangam literature could be discussed in terms of translating even the proper names into Tamil was practiced during that time. But the story of Mahabharatha and its wide circulation in the sub-continent

\textsuperscript{100} The Cairo Genizah, alternatively spelled Geniza, is a collection of some 300,000 Jewish manuscript fragments that were found in the genizah or storeroom of the Ben Ezra Synagogue in Fustat or Old Cairo, Egypt. These manuscripts outline a 1,000-year continuum (870 CE to 19th century) of Jewish Middle-Eastern and North African history and comprise the largest and most diverse collection of medieval manuscripts in the world.

\textsuperscript{101} Kalittokai, one of the books of Ettuthokai of Cankam literature, is an anthology of 150 poems in \textit{kali} metre of varied length dealing with all phases and types of love experience. The poems are categorised into the five \textit{thinais} according to the mood and subject matter conforming to the Sangam landscape.
as well as the innumerable variations in terms of additions and omissions over the ages pose lots of impasse to determine the Sanskrit is the only source and further based on this discussing other language entries are mere translation of it. Moreover, one of the instances of using the word ‘Vadamozhi’ is explained as not referring any of the languages spoken in the northern region, rather; it means the language of the elephants.\textsuperscript{102}

Unlike the Sangam age, the following periods roughly until the end of the 19th century were marked by the dominance of the ‘Vadamozhi’. In the earlier times Pali and Prakrit were the dominant languages due to their religious affiliations, Buddhism and Jainism respectively. And later these languages were sidelined and gradually lost their dominance in the Tamil region by the emergence of the Vaithika religions and the dominance of the Sanskrit language. Many educational institutions for learning Vadamozhi were established in the region: Nagarujunahills, Gundapalli, Dhanya kadaga and Kanchipuram were the centres of learning Buddhist philosophies and the Pali language. The experts in Jainism, Buddhism, Logic, Kavya, Grammar, Play and Bharada Sastra were resided in the mutts of Kangapadi. Kooram copper plates explained that the reading of the Mahabharatha was conducted in the temple hall of Parameshwaramangalam.

However, these multilingual atmospheres in Tamil speaking region over the ages although described the various possibilities of the interactions among the languages, the detailed focused discourses explaining the act and the nature of translation are hardly found. Many attempts were made by the modern scholars and the historians to argue certain texts of the ancient period were actually the translations. For instances, by quoting the words

\textsuperscript{102} (Mullaipattu, lines 35-36)
‘Ariyithathu’ and ‘thokuthathan’ from the preface song of Acharakovai, S. Vaiyapuri Pillai argues that since the author is referring ‘Ariyithathu’ in a general sense and explaining the act of ‘thokuthathal’, it would be an appropriate to consider that this treatise was actually the selections from the various Smiritis. In addition, he also discusses the similarities of the text with ‘Sugarasmirthi’. Further, the commentary to Illakiyana Villakam refers this text as a translation while discussing the category of Valinül. Like the same, Perukkatai in Tamil was considered as the translation of ‘Pragadatta’ in Vadamozi and Civaka Cintāmani was the adaptation of Vadeepasimgan’s ‘Shatra sudamani’.

Besides the interaction among the Indian languages and their mutual sharing of the subjects, literary historiography subtly excludes the texts of non-Vaithika religious orientation as others by employing the label ‘translations’. The debate on the text Kamparāmōyaṇam is one of the typical examples of this kind. Kamparāmōyaṇam, originally named as Ramavataram, is an epic written by Kamban during the 12th century A.D. The introductory part of the text Kamparāmōyaṇam, though clearly stated that it is a translation; translation from the first one of available three versions of Rama’s story in Vaṭamoli (literally Northen Language, Sanskrit), the literary historians and scholars attempt in many ways to argue that it is a ‘Tamil text’. Nevertheless, the Buddhist and the Jain texts without any direct references are related with the source from other language, sometimes one small text has attributed to three or four sources from Pali or Prakrit languages. However, the point here is that the Jains and the Buddhist texts in Tamil were treated as translations, by doing so, the texts from the non-Vaithika religions were categorised as others. By using this strategy, the Vaitika sects’ dominance has been intact in the literary history of Tamil as it was in the pre-modern age.
Contrarily, European translation activities emerged as a threat to the Vaithika monopoly in the modern order. Bible translation is typical example of this kind.

