
by

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ABSTRACT


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Most scholarly accounts of Dravidian nationalism have focused on tracing the socio-economic and political dimensions of the movement. This primary emphasis has precluded scholarly interest and a deeper understanding of the important regional, socio-cultural and religious roots of the movement. Contemporary scholars engaged with the politics of Dravidian nationalism have also contributed to this significant lacunae by focusing largely on the “progressive” post-Saivite, “Self Respect” phase of the Dravidian movement. As a result, important questions regarding the early intellectual, socio-cultural and religious roots of the Dravidian movement remain unclear. Despite conceding the important role that missionaries and missionary Orientalism played in the Dravidian movement, there has been no significant attempt to locate their contribution to the movement, that is sensitive at the same time, to their wider missionary objectives for South Indian society. Similarly, despite the fact that Tamil/Saivite revivalists formed the “indigenous” vanguard of the Dravidian movement, there has been little detailed

The central concern of the dissertation, is to fill these major lacunae in the scholarship on the Dravidian movement. The dissertation is divided into two parts. Part one traces the early intellectual genealogy of Dravidian nationalism—in the process, it traces both the early missionary-led Orientalism as well as the work of the pioneer non-Brahmin Tamil/Saivite Dravidian ideologues who followed them. The second part shifts to a detailed analysis of the life and work of the central "indigenizer" of Dravidian ideology, Maraimalai Adigal (1876-1950). It seeks to locate him and his work both in the regional religio-cultural terrain as well as in the wider context of "modern" colonial India with its English intellectual, cultural and colonial impact. As one of the most popular Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil revivalist and emerging to prominence at a crucial juncture in the history of the Dravidian movement, Adigal in his life and work provides an ideal window to the impulses as well as to the personalities, groups and institutions behind the Dravidian movement. Through a detailed analysis of Adigal's life and work, as well as the complex network of individuals and institutions involved in his efforts to translate, build upon and popularize through the Tamil language the ideas formulated by
his predecessors, this work seeks to arrive at a deeper understanding of the intellectual, socio-cultural and religious roots of Dravidian nationalism.
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Although an effort was taken to follow the University of Madras Tamil Lexicon scheme for transliterating Tamil words I have not followed it consistently since in many cases I found the familiar anglicized form of transliteration often used in contemporary Tamil Nadu to be much simpler and less misleading. The majority of English translations of Tamil works cited here was done by me except when indicated otherwise.
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INTRODUCTION

In all societies, new classes and productive forces grow out of the old. In colonial societies, in which new classes are frequently fashioned by external agencies before older hierarchies have disappeared, there is often an articulation of the new capitalist mode of production with older forms of production, class and property relations, political authority, and ideology. Given both the continuities and the disjuncture, the contradictory nature of people's actions reflects a social order that is itself contradictory.

Shula Marks

The Dravidian movement began gaining momentum in Southern India in the early part of this century. It was primarily an ethno-nationalist and socio-cultural movement that sought to subvert the power and influence of Brahmins and Brahminical culture, and empower the non-Brahmin peoples, languages and cultures of Southern India. It largely appealed to the non-Brahmin, Tamil speaking people of Southern India who were also its main propagandists and activists. The movement took political form in the year 1916, with the formation of the South Indian Liberal Federation (SILF) popularly known as the Justice Party. In 1944, it was renewed and renamed the

Tiravida Kalam (DK) (Dravidian Association). Although the party was elected to power a number of times before independence, it was in 1967, under a more populist version of the DK, the Tiravida Munnetra Kalam (DMK) (The Association for the Advancement of Dravidians) that it captured state power in the recently reconstituted linguistic state of Tamil Nadu. Ever since, it has remained, albeit in various guises, the "official ideology" in power in the state of Tamil Nadu.1

S. Vedachalam Pillai (1876-1950), popularly known by his "pure" Tamil name Maraimalai Adigal was the central ideologue of the Dravidian nationalist movement. Adigal earned this distinction largely through his life-long efforts to translate, construct, build upon and disseminate in Tamil, a Dravidian ideology, the foundations of which had been formulated earlier by his predecessors. Adigal passionately called for the recovery, revival and celebration of an ancient "non-Brahmin", Dravidian (Tamil) language, religion and culture, free from the fetters and influence of Brahmins and Brahminical culture. His popularity was closely tied to his construction and reading of a Tamil identity and history that valorized and celebrated the "non-Brahmin" Tamils—especially

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that of the higher non-Brahmin castes. Although, he played a key role in both the Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil revivalist movements that together undergirded and formed the vanguard of the movement for the “indigenization” of Dravidian ideology, he is popularly known as the father of the “pure” Tamil movement. Emerging to prominence at a crucial juncture in the history of the Dravidian movement, Adigals life intersected with almost all the prominent figures associated with that movement.

Despite significant scholarly advances in our understanding of the Dravidian movement, it is still largely presented as an aberrant if not peculiar phenomenon—its relevance or concern restricted to Tamil Nadu and the Tamils. The fact that many of its propagandists were nurtured in the same Indian soil, and educated in the same schools and colleges as the Indian nationalists seems to have had little impact on the perception or understanding of the movement. Adigal was born around the same time as such hallowed, highly visible nationalist figures as C. Rajagopalachari (b.1878), Aurobindo Ghose (1872-1950), Mohandas Gandhi (1869-1948) and Lala Lajpat Rai (1865-1928)—yet despite his significance he is scarcely known outside Tamil Nadu.

Current scholarship on the Dravidian movement is at least partly responsible for this state of affairs. It has largely
focused on the socio-economic and political dimension of the movement and failed to address or trace its important regional, socio-cultural and religious roots. Most scholars have instead emphasized the unusual and "sensational" social and political rivalry that developed between the Brahmins and non-Brahmins. In fact, this sensationalist focus on the Brahmin/non-Brahmin rivalry has helped preclude a deeper understanding of the movement. Aside from the chapter on, "The Intellectual Background of Tamil Separatism" in Eugene Irschick's pioneering study\(^1\), there is very little scholarship in English that attempts to trace the distinctive socio-cultural and religious roots of the Dravidian movement. Scholars such as Robert Hardgrave(1965) and Marguerite Ross Barnett(1976) although conceding an important cultural dimension, do not really examine it in any great depth or trace its significant cultural roots and antecedents. When the cultural dimension has been addressed--more typical of works in Tamil--"culture" has often been deployed as a static, impermeable construct, unresponsive to external influences and

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socio-political imperatives. Relying mostly on English language sources and focusing largely on political rivalries, scholars identified with the Cambridge School such as Baker (1976) and Washbrook (1976) have dismissed altogether the significance of history and culture on the movement.¹

More recent efforts in English have been equally complacent in tracing the socio-cultural and religious roots of the movement.² One of the most recent, by Sumathi Ramasami (1997) although laboriously tracing the linguistic and cultural trajectory of Dravidian ideology, as a strategy to evade what she considers as "Orientalist preoccupation with caste and religion" treats this cultural dimension as almost self driven and autonomous." K. Sivathamby’s long research


article in Tamil, *Tanittamil Iyakkattin Araciyyat Pinnani* (The Politics behind the Pure Tamil Movement) (1979), remains one of the few sustained attempts to trace the socio-cultural and religious roots, while being sensitive to the social and political struggles and imperatives behind the Dravidian movement.

Contemporary Dravidian cultural politics has also contributed its share to this scholarly lacunae. The prolific writings in Tamil on the Dravidian movement are largely produced by politically engaged, “progressive” Dravidianists. In keeping with their commitment to this “progressive” brand of Dravidianism, however, they have tended to ignore the early colonial roots of the movement as well as its relationship to the Saivite/Tamil revival-associated as it is with the higher non-Brahmin castes. Instead, they have focused on the “progressive” post-Saivite, “Self Respect phase” of the Dravidian movement. However, the vicissitudes of contemporary

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political reality in Tamil Nadu have forced some of these scholars to call for a re-examination of the early roots of the Dravidian movement. At a recent conference held in South India (1998) some of these engaged scholars raised an issue that is very much a central concern of the present study, that is the "connection between caste and the construction of cultural identity" in colonial India. That it was raised by scholars engaged in the study of Tamil Nadu and the Dravidian movement is not surprising. The impetus for such questioning itself came from their concern "for deconstructing the Tamil-Saivite tradition and culture for the purpose of imagining an alternative Tamil community." Elaborating such concerns, A. Marx one of the panelists to first raise the issue, asserted that "the modernization process initiated during British colonial rule had been utilized by the cultural elites to construct Tamil culture in the Saivite tradition, ignoring the Jaina-Buddhist contribution and marginalising the subalterns." 10 It is precisely towards illuminating such processes and concerns that the present study is engaged.

The historiography of the Indian nationalist movement is also complicit in the marginalization of the Dravidian

10 This question was reportedly raised by A. Marx among others, in a recent conference on the theme of "Re-Figuring Literary and Cultural Historiography" held in Hyderabad in March 1998. See, Susie Tharu and Satish Poduval, "Re-Figuring Literary/Cultural Historiography," Economic and Political Weekly, Vol.XXXIII, No. 25, June 20-26, 1998, pp. 1508-9.
movement as a purely regional and Tamil concern. In the narratives of Indian nationalism, like the Pakistan movement, the Pathan and Sikh movement, the Dravidian movement is an uncomfortable and unconformable presence. In addition, both Nationalist and Cambridge historians have aided this marginalization by failing to address adequately the dominant religio-cultural undercurrents behind the Indian nationalist movement. Some Cambridge historians have similarly denied any regional religio-cultural basis for the Dravidian movement.11 The fact that many of the regional movements including the Pakistan movement--and the ethnic or religious identities they in turn spawned--were cast through conflict and response to the dominant discourse of Indian nationalism is not adequately addressed in contemporary scholarship. Suggestive of this need, a recent effort in this direction has been made by Dietrich Rietz (1997) in an article aptly entitled: “In Search of Collective Self: How Ethnic Group Concepts were cast through Conflict in Colonial India.”12


12See, Dietrich Reetz, "In Search of Collective Self: How Ethnic Group Concepts were cast through Conflict in Colonial India." Modern Asian Studies, 31, 2, (1997), pp. 285-315. Reetz though making an important point when he states, "If all-India nationalism was molded by religion from its inception, so was sub-nationalism, or ethnic politics." still does not take this beyond asserting that the three major regional movements, the Pathans, the Sikhs and the Tamils,
One of the results of this scholarly marginalization of the Dravidian movement has been the failure to adequately locate it and its significant players as representing an instance of a regional cultural "community’s" legitimate response both to its past heritage and to the demands and imperatives of the colonial experience and "modernity". Although the nature and boundaries of this "community" was itself shaped by the colonial experience, nevertheless, the Dravidian movement in many ways represents the dominant trajectory of the Tamil community’s response both to its heritage and to the demands, imperatives, as well as the terms and conditions of "colonial modernity."

Thus, one of the broader concerns of this thesis is to redress this imbalance in the scholarship of modern Indian history. The thesis seeks to reinsert the story of Dravidian nationalism within this wider canvas and its central preoccupation with the narrative of Indian nationalism. It hopes to position the ideological trajectory of Dravidian nationalism alongside the ideological trajectory of Indian nationalism described so vividly by contemporary scholars such as David Kopf and Partha Chatterjee. By doing so, it seeks to find a striking similarity in their patterns of mobilization, conflict and concept." he also added another similarity— their timing around mid-nineteenth century.

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demonstrate both the connectedness (dialectics) and similarity between the dominant discourse of Indian nationalism and--one of its principal counterparts--the discourse of Dravidian nationalism. Similar to the way European Orientalism was complicit in the construction of the dominant "neo-Hindu" discourse of Indian nationalism, I argue that a parallel missionary-led Orientalism was complicit in the construction of a Dravidian, more specifically Tamil identity and nationalism in Southern India. In fact, the central thesis of this work is that this parallel missionary Orientalism of Southern India and its people--specifically of the Tamils--provided the intellectual and ideological foundation and inspiration for Dravidian and more specifically Tamil nationalism in Southern India. Enriched by Christian and enlightenment intellectual traditions, this missionary Orientalism posited both an alternative/counter identity for the Dravidians/Tamils while at the same time provided a profound critique of the dominant neo-Hindu discourse of Indian nationalism.

An equally important reason for the limitations in the extant scholarship on the Dravidian movement stems from a lack of detailed scholarly analysis of the pioneer ideologues of

the Dravidian movement. The scattered and brief accounts of these crucial early protagonists that are available in English, have largely failed to locate their work both within the local religio-cultural trajectory as well as within the wider canvas of modern Indian history and colonialism. Despite acknowledging the important role played by missionaries there has been little scholarship devoted to them, nor has there been any effort to understand their contribution to the Dravidian movement that is sensitive at the same time to their wider missionary objectives for South Indian society. Similarly, the few Tamil works that are available on the pioneer Tamil Dravidian ideologues, in keeping with their predominantly Saivite/Tamil lineage and agenda, and the hagiographical tradition associated with it, have largely presented their work as nothing but a continuation of the work of Tamil/Saivite saints--albeit in a modern colonial setting.

Despite being the central ideologue of the Dravidian

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14Although the extant scholarship on the Dravidian movement traces its ideology to figures such as Caldwell they have not sought to analyze in any depth the relationship between missionary contributions to the Dravidian ideology and their wider mandates as missionaries in South India. K. Sivathamby(1979) had suggested that the missionaries like Caldwell attempted to portray the Brahmins and non-Brahmins as separate. The present work is the first lengthy study of the principal missionary contributors to the Dravidian ideology which is at the same time sensitive to their wider objectives in South Indian society. I have published a section of my work on the subject. See V. Ravindiran, "The Unanticipated Legacy of Robert Caldwell and the Dravidian Movement." South Indian Studies. Vol. 1. No. 1, pp. 83-110.
movement, Maraimalai Adigal has so far received little detailed scholarly scrutiny in English. The majority of works dealing at length with Maraimalai Adigal are in Tamil. Since Adigal is popularly known as the father of the Pure Tamil movement, the many works available in Tamil on the Pure Tamil movement generally devote a section to his life and work. In keeping with his popular image they generally present his life and work as part and parcel of the story of the movement for "pure" Tamil. Adopting an hagiographical approach, with scarce attention paid to colonial conditions and transformations they seek to insert him in an unbroken Saivite/Tamil lineage. For example, the most recent work on the pure Tamil movement is dedicated by its author to "The sacred feet of the father of the pure Tamil movement, Maraimalai Adigal who regarded Saivism and Tamil as his two eyes, and toiled for them all his

15One of the most erudite contemporary works on this theme is by K. Tirumaran, Tanittamil Iyakkam(Pure Tamil Movement), Tiruchi:Marutam, 1992. Other works on this theme include, Saratha Nambi Arooran, Tanittamil Iyakkathin Totramum Valarchiyum(Origin and Development of the Pure Tamil Movement), Madras:Kaniporri Achu, 1994; R. Ilankumaran, Tanittamil Iyakkam, Madras:Manivacagar Noolakam, 1991; K. Tamilamallan, Tanittamil Tantaiyin Katai(The Story of the Father of the Pure Tamil Movement), Pondicherry:Tanittamil Patipakkam, 1993; and R. Ilankumaran, Maraimalaiyadigalar Tanittamil Kolkai(The Pure Tamil Policy of Maraimalai Adigal), Madras:International Institute for Tamil Studies, 1986; There is even a Tamil journal Vellum Tuva Tamil (Victorious Pure Tamil) edited by K. Tamilamallan and published from Pondicherry. The journal cover always includes a the picture of Maraimalai Adigal. There is also an English work by, T.S. Subramany Raghavan, Makers of Modern Tamil, Madras:SISSW., 1965.
These Tamil works, thus seek to re-inscribe Adigal within the Saivite/Tamil lineage and tradition that the efforts of pioneer Tamil Dravidian ideologues were attempting to resurrect, revive and make popular, albeit through a Dravidian reading. All the biographies available on Adigal, the vast majority of which are in Tamil seek to do the same. They present Adigal largely from a Saivite/Tamil hagiographical perspective. In these accounts, Adigal’s life is charted—much in the way he was depicted in the dedication to the work on the pure Tamil movement— as a champion of Saivism and Tamil; the two fundamental and “primordial” pillars of Tamil identity. One of the most detailed and informative of these works is by his son, Marai Tirunavukkarasu, entitled, *Maraimalai Adigal Varalaru* (The History of Maraimalai Adigal) (1959). Despite its fairly transparent mandate and hagiographical style the work is richly textured and provides considerable insight, often unwittingly, on the life and career of Adigal as well as of many of the early protagonists of the Dravidian movement. There are also numerous shorter biographies in Tamil, often poor imitations of the one by his

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son. There are as well, countless shorter articles, also written in a largely hagiographical vein in celebration of Adigal’s many literary and scholarly achievements, and most of all, his service to the Tamil people and “nation.”