‘Paṟaiyar Vētam’: the conflict between the Caiva dominance Vs European textual practices

The European encounter with Tamils brought many changes in Tamil’s socio-cultural life. In fact, the ‘modernity’ in Tamil is an outcome of this relationship with the European thoughts. Roughly five hundred years of the literary activities of European/Christian in Tamil was not majorly recorded in Tamil literary history. Most of their works are ‘considered’ as ‘non-literary’ works. For the first time in Tamil the grammatical works in prose were written by the missionaries; the dictionaries were written and many translations from European languages came into Tamil. Many of this kind of literary activity were labelled as ‘mere writings’ on Tamil by ‘the other’. Moreover, the prose style of Europeans, especially the translation of the Bible introduced a ‘new’ mode of writing style to the Tamil literature. The missionary’s role, as depicted in Viviliyamum Tamilum (1990) goes:

... Besides bringing the gospel or good news to the Tamil people, in print, these translations made a tremendous impact on the Tamil language and the society. They started the development of modern Tamil prose and made available the new learning to all... It is also interesting to note that the Tamil purist movement was begun by the Madras branch of the Bible society when it rejected the tentative Version produced by the Jaffna Bible society on the grounds that it contained too many Sanskrit words. (Rājarattinam as quoted in Pākkiyamutatu 2)
The early attempts of the Bible translation were criticised and rejected by saying that it is a ‘Paraiyar vētam’ (Untouchable’s Veda). This was the case with many texts produced by the Europeans in prose. Nevertheless, many European works were translation in nature, mainly translations of Christian songs and prayer books in earlier times and grammar of ‘heathen’ languages and religio-philosophical writings in later years. The ‘peak’ outcome of the European culture in Tamil could be understood by the changes in the 19th and 20th centuries’ Tamil society.

Many texts produced by Europeans in Tamil are the translations by nature and many other writings of Europeans are treated as ‘the other culture’s’ understanding about Tamil. In both cases, most of the European literature was ‘not included’ in the history of Tamil literature, mainly employing the translation tag.

**Translating Thirukkural: From Translations to ‘Source’**

Thirukkural is one of the early Tamil texts, believed to be written in-between 1st century BC to 5th century AD. It contains 1330 couplets that address a wide variety of issues ranging from human virtues to pleasure. These 1330 couplets are grouped into 133 chapters each containing 10 couplets. The text is divided into three major sections Pal, respectively designated virtuous conduct, prosperity, and pleasure. The text in itself is silent about its title, author, and the history. But, Thiruvalluvar is attributed the authorship, according to the tradition he comes from pariar (untouchable) background.

Aram contains 380 verses, Porul with 700 and Inbam with 250. Couplets and the topics go like this: 40 couplets on God, Rain, Virtue and Ascetics, 200 couplets on Domestic Virtue, 140 couplets on Higher Virtue based on Grace, 250 couplets on Royalty, 100 couplets
on Ministers of State, 220 couplets on the Essential requirements of Administration, 130 couples on Morality, both positive and negative, 250 couplets on Human Love and Passion.

The print history of Thirukural is unusual while comparing the common print practice of the literary text in Tamil language. Generally the translation of any literary text would happen while the text is available in the ‘source’ language. Like many folk literature in print, Thirukural at first appeared in foreign languages as translation much before it appeared in its source language, Tamil. Before the first printed edition of Thirukural in Tamil in 1812 AD was out, it got translated into three major European languages and widely circulated in Europe. Constanzo Joseph Beschi, popularly known as Viramamunivar translated the first two parts of Thirukural into Latin as early as 1730 and later French version by Louis Jacolliot in 1767 and German version by A.F.Cammera in 1803 were appeared. These translations in Europe introduced Tamil literature to European intellectual and also set the tone for the Tamil literary world as ‘the world of moral and virtue literature’.

These translations of Thirukural in European languages played a massive role and influence among the Indian, especially Tamil audience. The bases behind these Europeans’ translations are subtly tied up with the Christian interests and the space the text offered for the possible interpretation of Christian philosophy. However, G.U.Pope’s heard ‘echo of the Sermon on the Mount’ in Thirukural.

The history of Thrikural in print would explain how the meaning of the text is channelized in certain direction through the inclusion and exclusion of textual things in the print mode. The first printed Thirukural text appeared in Tamil in 1812 and it is a text without commentary, appeared along with two more texts: Naladiyar and Thiruvaluvarmalai.
Following this edition Saravana Perumal Aiyer brought out an edition in 1838 with commentary that was written principally following that of Parimalaleger’s. In this line, during the 19th century alone, Thirukural was published by various scholars like Ramanuja Kavirayar and Arumuga Navalar and others. However, many of them are the reprints of earlier editions. The notable point in the printed version of Thirukural in the century is the commentary of Parimalaleger. Only Parimalaleger commentary to Thirukural is entered into print and also continuously reprinted and circulated. Reason for celebrating the commentary of Parimalaleger partly lies in the native consciousness against the propagation of the Christianity which they believed was made successful to missionaries through the control over the print, which was in their hands over the period. Contrarily the natives were also started printing their literature as against the Christian propagation. Moreover, the commentaries which are subtly connecting the text with the Brahminic world view. And suits both the Saiva and Vaishnava religious ideologies. Various issues regarding the print technicalities could be discussed here, but the point would be the entire 19th century and early decades of the 20th century, until Manakudaver commentary got printed in 1917, received the text Thirukural with Parimalaleger commentary only and thus the meaning of Thirukural in this period was highly decided by the commentary of Parimalaleger.

Even though Manakudaver’s commentary that interprets Thirukural according to Jain philosophy appeared in print in 1917, the dominance of Parimalaleger’s continued its legacy in Tamil scholarship until the mid-20th century. From then on, vast changes happened in the journey of the meaning of the text. Pure Tamil movement engaged with the text, started rejecting the assumptions constituted by the commentary of Parimalaleger that the three parts of Kural (Virtue, Wealth and Pleasure) are translations from Manu smriti, Artha Sastra and
Kama Sutra respectively and argues the purity of the text. On the other hand, Dravidian movement started taking up the text as an account of rational verses and as a result, on 15. 01. 1949, Periyar E.V.Ramasamy organised a conference on Thirukural which united the scholars in a place and urged them to write commentaries excluding all the religious and narrowed views attributed on to the text. These act of Pure Tamil movement and Dravidian movement’s concern on Thirukural created the new waves of commentaries and interpretation to Thirukural and this new meaning is gradually translated as the meaning of the text.

But the popularity of the text Thirukural maintains altogether different trajectory and this trajectory is marked by translations. Although the text was translated into the European languages much before it appeared into Tamil and the European languages translation constituted a wide popularity to the text, the European scholars looked at the text as more dynamic one than that of the rigid written composition. However, debates, discussions, controversies and the existing knowledge regarding Thirukural invariably related with ‘written’ texts. Modern literary histories portray or indeed construct a linear ‘written’ tradition to Thirukural. It narrates the ‘origin’ of the text is in the written form as it appears in the printed version today. This understanding of the text as a ‘written’ substance having a perfect structure and moreover has been produced as a unified whole, though it could appropriately fit into many other text in Tamil, it highly reduces the dynamic potential of Thirukural by attributing a linear history it.

This linear mode is more obsessions with the time limit of the text mainly because the ‘origin’ of the text provides base to constitute an order. Here, in Thirukural case the debate on the origin of the text is highly complex. The age of the text is not merely related
with ‘written’ substance alone in Thirukural case; it is more subtly related with the cultural pride of Tamils. Therefore, what is at work in many times while engaging the attempts to pin down the age of Thirukural would lead to more back into the historical time so as to establish an antiquity to the text. Even though the controversies are still alive regarding the origin of the text Thirukural and even though various dates and time limits are attributed to the text, starting from 3rd century BC to 6th century AD, it is commonly in practice among the literary histories that the text is grouped as Pathinenkeez kanaku and is kept into an order right immediate next to Sangam literature, in this connection, it seems the text might have been written probably the 3rd century AD.

However, the linear tradition of Thirukural constituted by centring the act of ‘writing’ became less substantial and could not provide any traces of the text’s presence and the possibilities of practicing it until the 10th century AD. In other words, except some attempts to establish the text Thirukural’s origin in and around the Christian era by adopting various internal and external evidences, there are no traces about the text in following years till the 10th century AD. The 10th and the following three centuries are remarkable in Thirukural scholarship mainly due to the commentaries and in fact some of them are dense in their explanations. According to the tradition, 10 commentaries were written during these four centuries and only five of them are extant now. The flooded scholarship in a short span of time in the form of commentary is also remarkable mainly because of its intention, purpose and stand point were all provided and controlled by religious orientations. Moreover, from the commentarial tradition onwards, (i.e) from the 10th century onwards the clear traces regarding the presence as well as the practice of the text are available.
Contrary to the rigid, static written-centric origin of Thirukural, the scattered evidences lie in and around the structure of the text and by gathering and organising them into an order; one can effectively argue the relationship of the text with the folk form. The relationship that was shared between the well-wrought, flawless modern text called Thirukural and the oral mode of practicing ‘the text’ is explored by focusing the experiences of folklorist who engaged with ordinary people as a part of their project to collect the folk tales, songs, riddles and of course proverbs during the 19th century. Moreover, the very structure of Thirukural aphorisms and absence of this particular structure in longstanding Tamil literary tradition and various conscious efforts to bring the text into the Tamil tradition in the form of commentaries and enormous literature produced mainly discussing the structure and its part in Tamil literary tradition inevitably support the experiences of folklorists and narrate a different story altogether which in fact concrete parallel to what is described by the written-centric origin of Thirukural.