The scholarship on the Dravidian movement is thus beset both by the insistence of such works on depicting the work of Adigal and the early Dravidian movement as merely the reassertion of the legitimate Saivite/Tamil past of the Tamils, long submerged by Brahmins and Brahminical culture; and the post colonial historiography of the movement, mostly in English, which views such claims with suspicion and which suggests instead a colonially instigated if not “invented” movement. Almost all the works in English despite referring occasionally to primordial loyalties, emphasize the colonial

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18Some of the more original ones include Arasu (Pulaver), Maraimalai Adigal, Valvum Paniyum, Madras:SISSW., 1951; Alagaradigal, Maraimalaiyadigalar Varalaru Matchi, Madras:SISSW, 1977; M. Iracamanikkam, Maraimalai Adigal, Madras:India Veliyidu, 1951.

19One of the more sustained, though still hagiographical efforts at analysing Adigal’s literary achievements is the work, N. Jeyaprakash, Maraimalai Adigalarin Ilakkiyap Padaipukal (The Literary Works of Maraimalai Adigal), Madras:Arul Oli, 1981.

20Most of them were written for the many celebrations of Adigal’s life and work undertaken by various organization that promote Tamil and Saiva Siddhanta in contemporary Tamil Nadu. The most prominent of these organizations is The South India Saiva Siddhanta Works Publishing Society based in Madras and Tirunevelly. It was begun originally by Adigal’s greatest patron and devotee T. Tiruvarangam Pillai. As the society entrusted to preserve and propagate Adigal’s work, it has published numerous celebratory volumes on Adigal, one of the latest is entitled, Maraimali Adigal Noorttandu Vila Malar (Souvenir of Centenary Celebration of Maraimalai Adigal), Madras:The South India Saiva Siddhanta Works Publishing Society(SISSW.), 1977.
period, especially the rise of Indian nationalism, urbanization and Orientalist scholarship as decisive in the emergence of the Dravidian movement.

To a student of modern Indian history, what is most striking about the early Tamil Dravidian ideologues is that they were generally English-educated non-Brahmins. In addition, even a cursory glance at their writings reveals that they were profoundly influenced by Orientalist and English scholarship. Regarding the work of Adigal from such a vantage point, the question which naturally comes to mind is, how does one make sense of Maraimalai Adigal depicted in the Tamil/Saivite hagiographical scholarship as the very embodiment of an ancient Saivite/Tamil poet saint, and reconcile it with the knowledge that he kept his diaries in English, had a passion for "high class English books", loved to go rowing and experiment with Tumbler Talking" and "Crystal Gazing outfits" imported from London along with "Pictures of famous Nudes". Aside from being the central ideologue of the Dravidian movement, it was such contradictions and ironies that inform the life and career of Adigal that inspired me to undertake a detailed study.

Despite tracing Dravidian ideology to the writings of important missionary figures in nineteenth century South India, scholarship on the Dravidian movement does not attempt
to address why or how the work of missionaries came to play such an important role in its formulation. Perhaps more importantly, it does not attempt to reconcile this "alien genealogy" with that of the claims made by non-Brahmin Tamil/Saivite ideologues, of the indigenous lineage of their work. There is really no attempt to explain how such a complex and powerful corpus of ideas as Dravidian ideology came to be derived from what they posit as scattered though decisive missionary contributions. The present study argues that the power and resonance of Dravidian ideology derived from missionary-led Orientalism's critique--utilizing researches into local vernacular languages, religions, cultures and traditions--of the place of Brahmins and Brahminical culture in South Indian society and culture, along with their support and encouragement of local "Dravidian" languages and cultures. It explains the extraordinary support that missionaries gave the Dravidian movement by positing that missionaries were impelled in this work, due to their belief by mid-nineteenth century, that Brahmins and Brahmanism posed the greatest obstacle to Christian missionary objectives in Southern India.

The present study argues that by early nineteenth century, before the major impact of missionary Orientalism on Tamil scholarship, Brahminical/Sanskritic culture was clearly gaining ascendancy over the more regionally bound
Tamil cultural forms and practices. This is especially reflected in the widespread use and prevalence of a form of highly Sanskritized Tamil called Manipuravalam during the period and which is now not easily understood by contemporary Tamils. Similarly, in the religious realm, Brahminical/Vedic religious practices were gaining ascendancy over the more regional, Agama based Saivite/Saiva Siddhanta practices associated especially with the higher non-Brahmin castes. Centers of Tamil learning that existed were largely patronized by Saiva Siddhanta mutts, especially those led by higher non-Brahmins castes. However even in these mutts the Tamil learning that was propagated was increasingly influenced by Sanskritic culture that had begun gaining ascendancy from at least the fifteenth century in Tamil Nadu.\(^{21}\)

It is against this cultural background that we need to locate the work of missionaries and Missionary Orientalism. Aside from the need to propagate their message, the missionaries began to patronize and encourage local vernacular languages and traditions in order to subvert the power and influence of Brahminical culture-- which by the mid

\(^{21}\)The contemporary Tamil scholar, Zvelebil believes that by mid-fifteenth century, even among the learned, ancient Tamil literature ceased to be of interest and faded into oblivion. He further asserted that, "The decisive factor in ancient Tamil literature being hidden was the strong and lasting influence of Brahminical Hinduism." See Kamil V. Zvelebil, Companion Studies to the History of Tamil Literature, Leiden:E.J. Brill, 1992, p. 147.
nineteenth century they began to identify as the greatest impediment to the propagation of Christianity in South India. They particularly encouraged those works and traditions within South India that had historically opposed Brahminical Hinduism. In addition with the increasing awareness of the historical tensions and contradictions between Sanskrit culture and local vernacular languages and culture some missionaries took this a step further by constructing a separate linguistic, racial and cultural genealogy for non-Brahmin South Indians. These efforts by the missionaries may be seen as laying the early foundation for the Dravidian movement.\textsuperscript{22} It is in re-constituting, re-configuring and redrawing the nature and boundaries of these earlier tensions that Orientalism and especially Missionary Orientalism played a significant role.

In order to understand why Saivite/Tamil revival undergirded and formed the vanguard of the movement for the indigenization of Dravidian ideology, it is important to have some understanding of the Saivite religion and its complex history in the Tamil region. The Saivite religion has been the

\textsuperscript{22}The tensions they elicited recalled earlier tensions that were involved in the process of Sanskritization and Vernacularization in the Tamil regions. It is highly welcome that scholarship has again begun to focus on this much neglected area of the issue of Sanskritization/Vernacularization in India. A recent issue of the Journal of Asian Studies (1998) devoted to precisely this issue is promising.
predominant religious tradition among the Tamils at least from the medieval period. As the predominant tradition, it is hardly surprising that Tamil language and literature, were closely tied to its evolution and institutions. Unlike Brahminical/Vedic tradition, Saivite tradition in Tamil Nadu was closely tied to the temple-centered Agamic tradition. Philosophically too there was a difference in emphasis between the two traditions. Unlike the Vedic tradition which at least from the time of Sankara emphasized Advaita (Non-duality) and monistic philosophy, where God, the Self, and world were seen as one, the Agama based Saivite tradition in Tamil Nadu emphasized a Dualistic, Theistic philosophy where God, the self and the world were not only regarded as separate but the existence of the individual and the world was given a greater sense of reality and credence. The missionary support for Saiva Siddhanta over Vedantic tradition derived some of its impetus from this greater doctrinal compatibility between Saiva Siddhanta and Christianity in addition to the fact that it was associated more with the non-Brahmins in Tamil Nadu.

Recent scholarship on the Saivite/Saiva Siddhanta tradition in Tamil Nadu suggests that from the medieval period there was a conscious attempt to “Tamilize” Saiva Siddhanta
tradition which had previously been an all India phenomenon.\textsuperscript{23} This process of "Tamilizing" itself made the Saiva Siddhanta tradition in Tamil Nadu unique and distinctive from the earlier all India, Sanskrit based Saiva Siddhanta tradition. This process of "Tamilization" began around the twelfth century with Vakisa Munivar and a guru lineage beginning with the non-Brahmin saint Meikandar.\textsuperscript{24} One of the important results of Tamilization, was that in the process the Saiva Siddhanta tradition not only became inextricably linked to the earlier Saivite bhakti tradition of the Tamils but also became associated with a distinct Tamil guru lineage complete with Tamil canonical works. Perhaps it was with the process of "Tamilizing" Saiva Siddhanta that there emerged powerful non-Brahmin, Vellalar-led Saiva Siddhanta mutts in Tamil Nadu.\textsuperscript{25} However, what is important to note here is that linked powerfully both to the dominant higher non-Brahmin castes through mutts and temples as well as to the masses through its connection to the Tamil language and the Saivite bhakti


\textsuperscript{24}Ibid., p. 237.

tradition, the revival of Saiva Siddhanta in the nineteenth century afforded a powerful vehicle for mobilizing the "Tamils" and the "Tamil nation."

The thesis is divided into two parts. Part one seeks to trace the early intellectual genealogy of Dravidian nationalism,-- in the process it traces both the early missionary-led Orientalism as well the work of non-Brahmin English educated Tamil pioneer Dravidian ideologues who followed them. Chapter one is devoted to tracing Dravidian ideology to the parallel missionary led Orientalism that developed in Southern India, partly as a response to the dominant school of Orientalism inaugurated in Calcutta. In particular it focuses on the writings of two prominent nineteenth century Protestant missionaries, Robert Caldwell and G. U. Pope, who played important roles in the early formulation of Dravidian ideology. The second chapter focuses on the indigenization of that ideology undertaken predominantly by English-educated higher non-Brahmin caste Tamil Saivites. The chapter also argues that the non-Brahmin Tamil/Saivites of Southern India, unlike those of Jaffna, Sri Lanka, embraced and adopted the Dravidian ideology to combat the ascendancy of Vedanta, Vaishnavism and Sanskrit in Tamil Nadu.

Part two is devoted to a detailed analysis of the life
and work of Maraimalai Adigal. The principal focus of this section concerns his efforts to build upon and popularize the Dravidian ideology formulated earlier by his predecessors. The aim is to both locate Adigal and his work in the regional “traditional” religio-cultural terrain as well as situate him in the wider context of modern colonial India and its English intellectual, cultural and colonial impact. Thus it seeks to fill important lacunae in the scholarship on Adigal rather than to provide a comprehensive biography. However, through a detailed analysis of the major aspects of his life and work this study seeks to tease out some of the significant factors, groups, personalities and institutions that were involved in the construction, dissemination and popularization of the Dravidian ideology. By an examination of some of his key writings the study also seeks to outline its changing contours as propagated by him.

Chapter three looks at the formative influences on Adigal’s life, his personal background including place of origin, family, caste, mission education and his significant early mentors and influences. It argues that in addition to the mission education he received, he was exposed to non-Brahmin led Tamil/Saivite revivalist influences early in his life. In addition he was exposed to the personalities and writings of the early Tamil pioneer Dravidian ideologues such
as P. Sundaram Pillai and J. M. Nallaswami Pillai. Chapter four focuses on his emergence as a Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil revivalist at the turn of the century. It argues that Adigal’s early exposure to and collaboration with his Saiva Siddhanta guru Somasundara Nayakar was decisive for his emergence as a major Saiva Siddhanta revivalist in Tamil Nadu. The chapter also argues that it was the brand of Saiva Siddhanta revivalism propagated by Nayakar that under the leadership of Adigal triumphed in Tamil Nadu over the competing, more conservative Saivite/Tamil revival that had been initiated in Jaffna, Sri Lanka.

Chapter five looks at Adigal’s life and work as a Tamil pundit from 1903-1911 at Madras Christian College-- in the intellectual, cultural and administrative heart of Madras Presidency. In addition to dealing with his teaching experience and his increasing exposure to English intellectual and cultural influences the chapter looks at the way he laid the foundation for his role as a major Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil revivalist. Chapter six deals with the period 1911 to 1926 when Adigal emerged as one of the most popular spokesmen for Dravidian and Tamil nationalism. His retirement from MCC, the establishment of his own Saiva Siddhanta order and mutt, adoption of Sanyasa (renunciation), his work as an itinerant lecturer and his launching of the “pure” Tamil movement were
some of the significant developments during this period. The final chapter deals with the period 1926-1950. It not only examines this "golden" period in Adigal's career but also the confrontation as well as the collaboration between Adigal and the emerging Self Respect Movement. It argues that the emergence of the Self Respect movement provided an intellectual and political climate that validated his ideas as well as stimulated their radicalization.
PART ONE

TRACING THE INTELLECTUAL GENEALOGY OF DRAVIDIAN NATIONALISM
Chapter One

The Intellectual Foundations of Dravidian Ideology:
Contributions of European Missionaries and Scholar Officials
(1800-1900)

In the assault mediated by the missionaries upon the idolatrous system of the Tamils, the first approaches have all been made through the instrumentality of education,... To a casual observer it might seem that an undue precedence has been given to the secular,... but a reflection will dispel the apprehension when it is borne in mind that the genius of the Brahminical superstition has itself suggested the order of attack.

Sir James Emerson Tennent (1850):

For the new theory of Language has unquestionably produced a new theory of Race... There seems to me no doubt that modern philology has suggested a grouping of people quite unlike anything that has been thought of before. If you examine the bases proposed for common nationality before the new knowledge growing out of the study of Sanscrit has been popularized in Europe, you will find them extremely unlike those which are now advocated...

Sir Henry Sumner Maine (1875):

Dravidian nationalism began gaining momentum in South India at the beginning of the present century in opposition to the dominant discourse of Indian nationalism. Its emergence

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affords a significant example not only of the complicity of Missionary Orientalism in the process of identity construction and nationalism in South India, but also more importantly of its role in empowering subordinate groups or communities there. The Dravidian ideology had its origins in the contesting 'Orientalisms' over the languages, histories, religions, races and cultures of India that had been inaugurated by the introduction of British colonial rule and administration. It is by now quite clear that the Orientalist scholarship that was inaugurated by British colonial rule founded mainly on the dominant pre-British traditions and ideologies; largely privileged a Brahminical vision of India. By contrast, European missionaries and later scholar/administrators working in South India provided a

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3 The first scholar to suggest that Protestant missionaries were attempting to create a climate where there could be a separation between the Brahmins and non-Brahmins in South India was K. Sivathamby. He had noted this tendency from a reading of Caldwell's first work on the Tinnevelly Shanars. See K. Sivathamby, "The Poetics of a Literary Style." Social Scientist Vol.6. no.8. 1978. pp. 16-33. The first work to examine this question in any depth and demonstrate such a thesis is by the author. See, V. Ravindiran, "The Unanticipated Legacy of Robert Caldwell and the Dravidian Movement." South Indian Studies, Vo1.6. No.1. pp. 83-110.


5 There is by now an enormous literature on this subject. Some of the pioneer works on the subject were by Bernard Cohn, David Kopf and Ronald Inden. After Edward Said's famous work on Orientalism there has been a renewed interest in the subject.
parallel but counter discourse to the privileging of this
Aryan/Brahminical vision. The ideology of Dravidian
nationalism can be traced to the writings of this counter-
discourse.

The central thesis of this chapter is that the
ideological origins of Dravidian nationalism can be traced not
only to the historical tensions that existed between
Sanskritic and local vernacular cultures in South India but
more importantly to the modern re-configured articulation of
these tensions inspired by Missionary Orientalism. The
missionaries were impelled in this project by their belief
that Brahmanism and the caste system posed the greatest
obstacle in the way of Christian conversion in South India.
They drew both their inspiration and justification for this
project from earlier resistance to Brahminical culture found
in ancient and medieval Tamil literary works.