Unlike modern scholars on Thirukural who are basically nurtured by the modern academics or learned from scholarly lineage, Charles E. Grover and Peter Percival had different experiences when they approached the common people for their oral substances. Many aphorisms of Thirukural are included in both Gover’s collection of folk songs and Percival’s collections of proverbs. An insightful introduction by Gover to his The folk songs of South India (1871), though recognises the lines from Thirukural appeared in the collection, he made not any attempt to exclude them considering it as a part of the text, rather he attempted to discuss the richness of the folk tradition in Tamil by bringing the lines of Thirukural into the centre. He compares Thirukural with Homer’s poetry as: “The Cural is as essentially the literary treasure, the poetic mouth piece, the highest type of verbal and
moral excellence among the Tamil people as ever Homer was among the Greek.” And also suggests that “If they were edited, they would form a body of Dravidian classic of the highest value.” Like the same, Kaa. Meenakshi Sunderam who studied Tamil proverbs by Percival comments the reason for the appearance of Thirukural line in the collection as follows:

Occasionally, we see in Percival’s list that there are a few verses from the Kural which are included as proverbs. It is apparent that these verses of the sacred Kural were so popular and frequently cited that they became proverbs almost. (163).

The point to be discussed here is the practice of Thirukural that was predominantly popular among the written centric textual mode and also equally in the oral culture. But, the act of writing history excludes the oral route of Thirukural and attempts to constitute an undisputable written-centric textual tradition to it. The act of excluding the oral traces while writing history of literature can be applicable to almost all the old texts. Even though many of the old texts what we are considering them as classic now in Tamil are argued that they were once practiced and preserved through oral transmission over the ages and written it in subsequent periods, that is much later to their origin, almost all the texts gradually started extinct from their oral route once they become in written documents. Or at least the written version becomes an authentic one to fix the texts if any dispute arises. Thirukural’s case is slightly different from that of other texts. As noted earlier, the missionaries’ accounts clearly stated that the practice of Kural in oral transmission are common among Tamil’s conversation till the second part of the 19th century.
Another interesting point to worth discuss would be the structure of Kural’s aphorism. The couplet form comprises of seven words, arranging four words in the first line followed by three words in the second. This couplet structure according to Tamil tradition called ‘Kural venba’, so as the text Thirukural composed in the meter, according to many Tamil scholars, is called as Kural. However, we now shall focus our attention towards the usage of this Kural Venba in the long running Tamil literary history. Except Thirukural no text is found popular in this meter, furthermore, we could only find a few texts composed of this metrical structure and those are all belonged to the most recent times. Even the long lists of texts believed to be lost over a period of Time and many partial lines quoted in commentaries also maintain silence of the form used popularly in the Tamil poetical tradition. On the contrary, this particular form flourished in the oral tradition largely due to ‘the shortness’ of its structure, which serves the base of the orality that it can be easily remembered and reproduced without much strain. Moreover, many proverbs and ‘moral’ sayings of Tamil largely fit into this metrical structure. On the one hand this details serve the supportive role to strengthen the claim that Thirukural has a subtle connection with the oral tradition, interestingly on the other hand, it, as this paper argues, connects the politics of commentaries and their intimate connection with the stories regarding the legendry author of the text Thiruvalluver.

Like the metrical structure of the Text, the lineage of the author is also more interesting to probe into. The major source for ‘legends of Valluvar’ is Thiruvalluvmalai (the Garland of Valluvar), a text containing 53 short verses majorly attributed to many poets of the sangam age and also to a incorporeal voice (Acarari), Godesses of tongue/speech (Namagal) and the lord Siva and also the introductions of mast of the 19th century Thirukural
editions in print. The period of the text is generally ascribed to the 11th century AD. Many interpretations and logical debates regarding the story of Valluver center on his birth: either he is Parayar (untouchable caste) or Half Brahmin and half Parayar. It is also believed that the name Valluvan itself refers the sub-caste in Parayar who mainly engaged in ritual activities. The point I would like to emphasize here is the birth relation between the author and the Paraya untouchable community. In the long standing Tamil literary tradition, there is no such incident attributing a text to an untouchable caste or untouchable/s as an author of a text. But invariable many sources either written texts like Thiruvalluvmalai or oral stories attribute the authorship of Thirukural to the Untouchable Parayar.

Moreover, the notable point in these birth based stories would be the period in which they are started emerging. As noted earlier, generally the time of the text Thiruvalluvmalai is ascribed to the 11th century and about the same time the text Thirukural started receiving commentaries. Among the 10 old commentaries, only 5 are extant now and among these 5 commentaries, 3 are interpreting the text in a Brahminical base and remaining 2 are arguing it as a product of Jain philosophy. The argument here is the politics of commentaries and the legend of Valluver’s stories have a temporal relation and the nature of the birth based stories have something related with uneducated/low-birth Parayar untouchable caste.

In short, consolidating all the points so far we have discussed above, the paper argues that:

1) Unlike the tradition of Thirukural constituted by the literary history of Tamil foregrounding the script-centric argument, Thirukural was also practiced commonly in the oral tradition as well.
2) Keeping aside the controversial debates yet unsolved regarding the ‘origin’ of the text, from the 10th to following three centuries are worth notable in Thirukural scholarship due to various religious commentaries and many stories regarding the extraordinary status of the text and about the attributed author Valluver.

3) The rarity of the usage of the Kural venba metrical form in the long standing Tamil literary culture and the frequency as well as structural synthesis of the form with the oral sayings and proverbs also supports the oral tradition of Thirukural. Moreover, the attempt of writing commentaries to Thirukural and the stories regarding the text and the author are emerged almost in a same period, the nature of commentaries and stories are deeply rooted in religious ideologies. In this connection, the entire episode can be narrated as a tension between the religious attempts to appropriate the text into their region and the anti-religious attitudes comprised of the author ‘authority of the text’, from untouchable/low-birth/uneducated and thus oral in nature.

Nonetheless, the multiple meanings and controversies as well as debates regarding the nature and the purpose of the text are invariably connected with the notion of translation. The early studies on the Thirukural, particularly the studies happened prior to the mid of the 20th century mainly focusing on the commentaries than the text alone. The prime focus of these attempts would be any one of the followings or the combinations of more than one: The meaning of the text, the lineage of the author of the texts, the texts/author’s religious orientations, Brahmin vs Tamil debates and the stories regarding the immortality of the text and its divine connection and so on. The interesting point that determined the nature of these studies is their orientation towards commentaries/interpretations. More than the text, the commentaries provides the scope and supplies the materials to the enquiry of these studies.
This nature of the study however portrays the dominance of the commentaries over the text and indeed the commentary, particularly the one written by Parimējalakar is popularly understood as the ‘real’ meaning of the text.

The tradition of writing Urai (commentary) to the text seems to be an important intellectual act during the 10th to 15th century’s Tamil literary tradition. The politics of the commentaries lies when they decide the meaning of the text instead of facilitating the textual reading. The art of writing commentary to the texts is remarkable in Tamil culture, mainly due to its potentiality to preserve the old texts and if the tradition of commentary writing failed in Tamil culture, many texts of the ancient period would have been extinct by now. But, the package of the text and commentaries together over a period constituted the ‘fixed’ meaning to the text.

Unlike other translations, the translations of Thirukkural, particularly the translations started appearing from 9th century AD to roughly around the end of the nineteenth century are prime importance. These translations always blur the fences which constitute ‘a text’ as a translation. In a more precise way the translations are appearing or the translations are the ‘source’; the source to ‘itself’. This undecidability of the text as a source and as a target is not a recent phenomenon in the realm of Thirukkural translations. Right from the beginning this undecidability is a part and parcel of text, in fact the ‘whole text’ as it appeared to us today has been preserved through the translations, particularly the intra-lingual translations (commentaries). Though this intimate connection between the commentaries and the ‘text’ are as old as the ‘text’s own time’, these understandings that ‘the text’ and ‘the commentaries are two different entities are the development of the recent past, particularly from the 19th
century. A massive shift in the mode of reading and the reading practices in the nineteenth century visualize the various problems and alternatives to the notion of ‘text’.