Missionary Orientalism embraced and supported local
vernacular languages and cultures of South India in opposition
to that of Sanskrit. Their work inspired a significant body
of scholarship that proposed the existence of an ancient and
once "pure" Dravidian culture free from Brahmanism that needed
to be recovered and reclaimed. Alleging that the Aryan culture
of the Brahmins had corrupted this Dravidian culture, they
called for the recovery of the latter. Many elements that now
constitute Dravidian nationalist ideology derived from this anti-Brahmin Missionary Orientalism.

Dravidian nationalist ideology was framed in marked contrast to, and in opposition to, the hegemony of what can be characterized as the overarching Aryan/Brahminical/Sanskritic identity and culture of India. There were at least two key "moments" in its ideological evolution. The first consisted of the efforts to present Tamil and other South Indian languages and speakers as having a distinct genealogy separate from those of the Indo-Aryan linguistic family and its speakers in India. It was first systematically articulated in the pioneering philological work by Reverend Robert Caldwell, *A Comparative Grammar of Dravidian or South Indian Family of Languages* (1856).

Caldwell not only coined the word Dravidian to describe the languages and peoples of South India, but also constructed, with the aid of the modern disciplines of philology, archeology, and history, a genealogy for Dravidian languages, culture, and people marked by its opposition to an Aryan/Brahmin language, culture, and people. His work provided

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6 The term “Brahminical ideology” would be used instead of the more cumbersome “Aryan/Brahminical/Sanskritic ideology.”

a significant "scientific" bulwark against the privileging of a Brahminical vision of India of his time. It also, most importantly, provided the rising class of non-Brahmins in South India a significant ideological weapon against Brahmin socio-cultural and intellectual hegemony. His use of the term "Dravidian" came to have an enormous appeal to the rising non-Brahmin classes of South India, providing a single category under which all the linguistically disparate non-Brahmin caste groups in South India could unite.

Caldwell's work had a phenomenal impact, for aside from laying the ideological foundation for Dravidian nationalism it opened up a whole field of scholarly inquiry into things "Dravidian." After Caldwell's achievement, others launched a search for a distinctly "Dravidian" religion and culture. This was the beginning of the second key moment in the evolution of

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*South India and more particularly the Tamil region was an especially suitable site for such a religio-cultural intervention. Not only was the Brahmin population fairly small but there had been a substantial resistance to Brahmanism and Sanskritic culture in earlier times. The structural configuration of the system of social stratification in South India was also favourable for such an intervention due to an unusual anomaly in ranking of castes. The powerful landholding castes next in rank only to the Brahmins had been assigned the fairly low and demeaning varna (caste) category of "Sudra." Unlike northern India where the Hindu population had a fair distribution of the four varna groupings, namely Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra, South India had only two varna categories, Brahmin and Sudra. The dharma or duty of a Sudra according to the classical Sanskrit legal texts was one of menial work and service to the three higher varnas.

the Dravidian ideology. European scholar-administrators and missionaries were again in the forefront in raising the issue of a distinctly Dravidian religion in the Orientalist scholarship of the time. Although Caldwell had dismissed the religion of the Dravidians as simply demonolatry overlain by a thin veneer of Brahminism, many other European Christian missionaries and scholar-administrators searched for and found in the ancient Tamil and other vernacular religious and literary works evidence for an ethical and religious system that was in their eyes more compatible with the Christian tradition.

The major impulse in much of the missionary support for a distinctly Dravidian religion, again, was their antipathy towards Brahminism and what was considered to be its latest manifestation, neo-Vedantism. Neo-Vedantism by the late-nineteenth century in South India had come to be considered by many Christian missionaries and non-Brahmin Dravidian ideologues as the new liberal face of a resurgent Brahmanism in India. Working against the background of the ascendency of neo-Vedantism among English-educated Hindus that had been in part promoted by Orientalist scholarship, some Christian missionary scholars working in South India sought to promote their findings on what they considered to be a distinctly Dravidian religious tradition.
The second key moment involved the identification and resurrection of a distinctive Dravidian religion, which came to be identified as Saiva Siddhanta. It is best exemplified in the writings of pioneer Saiva Siddhanta revivalists who forged an 'inviolable' link between a Saivite or Saiva Siddhanta identity and a Dravidian identity. In the writings of advocates such as the Protestant Christian missionary G. U. Pope (1820-1907), pioneer Tamil ideologues such as P. Sundaram Pillai (1855-1897), J. M. Nallaswamy Pillai (1864-1920), and Maraimalai Adigal (1876-1950) Saiva Siddhanta became the original and "true" religion of the Dravidians. In fact, the Dravidian ideology derived much of its indigenous impetus and resonance by its association with a Saivite identity. As most of the early indigenous intellectuals in South India who embraced the Dravidian ideology were Tamil Saivites or Saiva Siddhantists, the Dravidian movement began largely as an integral part of the Saiva Siddhanta revival movement. These ideologues utilized the Christian missionary vision of a distinct and unique Dravidian language, culture and religion to present Saiva Siddhanta as a distinctly Dravidian religion. In so doing they clearly disrupted an earlier vision of a less racially defined or caste bound Saiva
Siddhanta tradition.  

South India and more particularly the Tamil region was an especially suitable site for such a religio-cultural intervention. Not only was the Brahmin population fairly small but there had been a substantial resistance to Brahmanism and Sanskritic culture in earlier times. There was also an unusual anomaly in South India in term of the classical varna categories. The powerful landholding castes next in rank to the Brahmins had been assigned the fairly low and demeaning varna category of 'Sudra'. Unlike northern India where the Hindu population had a fair distribution of the four varna groupings, namely Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra, southern India only had two varna categories, Brahmin and Shudra. The dharma or duty of a Sudra according to the orthodox Sanskrit legal texts was one of menial work and

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10K. Sivaraman a well known scholar and authority on Saiva Siddhanta does not deal with this contentious issue in his massive theoretical work on Saiva Siddhanta. However in one of his briefer articles he has confirmed his view that the idea that Saiva Siddhanta is the religion of the non-Brahmin Tamil/Dravidians has a fairly recent genealogy. He had written in a footnote to his article: "The literature is vast and only names of prominent participants in the debate over the issue, in the chronological order may be mentioned: P. Sundaram Pillai (1894) who was the first to raise the issue, Swami Vedachalam (1924) better known under the translated name of Maraimalai Adigal (who incidentally, inaugurated so to speak, the vogue of Tamilizing Sanskrit proper names thus reversing the age-long and the once-hallowed convention of 'Sanskritizing' Tamil names of persons, places, hills, rivers, shrines, dieties, kings, commerce...every conceivable item, in short, of nature and culture) K. Subramania Pillai (1931) who also vigorously propounded the thesis of 'original' four Vedas in Tamil and M. Balasundara Mudaliar." See, K. Sivaraman, "The Role of the Saivagama in the emergence of Saivasiddhanta: A Philosophical Interpretation." in Slater and Wiebe ed, Traditions in Contact and Change. 1980, p. 675.(footnote 9)
service to the three higher Varnas."

Although both Caldwell’s and Pope’s work drew from the work and writings of earlier as well as contemporary European scholars and missionaries, this chapter will largely focus on the work and writings of Caldwell and Pope. In many ways, the work of Caldwell and Pope provided a foundation for others—intellectuals, missionaries, administrators and politicians, both European and indigenous—who transformed these ideas into a primary base for identity construction and nationalism.

Despite the scholarly consensus on the enormous impact of Caldwell's work on the Dravidian movement, there has been little or no scholarship devoted to his life and work; nor

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11The orthodox Brahminical legal text, Dharmastra had laid down very clearly the rules and observances required of each category of persons. For example, it had stipulated the following as the dharma or duty of the Sudra: 
The one and only dharma of a sudra is obedience to the twice born; anything he does other than that will be fruitless...The sudra is to work for an aarya, who is to provide the sudra with left-over food, old clothing and furnishing, and the like...a sudra even if capable must never have a surplus of wealth, for a sudra with wealth will injure brahmans...One must never bestow learning upon a sudra...never teach him dharma, never instruct him in other vows. Whoever tells him about dharma, or instructs him in vows, will go to hell called Vast Darkness along with the sudra himself.”

12The only scholarly work devoted solely to Caldwell is in Tamil and was published in 1936: Ra. Pi. Setupillai., Kaltuvel Aiyar saritam (Biography of Rev. Caldwell), Tirunelveli, 1936. Some information on Caldwell is also available in K. Meenakshisundaram, The Contribution of European Scholars to Tamil, University of Madras, Madras, 1974. See also a brief note by M.S.H. Thompson, ‘Dr. Caldwell’, Tamil Culture, Vol.IX. No.4., Oct-Dec. 1961,}

has there been any attempt to locate his contributions in the larger context of his life, activities and objectives as a Christian missionary.\textsuperscript{13} This lacuna may partly be explained by the supposed 'scientific' and therefore, dispassionate nature of Caldwell's and other missionary contributions to the Dravidian movement.\textsuperscript{14} However, the most likely reason is the absence of any scholarly interest in exploring the possible linkages between missionary objectives and goals and the Dravidian ideology that they helped construct.\textsuperscript{15} The existing scholarship on the Dravidian movement has largely been content

\textsuperscript{13}This is best illustrated by the well known Tamil scholar Zvelebil's assertion that Caldwell's work was done in all innocence. See, Kamil V. Zvelebil, Companion Studies to the History of Tamil Literature, Leiden and New York: E.J. Brill, 1992, p. 256.

\textsuperscript{14}This explanation is hardly adequate, since it was not so much Caldwell's rigorous philological findings that came to have such an impact, but the lengthy introduction and appendix to his philological work, which was as clearly polemical as it was 'scientific'.

\textsuperscript{15}What I am proposing for the historiography of the Dravidian/Tamil revivalist movement is very similar to the argument proposed by David Kopf in his work, British Orientalism and Bengal Renaissance, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1969, where Kopf demonstrates the enormous impact that missionaries such as William Carey had on Bengali linguistic and cultural renaissance. A similar approach sensitive the enormous missionary contribution to the Dravidian movement and renaissance is very much needed. What is most striking in the case of South India is the more marked interest of the missionaries in the South to promote a Dravidian\textbackslash{Tamil linguistic and cultural revivalism in opposition to an Aryan\textbackslash{Sanskritic revivalism.}
to cite the missionary contributions, either as isolated incidents or as unforeseen by products of missionary labour. 

The intellectual influences that moulded Caldwell's philological work may be divided into three major influences. Aside from the intellectual and cultural baggage he brought with him from Scotland, Caldwell was influenced by the writings of earlier as well as contemporary Christian missionaries working in India. In addition, his work was also influenced by the writings of various scholar/officials attached to the College of Fort St. George in Madras. Lastly, Caldwell's work also drew generally from the tradition of European Orientalist scholarship that was ascendent during his life time.

Caldwell and Missionary Orientalism

In many ways Caldwell's work can be seen as part of a


17 Caldwell who attended Glasgow University was no doubt influenced by the philosophical traditions of the Scottish enlightenment. It is important to note that figures such as Charles Grant and James Mill came from a similar background. See Jane Rendall, "Scottish Orientalism: From Robertson to James Mill", The Historical Journal, 24, 1(1982). pp. 43-69.
critical tradition of missionary scholarship on India that was initiated by the earliest Christian missionaries to South India in the sixteenth century. The early missionary scholarship though varying in its level of sophistication and understanding of Hindu civilization generally presented a critical view of Hindu civilization and culture. It included works on various aspects of South Indian languages, cultures and religious practices. This early missionary scholarship was largely eclipsed by the emergence of a “new Orientalism” inaugurated in Calcutta under the patronage of the East Indian Company government in the late eighteenth century. The work of such eminent figures as William Jones and H.T. Colebrook was less critical of Hindu civilization and often painted a favourable vision of ancient Hindu culture. Although it was this “new Orientalism” that was ascendant during the time of Caldwell, his writings reflect more the critical spirit and traditions of earlier missionary writings on India.

In Caldwell’s exhaustive account of the early history of the Tinnevelly mission (1881), he reveals his immersion in and


19 A more recent example would be the work by the Francis Buchanan entitled A Journey from Madras, through the countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar(1809).

engagement with this long tradition of missionary scholarship on India, particularly of Southern India. The work also reveals that Caldwell placed a great deal of emphasis on learning from the cumulative experiences and writings of earlier missionaries. He was particularly inspired by the work of early Roman Catholic and Protestant missionaries who had immersed themselves in Indian life and who had gained a deep understanding of local languages, cultures and religious practices. He was particularly impressed by such early Jesuit missionaries such as Robert De Nobili (1577-1656) and Constantius Joseph Beschi (1680-1746), whose mastery of Indian languages and religious traditions attracted for them a large following in South India. He was also impressed by the early

\[\text{\footnotesize[21] Caldwell's work was entitled, Records of the Early History of the Tinnevelly Mission (1881). The work clearly reveals that Caldwell was a keen student of the writings and work of the early South Indian missionaries.}\]

\[\text{\footnotesize[22] Caldwell observed in the introduction to the work: "The progress of Christianity in Tinnevelly having been greater and more rapid than in most of the other provinces of India...and many who are...impressed with a sense of its importance, will be glad to be enabled to investigate its origins, and to trace the various links in the chain of events which led to so prosperous an issue. To those who are personally engaged in Missionary labour in this province-who are engaged in raising a superstructure upon the foundation...such records as I have been able to procure will appear peculiarly interesting and instructive" See, Records of the Early History of the Tinnevelly Missions, p. 1.}\]

\[\text{\footnotesize[23] There are only a few monographs in English on Robert De Nobili. One of the more comprehensive studies though written in a partially hagiographical vein is the work by S. Rajamanickam, The First Oriental Scholar, Tirunelveli: De Nobili Institute, 1972.}\]

\[\text{\footnotesize[24] The Jesuit missionary's method of utilizing their knowledge of local religious practices and customs to subvert those practices in favour of Christianity remained a powerful}\]
German Protestant missionaries to South India who had followed a strategy similar to their Catholic predecessors.

They were missionaries such as Christian F. Schwartz, Charles T.E. Rhenius and Batholomaeus Ziegenbalg. In a letter to his sister, Caldwell once contrasted the German missionaries with the missionaries from London:

All the missions of the London society in this country...are in large towns and European settlements. The consequence is that...they are greatly impeded by the influence of such places on the health of the missionaries, by the manners and style which missionaries in such places cannot but assume. All the German missionaries whose names are so celebrated and who produced such results in India, lived nearly on a level with the natives and among the natives; and the only missions which have for the last 30 years prospered in India--are village missions. 25

Caldwell clearly admired many of these German missionaries. The German missionary Bernard Schmid (1787-1857) who was a scholar of Tamil is reputed to have noted the independence of influence on many later successful missionaries both Roman Catholic and Protestant. The Protestant missionary Benjamin Babbington's view of Beschi's methods is fairly typical of many later successful protestant missionaries of South India including Caldwell. Babington had observed of Beschi:"Perfect master of Hindoo science, opinions and prejudices, he was eminently qualified to expose the fallacies of their doctrine, and the absurdities of their religious practices...we may draw this practical conclusion from Beschi's success, that a thorough acquaintance with Hindoo learning and a ready compliance, in matters of indifference, with Hindoo customs, are powerful human means, to which the Jesuits owed much of their success, and which should not, as is too much the case, be despised by those who undertake the task of conversion in a better cause."

25Caldwell, Reminiscences., p. 66
South Indian languages as early as 1836.26

It seems clear that Caldwell was influenced by the work of the French missionary Abbe Dubois entitled, Hindu Manners Customs and Ceremonies first published in 1816.27 Dubois, in the fashion of early Roman Catholic missionaries, had lived as one among the Hindus and through that familiarity had written what was considered a work of great insight. This book represents one of the earliest, widely disseminated scholarly works that subjected Hindu beliefs, customs and practices to the critical rationalist and scientific gaze of the European enlightenment tradition. Dubois explained Hindu cosmology, law, Puranic stories, customs and ceremonies using materialist or rationalist interpretations after referring to the

26 Schmid had first noted this in his article, "Observations on Original and Derived languages" MJLS (1836, oct.). He had also written the essay, "An Essay on the Relationship of Languages and Nations, The Dialect of the Thodavers, the aborigines of the Neelaherries"(1837, Jan.). This information on Schmid’s contribution and his articles is obtained from Reddy and Bangorey(1978:149).

27 There are many edited versions of his work, one of the most popular is edited by G.U. Pope. It is Pope’s edition that is refered to here. See Rev. G.U. Pope (ed.) A Description of the Character, Manners, and Customs of the People of India; and of their Institutions, Religious and Civil, By the Abbe J.A. Dubois, With Notes, Corrections, and Additions, (Third Edition) Madras: Higginbotham and Co, 1879, (Reprint, New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1989) Abbe Dubois was born around 1770's in France and was ordained in 1792. In the same year he had left for India as a missionary of Missions Estrangers fleeing thereby the French revolution. Dubois worked and wrote mainly in the southerly district of Madras Presidency. A recent scholar Sylvia Murr (1987) alleges that Dubois plagiarized the work of another French Jesuit missionary Gaston-Laurent Coeurdoux who spent his entire adult life in South India. See for details, Trautman, (1997:37). This revelation however, does not mean that Dubois's work had any less impact on scholars at the time.
traditional Hindu religious explanations.

Dubois focussed on Hinduism in South India especially through the life, character and manners of the Brahmins. Although his analysis is fairly detailed and nuanced, its spirit was decidedly critical and anti-Brahmin. He wrote:

The Brahman lives but for himself. Bred in the belief that the whole world is his debtor, and that he himself is called upon for no return, he conducts himself in every circumstance of his life with the most absolute selfishness. The feelings of commiseration and pity, as far as respects for the suffering of others, never enter into his heart. He will see an unhappy being perish on the road, or even at his gate, if belonging to another caste; and will not stir to help him to a drop of water, though it were to save his life."

This is just one of many examples of anti-Brahmin passages in Dubois’s work.

Dubois also drew a sharp distinction between the content and spirit of the literary works of the Brahmins and non-Brahmins. Referring to the work of the sixteenth century non-Brahmin, Telugu poet Vemana, he observed:

Amongst the few Hindu works which are written in a free philosophical vein, and in which the Hindu religion and its customs are openly criticized, not one that I know of has been written by a Brahmin. All the works of this kind that I have seen have emanated from authors who were not of this caste. Tiruvalluvar was a Pariah, Pattanattupillai and Agastya were both of the Vellala caste and their poems are written in Tamil...One of the most famous is Vemana...of the Reddy caste....It is to be noticed that the authors of all these satirical and

revolutionary works belong to recent times. If in earlier days any enlightened writer published similar works, the Brahmins have taken care that not a trace of them shall remain. Nowadays they rage against the authors we have mentioned, and speak of their works with contempt. They cannot of course, succeed in destroying them, but they do everything in their power to prevent the reading of them.\textsuperscript{13}

Such ideas were avidly taken up by later missionary Orientalists as well as later Dravidian ideologues. Dubois's work was also reprinted and re-edited numerous times during the course of the nineteenth century.

A series of controversial letters that Dubois published on his return to France in the 1820's, arguing that the conversion of the Hindus was impracticable, caused considerable consternation among missionary circles in South India. Dubois argued as the primary cause for his belief, the bad character of the Hindus, especially the Brahmins, and the extraordinary influence that the Brahmins had on the rest of the castes.\textsuperscript{32} He was in essence blaming the spiritual and intellectual power that the Brahmins exercised over the rest of the castes as the main impediment to Christianity. "The

\textsuperscript{13}This extract was taken from Dubois's 1816 edition, cited in V.R. Narla, ed., Vemana through Western Eyes, Madras:M. Seshachalam &Co, 1969, p. 4. In Pope's edition of Dubois's work, it is on pages 120-21.

\textsuperscript{32}Rev. James Hough had cited Dubois' primary reasons as, "the bad character of the Hindoos, but especially of the Brahmins-upon the extensive influence of the latter over all other castes of Hindoos..." See, James Hough, A Reply to the Letters of The Abbe Dubois, on the State of Christianity in India, London: Seeley&Son, 1824, p. 2.
Hindoos, he observed may be divided into two classes—the imposters and the dupes. The latter include the bulk of the population of India; and the former is composed of the whole tribe of Brahmans."

Dubois’s letters and the strong reaction to them from many Protestant missionary quarters in South India no doubt attracted a lot of publicity for his work. They also led to much debate about mission strategy. James Hough, whom Caldwell described as the second father of Tinnevelly mission was one of the missionaries who wrote a long rebuttal to the letters. Hough’s work was published in 1824, and Caldwell, who devotes an entire chapter to Hough’s labors in his Early History of the Tinnevelly Mission, must have been well aware of Hough’s role in these debates. Hough argued that the Catholics had failed in India as they had unwittingly strengthened the position and honor of Brahmans by attempting to emulate and pose themselves as Brahmans, instead of offering a liberation from the fetters of Brahminical

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31Cited in James Hough, A Reply to the Letters, p. 5.


33Caldwell in his fairly detailed description of Hough’s labours in Tinnevelly writes of many of Hough’s writings including those published as late as 1832. See Caldwell, Records of the Early History, p. 202. However Caldwell seems to have studiously avoided referring to Dubois in many of his works.
'superstitions'. He recommended instead a much more bold advocacy of Christian principles mainly through the medium of education.

Dubois's work certainly provoked much reflection on mission strategy. In many ways Caldwell's philological work can be seen as part of the ongoing missionary attempt to overcome the obstacles that Dubois had pointed out so vividly. The questions that Dubois had raised about the impracticability of converting the higher castes were as valid and resonant during the days of Caldwell as they were during the heyday of Dubois and Hough in India. Both the Roman Catholic and Protestant missionaries despite their efforts to

34Hough had begun by asserting: 'One of the most obstinate prejudices of the Hindoos, is that which ascribes to the Brahmin an origin and honour superhuman. This prejudice must be overcome, before the Gospel can obtain any footing....How, then have the Jesuits met this prejudice? They have adopted the very means that are calculated to strengthen it in the minds of the people, and to foster Brahmanical pride.' James Hough, A Reply., p. 62.

35Such a sentiment is echoed when Hough asserts: '...had the Jesuits acted with Christian integrity; and, instead of assuming the character of Brahmins, appeared among them as faithful preachers of the Gospel..." See, James Hough, A Reply., p. 95.

36That Caldwell was preoccupied with the various methods of advancing the cause of missions in South India is evident from his reflection on his job as missionary chaplain for Bishop Spencer: "I have been doing what I could in various ways to advance the cause of our missions in South India generally, having been appointed by the Bishop his missionary secretary...My work in this respect...is by no means heavy in consequence of having long been accustomed to inquire into and compare the various mission systems, and being personally acquainted with the workings of almost every station of every society in Southern India." See Caldwell, Reminiscences., p. 96.
the higher castes had their biggest successes only among the lower or out castes.\textsuperscript{17} Caldwell himself often came across Brahmin opposition to Christian conversion in Tinnevelly. In his work, \textit{The Languages of India in Relation to Missionary work} (1875), Caldwell echoed the views of Abbe Dubois regarding the chief obstacles to Christianity in India:

\begin{quote}
A considerable proportion of the people by whom these Indo-Aryan vernaculars are spoken were not, I conceive, originally Aryan by descent, but were Dravidian or Kolarian aborigines conquered by the Aryans. Hence we find amongst them many differences in complexion... But, not withstanding these differences, whatever their culture or want of culture whether they are of high caste or low caste, the ideas and feelings of the entire mass have in the course of ages become so completely interpenetrated by the religion they all profess in common, and all classes, down even to the lowest, are so fast tied and bound by the iron fetters of caste, and so proud of those fetters, that the difficulties in the way of their conversion to Christianity are very much greater, I had almost said immeasurably greater than those that stand in the way of the conversion of the ruder but freer, aboriginal tribes.\textsuperscript{18}
\end{quote}

Caldwell was also influenced by the work and writings of many of his mission contemporaries. About half of the scholars

\textsuperscript{17} The census returns for the year 1871 reveals that the highest number of Christians in the Tamil region came from the lowest Pariar community, the number being 146,250 and the lowest numbers, namely 76, had been drawn from the Brahmin community. By the late nineteenth century many missionaries and mission societies had given up their hope of converting the higher castes and begin to focus more exclusively on gaining converts from among the lowest castes in Southern India.

\textsuperscript{18} Robert Caldwell, \textit{The Languages of India in their Relation to Missionary Work}, London, 1875. p. 9.
whose help he acknowledged in the preface to his philological work were among this group. H. Gundert was a prolific scholar of Malayalam during Caldwell’s time. He especially thanked Gundert for the “invaluable help he was so kind as to render me in connection with every department of this work.” G. U. Pope concentrated on Tamil and F. Kittel worked on Kannada. These and other missionary scholars also contributed directly or indirectly to the discourse of Dravidianism after the publication of Caldwell’s philological work. In addition to such missionary colleagues, the other half of his acknowledgements concerned the work of colonial officials.

**Caldwell and the "New Orientalism"**

Although Caldwell came to challenge the Aryo-centric vision of the “new Orientalism” that was ascendant during his time, he shared with them many assumption about India. This “new Orientalism” had eclipsed the older missionary Orientalism with the establishment of British rule in Bengal in the late eighteenth century. In general this new school of Orientalism privileged a Brahminical vision of Indian civilization and painted a favourable account of Hindu

39ibid.

40I use here Trautman’s notion of "new Orientalism" to characterize the Orientalism that emerged with the establishment of British power in Calcutta. See Trautman’s recent work, *Aryans and British India* (1997).
civilization before alien conquests."

From the time of William Jones, a view of Indian civilization as the work of an ancient Aryan race that migrated to India around the second millennium was elaborated by many of the adherents of this school of orientalism. Sanskrit, the language of this ancient Aryan "race", came to be considered as the parent of all the vernacular languages of India. As the dominant school of Orientalism during the time of Caldwell, his work both challenged and integrated much of the assumptions of this school of thought. In response, however, Caldwell had once referred to these scholars derisively as "Western Brahmins". Max Muller was one of its finest representatives and Caldwell had acknowledged his help for his work. Although Caldwell's philological work was aimed at challenging the primacy given to Aryans and Sanskrit by the members of this school, he nevertheless accepted their belief that ancient Aryans were the carriers of the great culture of India.

Caldwell and the Madras School of Orientalism

As in Calcutta, a parallel centre for Orientalist

41There are many good accounts of the rise of this kind of Orientalism. one of the most recent is Trautman's Aryan and British India. Other notable works include works by David Kopf and P.J. Marshall.

research developed in Madras in the early nineteenth century out of the imperatives of colonial rule. Its institutional base consisted of the seat of government in the city of Madras, the College of Fort St. George and the various literary, scientific societies and journals in Madras.\(^{12}\) The College of Fort St. George was established in 1812, with the principal aim of teaching South Indian languages, laws, customs etc. for the European civil servants posted to Madras Presidency.\(^{13}\) From its inception, scholars associated with this Madras school claimed and asserted a superior knowledge of South India in relation to the dominant school of Orientalist researchers in Calcutta. Many of Caldwell’s most immediate intellectual predecessors such as Francis Whyte Ellis, A.D. Campbell and C.P. Brown were associated with this Madras school of Orientalism.

As Caldwell himself acknowledged in the introduction to his philological work, Francis White Ellis (d.1819) was the

\(^{12}\) The Madras Literary Society was an auxiliary of the Royal Asiatic Society, its journal was, *Madras Journal of Literature and Science*. It began as a quarterly in 1833-34, later at irregular intervals until 1890.

\(^{13}\) The aim of the Board of the College first constituted in May 1812 included: “1. In expediting and perfecting the preparation of the candidate for those important public offices which members of the Civil Service are destined to fill; 2. In supervising the instruction of the Moonshees; 3. In supervising the instruction of persons to be appointed Hindoo and Mahomedan Law officers in the various courts; 4. In bringing out works in the Oriental languages and certain other special subjects and in working the College Press...” cited in G.N. Reddy and Bangorey, ed. *Literary Autobiography of C.P. Brown*, Tirupati: Sri Venkateswara University, 1978, p. 45.
first person to demonstrate that South Indian languages belonged to an entirely different family from that of the Indo-Aryan. Ellis who was a member of the Madras Civil Service was intimately connected with the founding of the College of Fort St. George. Due to his untimely death, however, much of his writings were lost. Ellis’s arguments on the South Indian languages only appeared as a long ‘note to the introduction’ in the work of his colleague, Alexander D. Campbell’s, Grammar of the Telooogo language in 1816. Ellis demonstrated that South Indian languages belonged to a single family separate from the Indo-Aryan family of languages. Alexander D. Campbell (d.1857), a member of the board of the College and a

45 Ellis was the first chairman of the board of superintendence of the College. Trautman(1997:150). A brief account of Ellis is provided by Walter Elliot, see Walter Elliot, “Mr. F.W. Ellis”, The Indian Antiquary, 1875, Vol. 4. pp. 219-21.

46 Ellis had noted, “that neither the Tamil, the Telugu, nor any of their cognate dialects are derivations from the Sanscrit; that the latter, however, it may contribute to their polish, is not necessary for their existence; and that they form a distinct family of languages, with which the Sanskrit has, in latter times especially, intermixed, but with which it has no radical connection.” cited in R.E. Asher, The Contribution of scholars of British Origin., 1968, p. 63.

47 Ellis wrote: “The author, supported by due authority, teaches, that, rejecting direct and indirect derivatives from the Sanscrit, and words borrowed from foreign languages, what remains is the pure native language of the land: this constitutes the great body of the tongue and is capable of expressing every mental and bodily operation, every possible relation and existent thing; for, with the exception of some religious and technical terms, no word of Sanscrit derivation is necessary to the Telugu. This pure native language of the land...is, with the Telugu, common to the Tamil, Cannadi, and the other dialects of Southern India...”(Ellis, 1816) Cited in Trautman, (1997:153). On Ellis see also, R.E. Asher, “The Contribution of Scholars of British Origin and the study of Tamil in Britain” in Xavier S. Thani Nayagam, ed. Tamil Studies Abroad: A Symposium, Malaysia: The International Association of Tamil Research, 1968, pp. 43-81.
fellow civil servant, shared much of Ellis's ideas regarding the uniqueness of South Indian languages. In fact, there were a number of European scholar/civil servants associated with the Madras school who wrote pioneering works on various aspects of South Indian languages and cultures. Caldwell's work drew from this scholarship.

Caldwell was exposed to this distinctive Madras school of Orientalist scholarship even before he set foot on Indian soil through his chance encounter with C.P. Brown (1798-1894), on his first voyage out to India in 1837. Brown, a graduate of

49Trautman argues that although Ellis may have been a brilliant scholar the discovery that South Indian languages belonged to a separate family seems to be the result of a collective effort by scholars associated with the College rather than an individual discovery. Trautman, (1997:150). Ellis was also the author of the classic work on pre-British regime of land tenure, Treatise on Mirasi right (1818). Although considered a brilliant scholar of Tamil and Sanscrit, the vast bulk of Ellis's writings were lost as a result of his untimely death. See, Trautmann, Aryans and British India, pp. 149-50.

Notable among them are Walter Elliot (1803-1887) author of Flora Andhrica, (1859) and Coins of Southern India (1887); William Brown (d.1837), a pioneer in Telugu studies and author of Gentoo Grammar (1817). W. Brown had noted the originality of Telugu and its difference from Sanscrit even before Ellis; C.P. Brown (1798-1884) a major Indologist of South India on whom more will be said later. See Reddy and Bangorey (1978:139-52)

50 Brown, a member of the Madras Civil service and major Indologist of South India returned to India in the same ship as Caldwell after a three year furlough in England. During the long voyage out to India Caldwell spoke with his "restless Pandit Mr. Brown" on almost every subject and left a long account of his exchanges and impressions of Brown. For a full account of C.P. Brown see, Peter Lee Schmitthenner, "Charles Philip Brown, 1798-1884:The Legacy of an East India Company Servant and Scholar of South India," Ph.D. thesis. University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1991.