In this juncture, the clear distinction between the modes of reading practices and its influences on ‘understanding/s’ the very notion of the ‘text’ have to be relooked. The whole nineteenth century, historically speaking, is the evidence of the transformations in both physical as well as psychical notions about the text. The new mode called ‘printing’, though its visibility, portability as well as easy accessibility create new ways of approaching and accessing possibilities of ‘the text’ and ‘the meanings’. This ways to new interpretations, meaning productions and even very physical appearances of the text itself creates enough resistance, and to some extent acts as a vehement critique to the traditional meaning paradigm. This dispute between the two orders (old and new) of meanings shed new perspective on the very basic problems related to the notion of text itself.

Though the literary histories of Tamil account some nine centuries gap between Thirukkural and its commentaries, this paper highly suspects that claim and tries to focus ‘the traces’ of the text Thirukkural and argues that the text Thirukkural is the product of its own commentaries. In doing so, the aim is not to reduce the gap explained by the literary histories; rather the ‘text’ which is highly regarded today is the by-product of its own products (commentaries). To put it succinctly, the argument is not to find out the ‘originality’ of the source which is believed as quite old, rather to concentrate various stages by which ‘the text’ is (re)constituted as a ‘text in itself’ which is highly celebrated and ‘act’ as a source to many interpretations till date. In order to understand the various issues involved in the formulation of Thirukkural as a text, one should at least be aware of the history(ies) of translations of Thirukkural as well as the history of Thirukkural in print.
Thirukkural translations had a long history than its printed forms. As we follow the records and the documentations of Tamil literary history, the translations of Thirukkural in the name of commentaries started appearing from the 9th century AD onwards. Literary histories of Tamil account 10 different commentaries to Thirukkural, starting from the 9th century to the 14th century AD. An anonymous old Tamil song describes the names of Thirukkural commentators of the above mentioned time limits. The names of the commentators as the song renders,

1) Tarumar
2) Maṇṇakkuṭavar
3) Tāmattar
4) Naccar
5) Paruti
6) Parimē lalakar
7) Tirumalaiyar
8) Mallar
9) Paripperumāl
10) Kālinkar
Among these ten commentaries now we can only access the following five commentaries. Remaining commentaries are lost their existence due to various reasons. The available commentaries are:

1) Maṇakkuṭavar
2) Paruti
3) Parimē lajakar
4) Paripperrumāḷ
5) Kāliṅkar

The commentaries, due to their nature of dependence, became the repository of repetitions and differences. These repetitions and differences create a new order of meanings, understandings and canonical status to the text. At the same time the commentaries often contradict each other by placing them in an ‘imaginary’ circle which is the product of their ‘basic’ ideological as well as political back-ups. Religion, the time limit they belong, the social class, the scholarship and so on visibly mark their presence in order to ‘confine’ the text into their limits. These various factors and their presence in the text unavoidable produce the differences and these differences create endless possible logics which enhance the status of the text. The commentaries by explaining the ‘source’ produce differences which are logically fuse and at the same time diffuse the meaning/s possibilities. Let us find an example from Thirukkural, which is given below here in transliteration,

\textit{Vāṅkaṅ kuṭikāttal kāṟṟaṅtal āḻviṅaiyōtu}

Aintuṭaṅ māṅṭatu amaiccū (632)
This particular Kural discusses the important qualities of a minister supposed to have. The first line of the Kural has four words that indicate four different qualities of a minister.

- ஆச்சாய (Ančāmai) = firmness
- குளித்ரைப்பு (Kutipirappum) = protection of subjects
- கக்குத்திராயு (Kakkum tirānum) = perseverance
- கராரின்த ரிவு (Karrarinta arivu) = clearness by learning

But the very next line in the Kural indicates that ‘these five qualities…….’ Here the word இன்று (ainthu) is used to refer ‘five’.

If in the second line, the word ‘ainthu’ has been used to indicate the quantity as the commentaries refer, what is the one more quality which is missing in the previous line or the word ‘ainthu’ in second line refers something else than the quantity five. The commentators of Thirukkural differ from one another when they write the commentary to this Kural. Let us keenly look at the logics which create ‘syntheses’ to the lines of the Kural. All the commentators of Thirukkural invariably consider the meaning of the word ‘ainthu’ as the indication of the quantity that refers five. But logically they are different in order to create the ‘fifth’ quality of a minister.