51Brown was the son of David Brown (1763-1812), senior chaplain of the East India Company, later Provost of the Fort William College, Calcutta. Although not technically a
the College of Fort St. George, from the time of Ellis and Campbell, was a major scholar of South India. His speciality was Telugu and he is reputed to have done for Telugu what Max Muller had done for Sanskrit. In much of his Telugu work, Brown attempted to encourage the non-Sanskritic, or what Caldwell later called Dravidian elements. Brown had a life long interest in collating and translating the heterodox, anti-Brahminical, Vemana poetry and Jangam literature in Telugu. His life-long engagement with this project, as pointed out by a recent scholar, stemmed from his religious-philosophical stand against Brahmanism and was rooted in his missionary, David Brown laboured greatly for the mission cause. He had intended and educated his three sons for the express purpose of spreading Christianity in India. C.P. Brown was thus raised in the Christian spirit and the company of many of the famed Serampore missionaries such as during his early years in Calcutta. ibid.


53Reddy(1978) one of the editor of Brown's autobiography makes this claim in the preface to his edition of Brown's autobiography.

54Vemana, a seventeenth century Telugu poet was anti-Brahmanical to the core. Brown was the first to collate and translate these works. Brown had first come across Vemana through the work of one the earliest Westerners to be drawn to it, Abbe Dubois.

55Also known as Zangam, Jangam's is a term used for the priests of the Virasaiva religion, a radical Saivite sect in South India.
strong belief in Christianity. During his years in India Brown attempted to encourage the non-Brahmin desi (regional) component of Telugu literature and culture. "My respect for the Capoo (Kapu) and dislike of the Brahmin," he once observed, "seem to increase the longer I know them." Peter Schmithener, in a recent study has observed: "Brown's efforts to expose Vemana and non-Brahman based genres of Telugu literature would not only threaten Brahman respectability, but they would also challenge the traditional Brahman monopoly of literary knowledge of Telugu." Schmithener's study traces the roots of contemporary Telugu nationalism to Brown's efforts.

Thus, Caldwell was introduced not only to the scholarship of the Madras school early in his career, but also to a representative of the school whose work in many ways was a

56 Brown himself when describing his antipathy toward orthodox Hinduism in his autobiography had noted: "I was considered a deliberate enemy of the Hindu idolatory. My publishing Vemana's diatribes against Brahman, and my cherishing Jangam literature, which they shun, proved my antipathy to the Hindu idolatory." The editor of the work had added in a footnote to the above statement that Brown's fascination and appreciation for Vemana, "was deeply rooted in religion and philosophy" and was due to the fact that Brown was a "hard core Christian". See, G.N. Reddy and Bangorey, ed. Literary Autobiography of C. P. Brown, 1978, p. 59.


precursor to the kind of work that he himself later undertook. Caldwell’s account of the conversations he had with Brown reveal that they centred on subjects that were of great interest for Caldwell’s future work as a missionary in South India.

That much of their conversations centred on such subjects as the nature and character of South Indians and the possibility for their Christian conversion is evident from the account left by Caldwell:

I might already fill a volume with the views on Indian manners, character, literature and religion which he has brought before me and which though quite new to me, are evidently worthy of consideration. I shall wait, however, till I have been in India sometime myself, and put the truth of those views to the test of experience ere I make any mention of them. The general impression they have left upon my mind is that Dr. Duff's plan, or some modification of it is the best for general adoption."

Caldwell also spoke more directly with Brown on his views on the possibilities for Christianity in India: "...he at times astonishes me with the extent of his theological readings and with the novelty and yet the reasonable...aspect of his views on the spread of Christianity in India--on the obstacles to be encountered and the means to be used, as well as on the likelihood of success in spreading it." Caldwell's eagerness for information on India was clearly guided by his need to

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60Caldwell, Reminiscences, p. 45.

61Caldwell, Reminiscences, p. 45.
ascertain the appropriate mission strategy.

Caldwell was quick to determine that Brown belonged to an entirely different school of Orientalists from the vast majority of scholars associated with the Calcutta school. The fact that Caldwell and Brown remained life long friends and that Caldwell acknowledged the help of Brown in his philological work as well as in his Bible translation project further confirms the early impact of the Madras school.

The First Key Moment: The Separation Of Brahmins And Non-Brahmins

What had originally been a purely descriptive term (Dravidian) used to designate a language or a group of languages and was as such adopted in all 'innocence' and good will by R. Caldwell...became a term charged with emotion and a concept loaded with anthropological, racial, socioeconomic, and sharply political connotation and functions.

K.V. Zvelebil, Tamil Literature 1992

A member of a Scotch Presbyterian family of modest means,

Caldwell when describing Brown had observed: "Sir William Jones for a considerable period of life was a sceptic, and even in his later writings there are certain passages of a doubtful character. While Colebrook, Wilkins, Wilford and Wilson, who have taken up and carried onward the study of Sanskrit literature, are Brahmins if anything. Wilkins told Mr. Brown some time ago that 'he thought in another century Christianity would be worn out.'...Hence one might have expected that a zealous disciple would have followed these 'Western Brahmins' even in their free thinking. He seems to have a sincere..belief in Christianity as a system and a very low opinion...of Hinduism..." Caldwell, Reminiscences, p.19.

Revealing the extant scholarly perspective on Caldwell's contribution, K. Zvelebil, a contemporary scholar of great repute in the field of Tamil studies noted this in his recent work. Kamil V. Zvelebil, Companion Studies to the History of Tamil Literature, Leiden and New York: E.J. Brill, 1992, p. 256.
Caldwell decided to become a missionary of the London Missionary Society (LMS) at the age of nineteen. He was sent by the LMS to the University of Glasgow in 1834 where he completed a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1837. There is little doubt that Caldwell’s Scottish background and his studies at the University of Glasgow had a significant impact on his future work and scholarship on South India.

At the turn of the nineteenth century both the University of Glasgow and the University of Edinburgh attracted prominent scholars associated with the Scottish enlightenment tradition. Many of these scholars emphasised a critical approach.

64Caldwell was born on the seventh of May 1814, near Antrim in the north of Ireland. His parents were Scottish Presbyterian. He moved quite frequently during his early life between Dublin and Glasgow. His first ten years were spent near Antrim, the next six years were in Glasgow, the next three years Dublin and the next four years were again in Glasgow. He had also studied art in Dublin for several years before deciding on his missionary career. See Rev. J.L. Wyatt, ed., Reminiscences of Bishop Caldwell, Addison & Co., Madras, 1894, pp. 1-4.

65Ibid. p.5-6

66He had performed well in his Latin, Greek, and Logic exams. Was bracketed first in Mental and Moral Sciences, and stood first in the list of graduates. He was also taking courses in Theology and was delivering sermons in local Churches while completing his B.A. which reveals both his tremendous perseverance and religious zeal. It was from the readings that he was doing at this time that he notes that Hooker and Waterland were his favorite divines of the of the 17th and 18th centuries and it was through their influence that he felt inclined towards the Episcopal church. See Caldwell, Reminiscence, p. 7.

67Dugald Stewart a major philosopher of this tradition taught at Edinburgh and John Millar taught at Glasgow. See, Jane Rendall, Scottish Orientalism: From Robertson to James Mill, The Historical Journal, 25, 1, 1982, pp. 43-69. Dugald Stewart was critical of the enthusiasm over Sanskrit and had maintained that Sanscrit was stolen by the Brahmmins from the invading Greeks in order to conceal their conversations from the rest of the population. See Trautman, (1997:124).
comparative study of languages as the key to understanding human societies, their histories and their stage in the level of civilization." Caldwell learned philology from his professor of Greek, Daniel Sanford. His deep interest and engagement with a comparative philological and historical study of South Indian cultures was derived from his exposure to this environment.

Caldwell left for Madras as a missionary of the LMS in the year 1837. It was during this first voyage out to India that he met C.P. Brown, a member of the Madras Civil service and former student of the College of Fort St. George."

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68 The above information on Scottish enlightenment thought and its impact upon many Scottish Orientalists at the turn of the nineteenth century is derived from the article by Jane Rendall, "Scottish Orientalism:From Robertson to James Mill", The Historical Journal, 25. 1, 1982, pp. 43-69.

69Caldwell left for Madras aboard the sturdy, Dutch-built Mary Anne, on the 30th of August 1837. What strikes one the most on reading the journal he kept on his voyage, is the extent to which he had planned and prepared for his mission work in Madras. He had noted in his journal."There are two subjects especially in which I wish to be a little better grounded ere I reach Madras. One is the rise and progress of Idolatry, in order to the study of which, besides other works, I am reading Cadworth. The other is the evidence of Christianity..." Reminiscences, p. 20.

70 One also gets a sense of his romantic, solitary-retiring nature from the journal that he kept at this time: He wrote:

I went on deck and then up to the poop, where the helmsman was my only companion and where the solitary stillness not only gave me an opportunity for looking around but made everything doubly beautiful. Seldom have I enjoyed myself more than I did. In the clear pearly grey of the moonlight; in the moon herself, walking in brightness, in the sea almost without a ripple, but rising and falling in a gentle swell and in the quiet power with which the ship was gliding onward as contrasted with the animation and noisy glee of the various groups from the quarter-deck to the forecastle, I had matter for delighted contemplation.
Caldwell spent the first three and a half years of his mission life in the city of Madras, working principally amongst domestic servants mostly from the Paraiyar caste. From the beginning of his missionary career he was determined to cultivate a thorough knowledge of Tamil. He observed in his reminiscences:

My only work in Madras for the first year and my chief work afterwards, so long as I remained there was the acquisition of Tamil. It was my aim to acquire a good knowledge of the high Tamil, or classical tongue and of the Tamil classics, as well as of the spoken language, and the knowledge I then acquired... has been of the greatest possible use to me ever since.\footnote{ibid. p. 33.}

His long stay in Madras exposed him to many European scholar-officials and missionaries working in the city. He was particularly drawn to European missionaries who were as devoted to the missionary field as himself and who evinced great interest in Indian languages and affairs. His first long stay was with one such colleague, Mr. Drew of the London Missionary Society (LMS), produced this comment:

\begin{quote}
and I drank in delight. Ibid. p. 33.
\end{quote}

This was a trait that seemed to have endured throughout his life and enabled him to devote so much effort to intellectual pursuits. It would be hard to resist reading into such a romantic and poetic description. The scene is almost a metaphor for the lone missionary-a romantic hero gliding steadily towards an ocean of beauty, and away from the bustle and common place of life.

\footnote{ibid. p. 57.}
and a devoted student of Tamil. His first edition of the *Kural*, a great Tamil classic, placed him in the first rank of European Tamil scholars. It is surprising to me that since his time, so few missionaries of any society seem to have cared to acquire more than a colloquial knowledge of Tamil."

Another prominent missionary that Caldwell mentioned among the many he had met was John Anderson. Anderson is well known as one of the pioneer missionary educators in nineteenth century Madras and as the man who laid the foundation for what later became the Madras Christian College. Caldwell described him not only as the Dr. Duff of Madras but also as his greatest friend in Madras. He wrote of him as "one of the ablest, and most zealous and devoted missionaries I have ever met and certainly the most enthusiastic," and of the Anderson English School, as "the first systematic effort made to use English education as a means of spreading Christianity among the higher classes and castes."

The style of mission life in Madras city did not suit Caldwell. He was increasingly disenchanted with the LMS and its method of functioning. In keeping with his solitary, retiring nature he was drawn more towards village missions. He recounted, "I was tired of rationalism with which I was

2 *ibid.* p. 52.
3 *ibid.* p. 53.
4 *ibid.* p. 53.
surrounded in Madras, amongst native Christians as well as heathens; and I felt myself strongly drawn towards a people who were said to be peculiarly simple minded, teachable and tractable." It was a carefully considered decision to leave the LMS and Madras city for the Society for the propagation of the Gospel (SPG) and Tirunelveli. He felt that the SPG unlike the LMS gave ample room for individual initiative and resourcefulness—a style of functioning that he associated with the successes of pioneer German Protestant missionaries.

Caldwell like many of the more successful missionaries felt that in order to be successful the missionary had to be completely immersed in native society. It was the knowledge that came with such familiarity that provided the missionary the power to convince and transform. It was with such a vision and purpose that Caldwell journeyed to Tinnevelly, on foot, in the year 1841. He had no reason to regret the primitive mode of transportation since he was "anxious to see the country, and get acquainted with the people and their ideas, manners, and talk, in a way in which I could never expect to do if I travelled in a palanquin, or even in a cart." His curiosity for local knowledge was unbounded. He observed:

On my way I lost no opportunity of examining the

\[7^{5}\text{ibid.}, p. 69.\]
\[7^{6}\text{ibid.}, p. 69.\]
great Hindu temples of the Tanjore country—especially Chidamparam, the most sacred of Siva temples I was sufficiently acquainted with Hinduism and Hindu archeology to appreciate much of what I saw.

He was ordained a Deacon by Bishop Spencer of Madras, on his way to Tinnevelly, and they became close friends. Interestingly, Bishop Spencer was also a great patron of G.U. Pope who like Caldwell became an ardent advocate of the "Dravidians". Spencer was certainly an unusually gifted mission administrator and deserves further scrutiny and study. Several years later Caldwell was appointed Bishop Spencer’s missionary chaplain.

Caldwell began working in the southerly Tamil region of Tinnevelly in 1841, it was there that he toiled for the rest of his life. The region was one the earliest sites of successful missionary efforts in southern India, and the village where he lived was appropriately called Idaiyangudi (shepherds hamlet). Caldwell, like many of the missionaries before him in Tinnevelly, worked among a caste of people known as the Shanars, most of whom lived off the produce of the Palmyra tree and were considered fairly low in the scale of castes. Caldwell’s initial impression of them was hardly

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*ibid., p. 71.

*Caldwell was ordained a Deacon by the Bishop of Madras, Bishop Spencer in 1841 and also served as Spencer's missionary Chaplain for a number of years. Towards the end of his life Caldwell was also given the title of Bishop. ibid., pp. 72-73.
flattering:

I found the people of the place in a very low state of civilization. They were all accustomed to work with their hands, not with their heads--most of them with both hands and feet in climbing the palmyra--and had neither the leisure nor inclination for intellectual culture.

He was not however, deterred by these limitations, and soon began to establish schools, churches and other organisational and institutional infrastructures in Idaiyangudy and surrounding villages. He worked quite methodically and systematically and was not content merely to preach to the converted. He encouraged those around him to persuade others still living in 'heathen darkness'; so much so that by the end of his career, his tireless efforts had reaped a rich harvest of souls.

Much of the ideological underpinnings of Caldwell's philological work, like that of his predecessors can be traced to the type of work he was engaged in and the religious and socio-cultural environment in which he toiled as a missionary in South India. A brief look at Tiruneveli society may therefore be instructive. Caldwell's work among the Shanar's

\[\text{ibid. p. 83.}\]

\[\text{The number of conversions to Christianity as well as the number of persons receiving Christian instructions had risen over tenfold during Caldwell's time there. In his Jubilee address in 1888, Caldwell observed: 'Everything connected with the mission has increased tenfold during the fifty years of Queen Victoria's reign, and also during the fifty years of my own residence in India.', ibid. p. 109.}\]
like that of many other missionaries before and after him was by no means an easy one. The mission-led empowerment of certain lower caste groups in the predominantly agrarian and traditional religio-cultural landscape of Tinnevelly produced tension and disruption to the established social and ritual order. There was significant local upper caste Hindu concern about missionaries and their Christian converts. Opposition to missionary activity was so strong that a Hindu revivalist organization named the Vibuthi Sangam (Sacred Ashes Society) was formed to combat the work of the missionaries. Tensions between Hindus and Christians was particularly acute in Caldwell’s time and once escalated to the point that the army was called in to restore order. The mission historian, Eugene Stock, writing in 1899 described somewhat mildly the difficulties and hardships the converts faced in Tinnevelly in the 1830’s:

Even the Shanars and the lower castes or outcastes frequently had to endure grievous persecution. Crops


were often destroyed, cattle maimed or stolen, houses and huts pulled down, and the people themselves maltreated. False accusations, backed by the unblushing perjury which is so common in India, were brought against them in the local courts; and the local judges who were generally Brahmans, were naturally prejudiced against them...”