Mañakkūṭavar, the oldest available commentator of Thirukkural, split the second word of the first line குடிகத்தல் (Kudikatthal, in transliteration) into two separate words as kudi+katthal. Even other commentators like Pariperumal, and Kalingar also have the same opinion to find out the fifth quality of the minister. According to their logic, Kudi refers to the clan to which they belong and the next word Katthal refers to protection. But the way
they split the word Kudikatthal completely went against the Tamil grammatical pattern. In this separation, the second word Katthal that refers protection inevitably raise the further clarification that ‘what to protect’. Again the commentators in the name of explanation simply join the words to attain the meaning/s.

On the other hand, Parithiyar, one of the earlier commentators of Thirukkural, explains the fifth quality by splitting the third word of the first line as Katru+Arithal. Again the ‘unhappy sign’ comes from the grammatical discipline. Here the word Katrarithal and its broken form as Katru+Arithal gets meaning as follows:

Katru = to learn (the process is yet to complete; in Tamil this grammatical unit this uncomplete action (verb) is called as Vinayecham that refers an incomplete verb.)

Arithal = knowing (it indicates the event or the phenomenon; in Tamil this is grammatically called as Tolirpeyar)

The relation of these two words is bound by the cause and effect manner. Knowing happens through learning. Tamil grammar does not allow to make meaning separately in these kind of word combinations. So, the way Parithiyar tries to create ‘the fifth’ quality to the Minister is simply dismissed by its very grammatical possibilities.

Above all Parimezhalagar, the celebrated commentator of Thirukkural combines this particular Kural (which is numbered as 632) with the previous one (631). By doing so, he attempts to attain the fifth quality of a minister. Even his attempt failed to please the critics of Thirukkural on two grounds,
1) This way of drawing the meaning by combining either previous or next Kural/s, according to critics is a wrong method, because in Thirukkural, every Kural has been considered as an independent poem. This particular quality of Thirukkural is celebrated as one of the greatness of the composition.

2) But at the same time the Kural he has combined to attain the meaning is also in lack. It means Parimezhalagar used the Kural 631 to get meaning of Kural 632, but the Kural he has used is also incomplete thus insufficient to provide the meaning of the following one. The Kural 631 in transliteration goes as follows:

Karuviyum kālamum ceykaiyum ceyyum

aruvinaiyum māntatu amaiccu

This Kural also explains the qualities of a minister and interestingly it also refers only four qualities,

choice of means

time

manner of execution

difficult undertaking

Hence, the explanation of this Kural also provides nothing to achieve the fifth quality of the minister which is discussed in the following Kural. At last the fifth quality of a minister that is indicated in the Kural has been explained variously by the commentators. The differences these commentators made, simply and at the same time, logically dismisses...
the ‘specificity’ of the meaning/s. This unspecific, endless chain of meaning/s possibilities of a word/s always already create impasse to ‘the state’ (stability) of the word/s. The stability of the word/s is necessary, in fact the base on which any ‘interpretative’ act will occur. The print mode generally, Thirukkural/s in print particularly create new brackets through its various determinant/hegemonic nature, which ensures in certain level the stability of the meaning/s of the text.

Like this example, the ‘whole text’ is the repository of the differences and repetitions. The ‘whole text’, if we consider the text as an autonomous status and is separated from the commentaries is the sight for differences; the sight for endless meaning possibilities. Above all the structure, the word orders and the document of the ‘text’ are also maintained the inseparable as well as reciprocal connection with its commentaries. The position that the commentaries emphasise is the road to ‘a single and organic meaning/s’ and logically this decides ‘the stability of the meaning/s’ which structurally bind up with the ‘source’ (the lines, the commentaries, labelled as the source).

Unlike the old commentary tradition, the new as well as ‘focussed’ commentaries tradition of Thirukkural started with the print mode. Thirukkural as a printed text has an interesting stories. Let us concentrate a little while in the printed form/s of Thirukkural and their role in shaping up ‘the source text’.

Thirukkural has been translated into many major languages of the world, and at the same time it has also been translated into Tamil several times. The popularity of Kural amongst all ancient Tamil literature can be judged from that the next most translated work in Tamil comes nowhere near to Thirukkural when compared to the number of times and the
number of languages the Thirukkural has been translated. The critics believe that the Kural has been translated in the most languages, next only to the Bible and the Quran. Ikkala Ulagirku Thirukkural, a book by the International Institute of Tamil Studies, Chennai, accounts the information that the Thirukkural has been so far translated, either in parts or in full, into 80 to 90 languages. Over the last three centuries, numerous scholars have taken the task of translating the Kural into various languages. It has now been translated into all major languages of the world like French, Latin, Polish, Russian, Swedish, German, Japanese, Dutch, Czech, Finnish, Malayalam, Burmese, Korean, Chinese, Singhalese, Italian, Urdu, Arabic and at least eight Indian languages.