A series of conflicts arose in the 1840’s between Christian converts, their missionary supporters and the Vibuthi Sangam over the tearing down of a Christian Prayer-house that had been erected at the site of a former Hindu temple. Writing of this event, Stock observed:

One case, in 1846...was carried to the highest court in Madras. As usual the anti-missionary party among the Europeans warmly espoused the cause of the persecutors; but a prolonged trial resulted in the dismissal of the local Brahman judges. On this occasion the C.M.S. and the S.P.G. missionaries united in a public statement, to counteract the evil influence of certain Madras newspapers...The signatures to this document show what excellent men there now were in the Tinnevelly mission. Among the four S.P.G. names are Caldwell and Pope...”

These incidents certainly suggest that Caldwell and G.U. Pope were deeply aware and intimately involved in these local struggles against upper caste Hindu resistance to Christianity. Such experiences led missionaries to develop strong antipathies toward the existing social and religio-

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cultural order in Tirunelveli which they identified as Brahmanism and as the greatest impediment to Christianity.

For many missionaries including Caldwell and Pope, Brahminical religious culture sustained the traditional socio-cultural order and hierarchy and posed the greatest impediments to missionary efforts in South India. So much was this case that by the 1850's, with the exception of the Leipzig mission, all Protestant missions in South India adopted a very firm stand against the institution of caste. It was felt that the caste system not only served as an impediment to Christian conversion but also served to threaten the very unity of Christian Church members once they converted. It is interesting to note in this connection that G.U. Pope later resigned from the S.P.G over the issue of caste observances within the church. And Bishop Wilson reflected the experience of many protestant missionaries in South India when he described caste as "the nucleus of the whole system of idolatry" and as "eating, as doth cancer, into the vitals of our infant Churches." Caldwell, despite being much more cautious in his non-scholarly writings, once observed:

Sudras though they are rarely more willing than the

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Brahmans to embrace Christianity, they seldom evince that scorn of it, as a foreign or low caste religion which the Brahman generally evince. So far as I am aware, only one Tinnevelly Brahman has yet become a Christian."

Caldwell's ambitions were not confined to Tinnevelly alone, as he saw his task as the propagation of the Gospel to all who were still living in "heathen darkness":

I arrived in Tinnevelly about the end of the year 1841, and from the moment of my arrival was resolved not to be content with pastoral work...but set myself to the work which I believed was especially incumbent upon me as a missionary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel amongst those still living in heathen darkness.

Such an attitude and zeal could also be seen in his views regarding the purpose of British presence in India.

the rule of the English in India rests neither on force nor on human opinion, but on the will of the most High, the supreme ruler of all nations who has raised up England and confided race after race and region after region to her care, that she might tell it amongst the heathens that the Lord is King..."

He also once noted, "the handful of Englishmen...on whom all hope for the improvement of India depends have too much to do to sleep in the day time." It was such firmly held beliefs and attitudes that provided the inspiration and zeal for his

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86 Caldwell, Lectures on Tinnevelly missions, p. 34.
87 ibid., p. 122.
88 ibid.,p.3.
89 ibid.,p.3.
tireless efforts at evangelistic work.

Despite his retiring and reclusive nature Caldwell was no less committed to a greater project of evangelistic work. It was the peculiar combination of commitment to a larger project and yet preference for a reclusive existence that inspired Caldwell to contribute his share to the missionary enterprise in the particular way he did. His major contribution did not lie in his administrative accomplishments, nor in his public skills, but, rather, in his achievement as a scholar missionary, one that particularly suited a reclusive lifestyle.

Reading his writings, especially those addressed to a Christian audience, it becomes clear that Caldwell was a very earnest and ambitious evangelist, and also, one who set himself the task of examining every possible way that the Gospel could be propagated, especially in Southern India. His comment regarding duties while serving as missionary chaplain to Bishop Spencer are revealing in this regard:

I have been doing what I could in various ways to advance the cause of our missions in South India generally, having been appointed by the Bishop his missionary secretary. My work in this respect is by no means heavy in consequence of having long been accustomed to inquire into and compare the various mission systems, and being personally acquainted with the workings of almost every station of every society in Southern India.

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\(^{90}\)ibid. p. 96.
Much of Caldwell's missionary zeal was directed to his work as a scholar/missionary. One of his earliest works concerned people among whom he lived and worked, The Tinnevelly Shanars, (1849). In this early work itself, Caldwell attempted to present the religion and culture of the Shanars as quite separate from that of the Brahmins. He also wrote a number of smaller articles and pamphlets such as "Theosophy of the Hindus" (1863), "The Languages of India in their relation to Missionary Work" (1875), "On Reserve in Communicating Religious Instruction to Non-Christians in Mission Schools in India" (1881), and "Journals of Evangelistic Work amongst Natives of the Higher Castes and Classes," (1876, 1877, 1878) The titles of his writings themselves reveal Caldwell's intellectual approach to evangelistic work. Caldwell also played a key role in the revision of the Tamil Prayer Book and the Tamil Bible.

Caldwell was also quite systematic in his study of India. He noted in his reminiscences:

91 His major publications included, Lectures on the Tinnevelly Missions: Descriptive of the Field, the Work and the Results (1857), A Political and general History of the District of Tinnevelly (1881) Records of the Early History of the Tinnevelly Missions (1881).

92 K. Sivathamby first observed this in Caldwell's work on the Shanars. See Sivathamby, Poetics of a Literary Style.

93 Other articles included, "Observations on the Kudumi", (1875) "Christianity and Hinduism" (1893), "On the Demonolatry in Southern India" (1887).
From the time of my arrival in India, but especially from the time of my arrival in Tinnevelly, I set myself to the study of Indian philology, Ethnology and history. I procured the best books that were available and learnt German that I might be able to make use of the vast store of Indian learning accumulated by German scholars.

He also utilized his occasional trips to England to gather materials on India:

On each occasion when I visited England I carefully examined every book I found in the British museum pertaining to Indian archaeology. Amongst other things I made it a point of examining every reference to India to be found in the Greek and Roman classics. It was my chief aim to be perfectly accurate, as no one who has not made a trial of it can realize the amount of labour and care involved in the endeavour to secure perfect accuracy in philological, ethnological and historical statements.

It was such systematic and methodical study and research that enabled him to produce his pioneering work, which came to have such an enormous impact on South Indian history.

The Bard Of The Dravidians

It was through his magnus opus, A Comparative Grammar of Dravidian or South Indian Family of Languages, published in

\[\text{ibid.}, \text{p. 149}.\]

\[\text{ibid. p. 149}.\]

\[\text{Robert Caldwell, A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South Indian Family of Languages, London: Harrison, 59, Pall Mall, 1856. (latest reprint by New Delhi:Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1974.) Unless otherwise stated all citations and references are to the}\]
1856, that Caldwell systematically laid the ideological foundation of Dravidian nationalism. It is a painstaking and brilliant work, reflecting both Caldwell's knowledge of a vast number of languages and his wide knowledge of history, archeology and ethnology. It was not so much the philological findings in the work that had such a profound impact but the way Caldwell interpreted and expressed them in the lengthy introduction and appendix.

Through the work, Caldwell managed to not only erect a racial, linguistic and religio-cultural divide between the minority Brahmin and majority non-Brahmin (Dravidian) population of South India, but proposed a systematic project for reclaiming and recovering an ancient and "pure" Dravidian language and culture. Thus, the key to its tremendous impact was not merely its greatly elaborated demonstration of a separate genealogy for South Indian languages but the way this difference was articulated as a mandate for non-Brahmin or "Dravidian" South Indians to reclaim and recover their once "pure" languages and civilization from the corruptions it had undergone through Aryan-Brahmin impact.

In the work, Caldwell not only coined the word Dravidian to describe the languages and peoples of Southern India, but

original 1856 edition.
constructed with the aid of the modern sciences of philology, archeology and history, a genealogy for the Dravidian languages, cultures and people that was marked by its opposition to an Aryan/Brahmin, language, culture and people. His work provided a significant "scientific" bulwark against the extremely one-sided privileging of a Brahminical vision of India at the time. It also provided the rising class of non-Brahmins a significant ideological weapon against Brahmin socio-cultural and intellectual hegemony in South India.

Caldwell's timing was important. It reveals that he was keenly aware of the current 'state of knowledge' about India and most importantly sensitive to the great lacuna in that knowledge with regard to Southern India. His work did not merely attempt to fill this lacuna but did so in a way that was both acutely sensitive and responsive to the deep fissures and contradictions in South Indian society and culture.

Looking back at the theory he presented, a theory of a separate and independent racial, linguistic and cultural origin for the non-Brahmin South Indians, whom he styled the Dravidian people, one can see in it a timely, yet highly

9 There is little doubt that Caldwell was utilizing and expressing the earlier tensions and contradictions between Brahminical/Sanskritic culture and language and Tamil language and culture that could be traced in the earlier literature of the Tamils and other South Indian linguistic groups. However, what is interesting to note here is the way he chose to articulate these earlier tensions and his motives for doing it.
nuanced and critical defence and celebration of Dravidian languages, peoples and cultures in a period when Aryan/Brahmin people, language and culture held centre stage as the presumed custodians of the great culture of India."

Caldwell began his lengthy introduction to the work by justifying his choice of the word 'Dravidian' as a term to denote both South Indian languages and non-Brahmin peoples:

The word I have chosen is 'Dravidian', a word which has already been used as a generic appellation of this family of tongues by the Sanskrit geographers. Properly speaking, the term 'Dravida' denotes the Tamil country alone (including Malayalam)...a Dravida is defined in the Sanskrit lexicons to be 'a man of an outcaste tribe, descended from a degraded Kshatriya'. This name was doubtless applied by the Brahminical inhabitants of Northern India to the aborigines of the extreme South prior to the introduction amongst them of Brahminical civilization, and is evidence of the low estimation in which they were originally held."

In coining the word Dravidian, Caldwell posed it in opposition to a northern Brahmin identity and in the process highlighted the word's subaltern association, "a man of an outcaste tribe." With this term and its definition Caldwell not only deftly erected a divide between Brahmins and non-Brahmin peoples of Southern India but also gave the term a subversive...

\footnote{It may also be suggested that Caldwell was particularly suited and sensitive to the task of being a spokesman for the 'Dravidians' in an 'Aryan' empire being himself a 'Scott-Irish' in an 'English' empire.}

potential. He thus set the conceptual basis for a "Dravidian" linguistic/cultural identity, with an accompanying history and even the Dravidian nation.

Caldwell's central argument was that Dravidian languages, peoples, and cultures had an independent genealogy from that of the Aryan Brahmins. This independence and difference follows, he argued, from the fact that the Dravindians are of a completely different racial stock to that of the Brahmins; namely, a Scythian racial stock. Utilizing largely philological evidence, Caldwell asserted that the Dravidians were descendants of an ancient Scythian race from central and high Asia, who had come to India long before the coming of the Indo-Aryans. This radical distinction underpinned Caldwell's celebration of Dravidian "identity."

Like many of his contemporaries he believed that the supposedly-superior racial and intellectual ability of the Indo-Aryans made them responsible for the higher civilization of India. Nevertheless, in his view Dravidian languages and civilization were not as poor as previously considered by Western Orientalists and Brahmins. Although the Dravidians may have obtained elements of their higher civilization from the

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100 Caldwell also supplemented the philological evidence he musters with historical and ethnological observations to suggest a close relationship between Dravidian languages and the Scythian languages, particularly, the Ugro-Finnish variety; and hence concluded that the Dravidian races must be descendants of the ancient Scythians.
Brahmin colonists, those benefits were far outweighed by the evil customs that the Brahmins had brought with them. Writing of the Dravidian civilization prior to the arrival of the Brahmins, Caldwell noted that the Dravidians "in many things were centuries behind the Brahmins whom they revered as instructors and obeyed as overseers: but if they had been left altogether to themselves, it is open to dispute whether they would not now be in a much better condition at least in point of morals than they are." He continued:

The mental culture and the higher civilization which they derived from the Brahmins, have, I fear, been more than counterbalanced by the fossilising caste rules, the unpractical pantheistic philosophy, and the cumbersome routine of inane ceremonies, which were introduced amongst them by the guides of their new social state.

As we shall see later, Caldwell's attribution of the evils of the caste system, together with the pantheistic and ritualistic aspects of Hinduism, to the Brahmins was avidly taken up by later Dravidian ideologues.

Caldwell contended that Dravidians did have elements of civilization that, though simple, were free from many of the evils of Brahminism. The religion of the ancient Dravidians, he argued, was demonolatry or a type of shamanism much like the religious practices associated with the ancient Scythian.

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101Caldwell, Comparative Grammar, p. 79.

102 Ibid.
It was a practice that he believed was later integrated into Brahminism with the arrival of the Brahmins into South India.

It is the peculiar policy of the Brahmins to render all the religious systems of India subservient to their purpose by making friends of them all...Thus Brahminism yields and conquers, and hence, though the demon worship of Tinnevelly is as far as possible repugnant to the genius of orthodox Hinduism...yet even it has received a place in the cunningly devised mosaic of the Brahmins, and the devils have got themselves regarded as abnormal developments of the gods.\textsuperscript{11}

This kind of missionary critique of Brahminical Hinduism also later became popular with many Dravidian ideologues. Despite his critique of Dravidian religion, he highlighted the fact that the religious practices of the ancient Dravidians did not have a distinct order of hereditary priests like the religious practices associated with the Indo-Aryans.\textsuperscript{11}

Although the ostensible aim of the work was to present his philological research on South Indian languages, Caldwell additionally utilized the work to comment on Dravidian origins, history, peoples, religions and even physical types. When asserting the independence and purity of Tamil, he introduced, as well, the idea that Brahmanism was alien to Dravidians:

\textsuperscript{103}Caldwell, \textit{Lectures on the Tinnevelly Missions}, 1857, p.41.

\textsuperscript{104}Caldwell had written, "the ancient Dravidian inhabitants of India were demonolaters or Shamanites, like the majority of the ancient Scythian tribes of Upper Asia." Caldwell, \textit{Comparative Grammar}, p.52.
...Tamil can readily dispense with the greater part or the whole of its Sanscrit, and by dispensing with it rises to a purer and more refined style. If the Ten Commandments were expressed in the speech of the Tamil people, the proportion of Sanscrit would be very greatly diminished. Of the entire number of words, there is only one which could not be expressed with faultless propriety...in equivalent of pure Dravidian origin: that word is 'graven image' or 'idol!' Both word and thing are foreign to primitive Tamil usages and habits of thought; and were introduced into the Tamil country by the Brahmans, with the Puranic system of religion and the worship of idols.

Caldwell's comments, on various aspects of Dravidian civilization are generally done in comparison to an Aryan\Brahmin civilisation and the anti-Brahman nature of many of his comments are clear.

In Tamil...few Brahmans have written anything worthy of preservation. The language has been cultivated and developed with immense zeal and success by native Tamilian Sudras; and the highest rank in Tamil literature which has been reached by a Brahman is that of a commentator.

Caldwell also foregrounded the insulting Sudra Varna (caste) designation given to the powerful non-Brahmin castes of Southern India. Caldwell observed of this somewhat anomalous situation:

The application of the term 'Sudra', to the ancient

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105 ibid., p.32-33

106 ibid. pp.31-33.

107 Caldwell is here pointing out the inappropriateness of designating even the dominant, landowning caste, who are next in ritual status only to the Brahmins in South India as Sudras, a term which in the 'All India varna scheme' is largely reserved for the labouring castes.
Dravidian chieftains, soldiers, and cultivators may prove that the Brahmans, whilst pretending to do them an honour, treated them with contempt;...The Brahmans who came in peaceably, and obtained the kingdom by flatteries, may probably have persuaded the Dravidians, that in calling them Sudras, they were conferring upon them a title of honour. If so, their policy was perfectly successful."

Caldwell's writings on the 'Dravidian physical type' indicate his sensitivity to the feelings and aspirations of the rising non-Brahman English educated classes of South India, as well as his hope to appeal to their sensitivities. Caldwell introduced his section on the Dravidian physical type by quoting at length the rather unflattering description of Dravidian physical features written by a pioneer European ethnologist, Brian H. Hodgson:

A practised eye will distinguish at a glance between the Arian and Tamulian style of features and form...In the Arian form their is height, symmetry, lightness and flexibility...In the Tamulian form, on the contrary, there is less height, less symmetry, more dumpiness and flesh...

After arguing against Hodgson's and a number of other European scholars' rather unflattering description of Dravidian physical features, Caldwell asserted:

When we compare the physical type of cultivated, high caste Dravidians with that of the Brahmans, no essential difference...can be observed. In many instances the features of the high-caste Dravidian women are more delicately formed and more regular

108Caldwell, Comparative Grammar, p.77.

than those of Brahman women themselves, whilst their complexions are at least equally fair. The Dravidian type of head will even bear directly to be compared with the European. Compare for instance, the heads of the Tamil or Telugu Munshis, translators, and Pandits...and it is evident that the Dravidian head differ from the English only in being smaller and narrower—with a preponderance in the former of the signs of subtlety and suppleness, in the latter of straightforward moral and mental energy.

In an essay entitled 'Are the Pariars of Southern India Dravidians,' Caldwell argued for the inclusion of the lowest ranked caste groups of South India, such as the Pariars, in the same category as the Dravidians by providing both philological as well as ethnological evidence for considering them as descendants from the same original race as Dravidians. Again it was the Brahmins who were excepted.

Writing National History

Caldwell's lengthy introduction to A Comparative Grammar also reads as a pioneer historical work on 'Dravidians' or a national history of "non-Brahmins" of South India. In sub-chapters with titles such as, "Pre-Aryan Civilization of the Dravidians", "The Dravidian Languages Independent of the Sanscrit", "Political and Social Relations of the Primitive Dravidians to the Pre-Aryan Inhabitants of Northern India" and


"Relative Antiquity of Dravidian Literature", Caldwell clearly justified a subject domain called Dravidian. The underlying message in the writing is that ancient Dravidian culture and literary works were in a 'purer' or better state when compared with the contemporary state of Dravidian languages, literatures and cultures. It was in essence a call for the Dravidians to reclaim and recover their languages, cultures and civilization from the pernicious influences of Sanskrit and Brahmanism.

Caldwell even used the word "nationalism" in his descriptions of Dravidian civilization and culture. In a section entitled "Priority of the Literary Cultivation of Tamil," he privileged "Shen Tamil" (pure/high) of ancient times over contemporary colloquial Tamil. Describing "Shen Tamil" he observed: "High Tamil contains less Sanscrit, not more, than the colloquial dialect. It affects purism and national independence; and its refinements are all ab intra."\(^{112}\) Throughout the work, Caldwell privileged earlier periods of Tamil history as periods that were relatively free from Sanskrit and Brahmanism when “nationalistic” currents were ascendent:

The period of the pre-dominance of the Jainas (a predominance in intellect and learning—rarely a predominance in political power) was the Augustan

\(^{112}\) Caldwell, *Comparative Grammar*, p. 54.
age of Tamil literature, the period when the Madura College, a celebrated literary association, flourished, and when the Kural, the Chintamani, and the classical vocabularies and grammars were written. Through the intense Tamilic nationalism of the adherents of this school, and their jealousy of Brahminical influence, the Sanscrit derivatives which are employed in their writings are very considerably altered.  

It was through the use of such examples of anti-Brahmin and anti-Sanscrit ideologies that could be traced to early Tamil literature that Caldwell sought to convey his own message of anti-Brahmin "Tamilic nationalism". His practice of utilizing earlier Tamil history to justify a Dravidian revivalism and anti-Brahmanism became the model that was followed by later Dravidian ideologues. Such a strategy became increasingly effective and popular as more of the ancient Tamil literary works were rediscovered and published beginning in the latter part of the nineteenth century.  

113 Caldwell, Comparative Grammar, p. 56. (highlighted by author).

114 Caldwell also observed: "The Jainas of the old Panda country were animated by a national and anti-Brahminical feeling of peculiar strength; and it is chiefly to them that Tamil is indebted for its higher culture and its comparative independence from Sanscrit. The Saiva and Vaishnava writers of a later period, especially the Saivas, imbibed much of the enthusiasm for Tamil purity and literary independence, by which the Jainas were distinguished: in consequence of which, ... it is the only vernacular literature in India which has not been content with imitating Sanscrit but has honourably attempted to emulate it and outshine it." Comparative Grammar, p. 84.

115 As Zvelebil, a recent scholar of Tamil, had noted: "the earliest (and greatest) literature of the Tamils represents, indeed 'a tradition lost and found'. It had to be dramatically rediscovered since it was unknown even to most scholars up to the second half of the nineteenth century." See K. Zvelebil, Companion Studies to the History of Tamil Literature, 1992, p. 149.
Thus Caldwell managed in his work to lay the ideological foundation of the Dravidian movement. He ended his lengthy introduction with a hopeful message for the Dravidians which sounds also like a call to arms:

Now that native education has commenced to make real progress, and the advantages of European knowledge...are becoming known... it may be expected that the Dravidian mind will ere long be roused from its lethargy, and stimulated to enter upon a brighter career. If the national mind and heart were stirred to so great a degree a thousand years ago by the diffusion of Jainism...it is reasonable to expect still more important results from the propagation of the grand and soul-stirring truths of Christianity...The hitherto uncultivated minds of the lower and far more numerous classes of the Hindu community, are now for the first time in history brought within the range of humanising and elevating influences. A virgin soil is now for the first time being ploughed...and in process of time we may reasonably expect to reap a rich crop of intellectual and moral results.

The use of such terms as the 'Dravidian mind', 'national mind' and his expectant references to the education of 'lower and far more numerous classes' certainly suggests that Caldwell was writing with a certain expectant mandate for the 'Dravidians'.

Most of this rediscovery and publication in print form of the ancient Tamil works had taken place between 1850 and 1925. These had become available 'for study and research; later for inspiration and even imitation.' (p. 144.) Zvelebil had observed, "the consequences were enormous, not only for Tamil literature and culture, but also for social and political life...The Tamils (had) rediscovered their age-long heritage, their cultural independence and... their separate nationhood." (p. 149)

116Caldwell, Comparative Grammar, p. 90.
Thus Caldwell managed to construct a genealogy for the non-Brahmin people of Southern India that presented them as having an origin independent of that of Aryan\Brahmin people. Moreover, he proposed to the Dravidians a mandate to reclaim and recover their languages, civilisation and culture from the supposed pernicious influence of Brahmins, Brahmanism and Sanskritic culture- a people and culture which had been part of South Indian history and culture for at least a millennium. It was a powerful blow aimed at the pivotal role that Brahmins and Brahmanism had come to play in the South Indian Hindu world. The power and appeal of this discourse for the emerging non-Brahmin Tamil intellectual was aided by the fact that it was articulated in the language of modern Western science legitimized and made powerful by colonial rule and the missionary enterprise. It was Caldwell's gift to the rising non-Brahmin English educated classes of Southern India. 

17 Perhaps the best way to interpret and view Caldwell's philological work within the larger context of his life and work is through the eyes of some of his Christian contemporaries and supporters. Many of the articles written by friends and supporters in local newspapers at the time of his death suggest that we view his intellectual and literary contributions as part and parcel of his mission work. As one of them observed:

The Bishop was not only a missionary, but a man of letters and, though much admittedly depends in the work of missions on the grace of God..it must not be forgotten..that intellectual power such as the Bishop was endowed with is an invaluable auxiliary in the furtherance of such work. Indeed as the world now goes at a time when the allies of Satan are armed with all the newest weapons fashioned in the arsenal of controversy, it is necessary that Christian soldiers should not neglect to procure the most formidable weapon wherewith to meet the assaults of the well equipped foe... the exigencies of the time necessitates an
The Second Key ‘Moment’: Linking Dravidian Ideology with Saiva Siddhanta

Caldwell’s philological work had a tremendous impact on Orientalist scholarship on India. With his work a separate subject or domain was constructed within Indian studies to which scholars could now contribute. In the preface to the second edition of his work, Caldwell provided a four-page list of books and articles “bearing directly or indirectly” on Dravidian subjects that had appeared since the first edition of his work. Many of the earliest works of such kind were by European Christian missionaries and colonial officials. Missionaries such as Reverend H. Gundert and Reverend F. Kittel published dictionaries of Malayalam and Kannada respectively, enabling readers to separate words of Dravidian origin. European exponents of Dravidian literary and religious works apart from praising such efforts also foregrounded them adding to these of solid intellectual acquirements such as distinguished the late Bishop Caldwell, whose literary works will long remain enduring monuments of his learning and research and his zeal in laying out his many talents in the field of Christian efforts. See Caldwell, Reminiscences, pp. 188-95.

as the unique products of the Dravidian mind and civilization. Notable among the early works of this kind were *The Madura Country* (1868) by J.H. Nelson and *The Folk Songs of Southern India* (1871) by Charles E. Gover. Ancient Tamil literary and religious works in translation began to appear in increasing numbers in Orientalist scholarship of the time. They were often presented in glowing terms and compared favourably with Sanskrit works and the best classical and religious works in other languages. A solid foundation for a Dravidian literary, religious and cultural efflorescence was thus gradually constructed through much of these writings.

Although contributors to this burgeoning Dravidian scholarship often had their own views on Dravidian civilization, views that did not necessarily agree with Caldwell’s, the general result of their efforts was to further entrench the notion of an independent Dravidian civilization in India. The writings of Ernest Gover, a colonial official, are especially interesting in this regard. Gover though his views on Dravidian languages and civilizations differed

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119 A typical example is the article by W. Elliot, entitled, “The Importance of Early Dravidian Literature” which had appeared in the *Indian Antiquary* in 1887. In the article Elliot had cited another scholar E. Gover’s view that Dravidian, especially Tamil literature upon which, “total neglect has fallen. Overborne by Brahminic legend, hated by the Brahmans, it has not had a chance of obtaining the notice it so much deserves. To raise these books in public estimation, to exhibit the true products of the Dravidian mind, would be a task worthy of the ripest scholar and the most enlightened Government” See, W. Elliot, “The Importance of Early Dravidian Literature”, *The Indian Antiquary*, May, 1887, pp. 158-160.
markedly from that of Caldwell, was nevertheless, one of the most forthright advocates of Dravidian civilization. In The Folk Songs of Southern India, Gover presented English translations of a selection of folk songs from South Indian languages. He considered them as the "real" voices of the Dravidian people of South India who had long been suppressed by Brahmin colonists. His reason for publishing the folk songs was an "attempt to fathom the real feelings of the masses of the people, by gathering and collecting the folk songs of each family of the great Dravidian nation." Describing and justifying the publication of the verses in his introduction, Gover asserted:

...there is no better way of discovering the real feelings and ideas of a people than that afforded by the songs that pass from lip to lip...Such satire is often the only means left to the illiterate and obscure of showing that the priestcraft...the showier fabrics, which to outsiders seem to be the life of the nation, are in no sense the life or even a portion of the life of the millions who in reality form the mass of the nation, but who are far too often utterly forgotten by those who judge a people by its upper ten thousand. A lengthened residence in India has shown that the Dravidians or Hindus of Southern India... are not what ordinary descriptions would make them out to be." 

\[120\]Charles E. Gover, The Folk Songs of Southern India, Madras:SISSW. 1959.(first published 1871)

\[121\]Gover, The Folk Songs, p.9.

\[122\]ibid., pp. 1-2.
Gover went on to argue that most of the works on India with a few exceptions:

are filled with descriptions of Brahmin ceremonials. They comprehend only Brahmin literature. The vices and virtues of the priesthood are ascribed to the nation as a whole. There seldom seems to dawn upon the mind a single suspicion that perhaps so exclusive a caste, so jealous of contact with the impure masses around, so determined to keep to itself all the religious books...is not a fair representative of the masses it despises, and with whom it will have no dealings.\(^1\)

Insisting that"Brahmanism has little hold of the national mind in Dravida", that "The Brahmins are foreigners,"\(^2\) Gover went on to argue that the religious beliefs of the Dravidians unlike the ritualistic and pantheistic practices of the temple priests are much more rational and monotheistic, leaning "tenderly towards Buddhism". In Gover's view, the original religious literature of the Dravidians was corrupted. Speaking of Tamil religious works, he wrote:

Take for example the songs of Sivavakyer. Purely deistical and strongly opposed to idolatry and cumbrous ceremonials...What followed? The Brahmans have corrupted what they could not destroy....To the public demand for Sivavakyer they responded by issuing expurgated and improved editions. Each editor added new names and references to Siva or Vishnu, left out further verses from the original...The same thing has occurred with all the best Dravidian poetry...The Tiruvalluva Charita has been remodelled till it appears that every early writer was a Brahman...The tendency of the national

\(^1\)ibid., p. 2.

\(^2\)ibid., p. 11.
mind is ethical. The Brahminic importations are usually violently amoral."  

What is important to note here is that Gover like many European Dravidianists after Caldwell did not take seriously Caldwell’s assertion that the religion of the Dravidians was demonolatry. Although he did not elaborate his views on the original Dravidian religion, Gover attempted to present it as the religion of the non-Brahmin poets of Southern India such as Sivavakyer, Tiruvalluvar and Vemana. To emphasize his point, Gover asserted that "modern Hindu life in Southern India much resembles that of Europe before the Reformation". He described the religious beliefs of the Dravidians as more rational, monotheistic and devotional with a strong sense of ethics.

Like Caldwell, Gover urged Dravidians to reclaim and recover their culture. He observed:"There is a great mass of noble writing ready to hand in Tamil and Telugu folk literature...Total neglect has fallen upon it. Overborne by Brahminic legend, hated by the Brahmans, it has not had a chance of obtaining the notice it so much deserves." What was required in Gover’s view was to:" raise these books in public estimation, to exhibit the true products of the Dravidian

\[125\] \textit{ibid.}, pp. 15-16.

\[126\] \textit{ibid.}, p. 7.
mind, which he regarded as "the task worthy of the ripest scholar and the most enlightened government." Thus, Gover's work represents not only an effort to take further the Dravidian ideology but also the development of an effort to identify a distinctive Dravidian religion.

The project to identify a distinct Dravidian religion was the effort of many scholars both European and indigenous. At the beginning, Dravidian religion was identified rather vaguely with the writings of non-Brahmin religious figures such as Tiruvalluvar, Pattinatu Pillai and Vemana as figures such as Abbe Dubois, C.P. Brown and Gover had done. Many of their writings were translated by Christian missionaries. Thus the efforts to identify a uniquely Dravidian religion began with the translation into English of the works of the early non-Brahmin saints of Southern India. By the close of the nineteenth century English-educated non-Brahmin Tamil scholars such as P. Sundaram Pillai and J.M. Nallaswamy Pillai, with the support of Christian missionaries, began to speak of the Saivite tradition prevalent among the Tamils as a uniquely Dravidian religion. The religion of the non-Brahmin Tamils--the primary members of the Dravidian language family--came to be increasingly identified as the Dravidian religion. In many ways this development marked a narrowing of focus of the

\[\text{\cite{bid}, p. xvi.}\]
Dravidian project. As the religion of the Tamils began to take centre stage as the religion of the Dravidians, the appeal of Dravidian ideology to other members of the Dravidian linguistic family was there by reduced.

There were many reasons for this ideological development. From its inception, it was to the Tamils that the Dravidian ideology was principally directed and it was the Tamils who were its most enthusiastic supporters. Since Tamil was the root language of the Dravidian family it was the Tamils who were given the gauntlet for the project of reclamation and recovery of Dravidian civilization. Furthermore, the Saivite/Tamil revival which began gaining ascendancy in Jaffna, Sri Lanka by mid-nineteenth century largely through the medium of Tamil, must have exerted a significant influence on both European and indigenous scholars of Tamil in South India. The earliest Tamils in South India to speak of Saiva Siddhanta as a Dravidian religion were inspired by the Saivite/Tamil revival in neighbouring Sri Lanka.