Beyond all these factual details, the importance as well as the interesting phenomenon of Thirukkural in print lies in its translation/s, not like the intra-lingual translations but in their interlingual translations that too the languages which has a less contact with the ‘source’ (Tamil) till date. The interestingness of the Thirukkural in print depends upon its translation/s, means before Thirukkural finds its place as a text in print in its ‘own’ language it had been translated, not only once or in one language, but also more than once and more than one foreign languages which is really foreign in terms of geographical proximity. The first print of Thirukkural in Tamil appeared in 1812 and this ‘version’ has an interesting political account and has recorded ‘the role of pandits’ (mostly upper caste educated people of that time, worked as a Tamil tutor in St. George college in Madras) in the process of interpreting the ‘text’ that comes from Kandhappu Butler (belongs to ‘lower caste’). A difference/s of meaning/s of the ‘text’ as a preserved traditional forms and in print, was also discussed in much elaborate ways. Sooner the text Thirukkural got interesting stories like the personal life of author, and his behavioural highness and his ‘model’ relationship with
his wife Vasuvai and so on. In the part of this project, the image of Thiruvalluvar had started to appear and it is an interesting all together to study due to its rich varieties of portrayal of the author. This stream of approaching and interpreting the text create a particular way/s of accessing the text and its meaning/s. The religious views mainly play the determinant role in the meaning possibilities of the text. Thus, the process of accommodating the text Thirukkural into the glorious golden past of Tamil literary history mainly started from Thirukkural’s first print itself.

On the other hand, contrary to this way of ‘canonizing’ the text Thirukkural, the translations of the text play a vital role. Before the text as ‘a text’ in itself get printed into Tamil, Thirukkural had found its place and its importance in European ‘literary’ space. The first translation of the Kural into a European language was that of C.J. Beschi of the Society of Jesus (1700-1742) into Latin in 1730, roughly some 80 years before the ‘source’ text appeared in its ‘own’ language. Not only this Latin translation enjoyed the privilege of holding the title as the first interlingual translation of Thirukkural but also played the very role of ‘source’ to some other translations that too in some foreign languages. A selection of Kural appeared into English at 1794, translated by Kindersley and the Kural got its German translation by A. F. Cammera in 1803. These translations got enough influences as well as valuable guidelines from the Latin sources than the source language (Tamil). And at the same time these three major European language translations of Kural appeared in print, before the source text appeared as it is in print. In doing so, the translations create new spaces and popularities to the text. The close reading/s of the translations, particularly the translations appeared before the source appeared in its ‘own’ language (1812), produces many variations and these variations to some extent contradict the very notion of the ‘source
text' (the source, here refers the text which is (re)formulated and given to Tamil society as a complete text which derives its traces from the differences marked in various commentaries). Thus, another, alternative tradition to Thirukkural created by the inter-lingual translations that to some extent play as a vehement critique to the 'great traditions' of Thirukkural created by the 19th and 20th century politics.

The positions translation/s occupy in relation with the text Thirukkural is highly debatable and the area which expects a lot of studies. This paper tried to focus some of the instances which actually play an important role in the formulation of the 'source' which can be or need to be placed as a center for their existence. Either the space of intra-lingual translations such as commentaries or in the time of print which resulted to inter-lingual translations, the role of translation are indivisible in the very notion of the text Thirukkural. In fact the notion of the text: Thirukkural as a text in itself is the production of its various translations in various time limits. Therefore, the text Thirukkural that is identified and is given to us today, one can argue by quoting various possibilities is the translation of the translations, that means the 'source' is nothing but the translation of 'its own' translation/s.

The discussion in the chapter could be summarised as follows: the literary historiography in Tamil marginalised the literary text composed by the Buddhist and the Jain by labelling them as 'translation', by doing so, these text are considered as the other and not belonging to Tamil's own. Further, it subscribes many origin oriented myths and the Cankam legends to establish the supremacy of the Vaithika religion. Many didactic and original works of Tamil language had interpreted as the texts of the Vaithika religion, principally by the act of writing commentaries to the texts. Above all, many texts which assert their Sanskrit origin were argued as Tamils own by the Vaithika scholarship. By employing these, the literary
historiography attempted to justify the Vaithika supremacy into modern order as the natural one.