George Uglow Pope (1820-1907)

One of the earliest European scholars to assert that Saiva Siddhanta was a uniquely Dravidian religion and to closely support the pioneering efforts of these early Tamil Dravidian ideologues was the Scottish missionary George Uglow
Pope (1820-1907). As a Missionary Orientalist with an excellent reputation in the field of Tamil studies, Pope's work played an important role in the project of recovering and reviving Saiva Siddhanta as a uniquely Dravidian religion.

Pope came to Madras as a Wesleyan missionary in 1839. Like Caldwell, he joined the S.P.G in 1841 and was assigned to work in the southerly rural Tamil district of Sawyerpuram. Pope too was a scholar/missionary who quickly acquired a mastery of Tamil language. Active as an educator, he wrote avidly, publishing numerous works on the Tamil language and

128 Pope arrived in Madras as a Wesleyan Missionary was attracted to the same Bishop Spencer as Caldwell and was ordained a Deacon in 1843 and a priest in 1845 by Spencer. Since his principal love was teaching he was appointed Principal of the Sawyerpuram Seminary for the training of Catechists for the period 1843-50. Then transferred to the Tanjore Mission including the High School founded by Schwartz and served there until 1858 when he resigned from the Church over disputes on the question of caste among Christians. It was in Tanjore that Pope met and worked with Vedanayaka Sastri. On his return to England he was S.P.G. secretary in the diocese of Manchester between 1882-85. Much of the biographical information on Pope was derived from, K. Meenakshisundaram, (ed.) The Contribution of European Scholars to Tamil, Madras: University of Madras, 1974 and Frank Penny, The Church in Madras, Vol. III, London: John Murray, 1922, pp. 369-70.


130 Pope had begun his first Tamil lesson in 1837. In the 1850's he is thought to have struck a great friendship with Vedanayaka Sastri of Tanjore with whose help he had improved his Tamil a great deal. See, K. Meenakshisundaram, The Contribution of European Scholars to Tamil, 1974, pp. 57-8.
literature. Pope was in South India around the same time as Caldwell and at least on one occasion cooperated with Caldwell against the anti-Christian activities of a Hindu revivalist organization. Caldwell also acknowledged the valuable help of Pope for his major work on Dravidian philology.\textsuperscript{132}

Pope left India in 1882, and from 1888 held the post of Professor of Tamil and Telugu at Oxford University. It was after his move to England that Pope began to undertake in earnest the work of popularizing and disseminating Tamil religious and literary works through translation and it was through them that he strongly endorsed a Dravidian ideology and identified Saiva Siddhanta as a uniquely Dravidian religion. Pope’s most significant contribution to the development of Dravidian ideology was in forging an ‘inviolable link’ between a Dravidian identity and a Saivite or Saiva Siddhanta identity.

The roots of Pope’s intervention in the Dravidian

\textsuperscript{131}Pope’s books on Tamil grammar were often used as standard texts in many of the vernacular schools of the time. Indeed Thiru V.Ka the great pioneer Tamil journalist and politician seems to have been aided by Pope’s Tamil grammar’s as a young student. See Thiru. V. Kalyanasundara Mudaliar, \textit{Thiru Vi. Ka Valkkai Kurripukal} (Thiru Vika Notes on Life), Madras:SISSW. 1982.

\textsuperscript{132}Caldwell acknowledged the invaluable help of Pope in the preface to the second edition of his \textit{Comparative Grammar}, in 1875. Both Caldwell and Pope had also cooperated during the anti-Christian struggles in Tinnevelly during the 1840’s spear headed by the activities of Vibuthi Sangam. See Eugene Stock’s \textit{History of Missions}. 
discourse can be traced to his edited translation of French missionary Abbe Dubois's critical study of Hinduism (1816). Pope published his version of this famous work under the title, *A Description of the Character, Manners, and Customs of The People of India* in 1879. His lengthy preface to the work clearly reveals the extent to which he both identified with and endorsed Dubois's conclusions:

The Abbe, after many years of labour among the Hindus...on his return to Europe, wrote and published a letter in which he declared his conviction that the conversion of the Hindus was impossible; though, when going on board ship, he cast his eyes back towards the shore and exclaimed with emotion that he hoped to return. This he did not do; but became the head of the French institution 'for the Propagation of the Faith,' from which several eminent missionaries of the Roman Catholic Church have come out to India. There he laboured with zeal and energy...and died universally respected, in 1853."

As mentioned earlier, Dubois blamed 'Brahminical prejudice' or intellectual Hinduism as the chief obstacle in the way of Christian conversion in India. By the time Pope was writing

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133 The first English translation of the work had been published in 1816 under the sanction of the East India Company. Since then numerous translations and editions of the work have been published. The process of translation and edition no doubt left ample room for interpretation and Pope’s translation and edition no doubt reflects Pope’s own interpretation.


135 Dubois had elicited much controversy upon his return to Europe when he had declared that "the time of conversion has passed away, and under existing circumstances there remains no human possibility of bringing it back". The chief cause he had given was 'Brahminical prejudice' or intellectual Hinduism. The editor had added: "the Abbe completely despaired of the higher
this commentary, he had resigned from the Church and was working principally as an educator. In many ways Pope followed the course of Dubois; devoting himself to educational work in connection with his former 'flock' after severing his formal connection with direct missionary work."

Pope's preface to Dubois's work also reveals his awareness of the complex developments within Hinduism. Developments that he was willing to endorse and encourage:

There is also in every part of India, but more especially in the South, a very great tendency to substitute for the ordinary religious system, or to add to it, a kind of philosophic pietism which under such names as Gnanam (Wisdom) and the Vedanta, has great influence among the people. The thoughtful among them explain away much that is offensive in Hinduism and take refuge in an esoteric system professing to be founded upon the popular religion, and to be the real essence of it. Thus the Saiva worshippers have their Siva-Gnanam... The most remarkable of these Saiva works is the collection of poems by Tayumana-swami... Certainly Roman Catholic Missionaries, who laboured with such singular zeal and ability, have been instrumental in diffusing a higher sentiment which has penetrated the masses, castes ever becoming Christians, though he was ready to acknowledge that there was a harvest field among the low castes and outcastes." See, Henry K. Beauchamp, (translator and editor) Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies, by the Abbe J.A. Dubois, Third edition, Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1906. pp. xxv-xxvi. Pope's subsequent career on behalf of Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil rather than direct missionary work suggests that he shared Dubois's views regarding Christian conversion in India.

136 An earlier editor of the Dubois's work had commented: "He (Dubois) seems to have recognized from the very first day of his arrival in India that Christian mission work meant something more than the mere preaching and expounding of the Gospel; that it included among its chief essentials to success a long and thorough study of the innermost life and character of the people amidst whom it was to be carried on." See Henry K. Beauchamp, (translator and editor) Hindu Manners, Customs. 1906. p. ix
and has found its expression in compositions such as these. Christian influences are unmistakably to be traced to these Gnana Verses.

Pope's awareness of such complex developments within Hinduism itself anticipates and explains the kind of intervention he hoped to make within Hinduism. It explains his later active support of Saiva Siddhanta in opposition to Brahmanism or neo-Vedanta as the 'real' religion of the Tamils.¹³

Thus, as early as 1879, Pope felt that it was through a deeper exploration and perhaps a selective encouragement of certain strands within Hinduism that Christianity could hope to make an impact. Pope argued that it was the lack of real knowledge and intercourse with the Hindus that had prevented Christianity from making a larger impact:

¹³However, at this time Pope seems to have seen both Saivite philosophy and neo-Vedanta as equally progressive and equally influenced by Christianity. He does not seem to have privileged the Saivite school of thought as he later does. Pope had also observed in the preface: "The Vedanta of the south is a kind of Neo-Vedantism, differing in many essential points from the system of the Sutras of the Vedanta Sara...This is essentially different form the proper Vedanta system; and is developing, gathering to itself and assimilating, many elements from other systems, more especially from the Mohamedan Sufism and from Christianity, and exercises a great and growing influence upon the people of India. It should, of course, be studied by all who wish to know, or to influence, the Hindus of this presidency. dubois, (p. xxiv-xxv.) Pope clearly felt at this time that it was neo-Vedanta that had the greatest influence on the Tamil mind which makes his support of Saiva Siddhanta as the unique religion of the Tamils rather ironic. Pope also observed in the preface that those wishing to gain a thorough mastery of the systems which have the most influence over the Tamil mind should read, 1,Gnana Vasishhtam (A Vedantic poem) 2,Kaivalya Navanitam (exposition of the neo-vedantic system 3, The poems of Tayumana-swami (Saiva Bhakti poetry) 4,The works of Pattanattu-Pillai 5, The drama of 'Harischandra 5, The 15 lectures of Panchathacap pirakaranam. Essentially noting that the neo-vedantic system was what most influences the Tamil mind unlike his later views on Saiva Siddhanta. The editor's preface had been dated July 1st 1862.
I am not indeed disposed to consider the Hindus to be the apathetic, unchanging people they have often been represented to be. The career of Chaitanya in Bengal and of Nanak in Punjab,...shew that the Hindus are not impression less, nor by any means slow to take in new ideas and to attach themselves to new systems. We have found them apathetic, for we have not striven to interest and arouse them, and have not, in many cases, studied them or their books with sufficient care, to enable us to talk with them mind to mind. Between them and us there has been a great gulf fixed. How shall it be bridged over?

Pope’s reference to Chaitanya and Nanak reveals his admiration and support for reformist strands within Hinduism. Both led movements that were to some extent more egalitarian and anti-caste. Pope’s encouragement of Saivite Bhakti literature and Saiva Siddhanta is understandable when seen in this light.

Pope concluded his edition of Dubois’s work with a chapter entitled, “On the Sect of the Jains and the Principal Differences between them and the Brahmans”.

In the chapter, Dubois foregrounded the oppositional relationship between the Jaina religion and Brahmanism:

In the progress of time, the true religion (Jainism) was gradually abused in different essential points; and abominations, corruptions and superstitions of every kind have usurped its place. The Brahmans who gained the ascendant, swerved from all the old religious maxims...substituting in their place a monstrous combination in which there cannot be seen

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138Ibid. p. xxiii.

139It is not clear that Dubois himself had ended his work with this chapter. A more authoritative edition edited by Henry Beauchamp has this chapter only as an appendix.
Dubois’s description of Jainism and its corruption by Brahmanism reads much like the explanation offered by missionaries and later Dravidian ideologues regarding the corruption of the 'Dravidian' languages and religion. Dubois continued:

They (Jains) withdrew from the Brahmans and all their adherents, and formed the body of Jains. These four divisions now compose the posterity of the Hindus of every caste who united together, in early times to oppose the innovations of the Brahmans, and who have preserved in purity the pristine religion of the country.

Here, Dubois’s writing on Jainism and its anti-Brahmanism curiously resemble Pope’s own later advocacy of Saiva Siddhanta and the Tamil language in opposition to Brahmanism and Sanskrit.

Pope ended his preface to Dubois’s work with an earnest appeal, an appeal that revealed his mission to change South Indian society:

\[142^{\text{ibid.}}, \text{pp. 394-95.}\]

\[141^{\text{Dubois had continued:}}\]"but the wicked innovations of the Brahmans having gradually been adopted by most of the Kshatriya or Rajas, and the great majority of the other tribes, they became the more powerful party, and succeeded at last in beating down the Jains and reducing them to a state of abject submission... and reducing them to such absolute distress that in many provinces of India there does not remain the slightest vestige of the Jains or their worship." Ibid., pp. 394-95.
To revive a decaying civilization is confessedly difficult; yet with all the resources of Western science, all the means and appliances of British wealth, power and influence and, above all, with a religion which breathes into all who receive it in sincerity...we ought to—we certainly must—effect among the races of whose manners and customs this work gives so true and lively a picture.142

Pope's first major intellectual and cultural intervention into Tamil religio-cultural world was through the English translation of an ancient Tamil ethical treatise composed by the non-Brahmin Tamil saint, Tiruvalluvar. Pope's work was titled, The 'Sacred' Kurral of Tiruvalluva-Nayanar and was first published in 1886.143 Although he does not directly speak of the Kurral as part of the religious cannon of the Dravidian religion, there is a clear message that such works are the 'real' works of the 'Tamil race' as opposed to later works that had been corrupted by the Brahmins. He began his introduction with the words:

The weaver of Mayilapur, known now only as Tiruvalluvar, was undoubtedly one of the greatest geniuses of the world; but his fame belongs to South India alone, and to only one great race there. He is the venerated sage and lawgiver of the Tamil people..."144

While celebrating the work Pope deftly linked the great Kurral

142ibid., p. xxix.


144ibid., p. i.
to the 'great (Tamil) race'. He justified his positive response to the work by emphasizing its more rational, egalitarian spirit. Citing another European author, M. Ariel's view of the Kurral, he continued:

That which above all is wonderful about the Kurral is the fact that its author addresses himself, without regard to caste, peoples or beliefs, to the whole community of mankind; the fact that he formulates sovereign morality and absolute reason...¹⁴³

Pope applauded the rational, egalitarian and ethical philosophy of the Kurral at the same time as he pointed to its similarity to Christianity. He even argued that the author derived some Christian inspiration:

Remembering that the author was not fettered by caste prejudices, that his greatest friend was a sea captain, that he lived at St. Thome, that evidently he was an eclectic, that Christian influences were at the time at work in the neighbourhood, and that many passages are strikingly Christian in their spirit, I cannot feel any hesitation in saying that the Christian scriptures were among the sources from which the poet derived his inspiration.¹⁴⁴

Having argued that the Kurral, the 'real' philosophy of the Tamils, was consonant with the teachings of Christianity, it is only natural, he suggested that the English should help and encourage the Tamils:

...but the Tamil race preserves many of its old

¹⁴³ Ibid, p. i.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. iv.
virtues, and has the promise of a noble future. Their English friends, in teaching them all that the West has to impart, will find little to unteach in the moral lessons of the Kural rightly understood....So far, then, we may call this Tamil poet Christian.

Thus, for Pope, the friends of the ‘Tamil race’ were the English and it was the task of these English friends:

to understand him (Tamil race), to free him from mistaken glosses, to teach his works, to correct their teachings where it is misleading, and to supplement where it is defective, would seem to be the duty of all who are friends of the race that glories in the possession of this poetical masterpiece.147

It was this kind of approach that Pope adopted in his numerous writings on Tamil religious and literary subjects. He saw himself as the champion of the “non-Brahmin”, Dravidian element or what he may have preferred to call the more Christian element of Tamil civilization.

Although there is no direct attack on Brahmanism or Sanskrit in the work, it is difficult to escape the thinly veiled anti-Brahminical, anti-Sanskritic ideology that pervades it. When speaking of the glories of the ancient schools of Tamil literature, Pope noted, "The truth seems to be that the Madura school of Tamil literature, now too full of Sanskrit influences, was supreme till the advent of the

147ibid., p. xii.
St. Thorne poet. Pope here in the same sentence not only identifies the ‘other’ as Sanskrit or Brahminical culture but also manages to convey to the reader that the pre-Brahminical period of Tamil culture was better. Thus, not surprisingly Pope utilized the work to promote the writing of “Pure Tamil”, which meant ridding the language of Sanskrit words that had accreted over the years. He observed:

The Kurral is composed in pure Tamil, that is, with scarcely any admixture of Sanskrit... Of this pure and primitive Tamil this work of Tiruvalluvar is the most finished specimen, and may fitly be termed ‘a well of Tamil undefiled.’

His next major work, published in 1893 was the English translation with commentary of a popular ancient Tamil classic Naladi-Nannuru (Four Hundred Quatrains). Again, Pope chose a Tamil work that, “reflects the thoughts and ideas of a great mass of the Tamil people, and indeed of the yeomanry of India... and is often called the Vellalar-Vetham, (Veda of the Vellalar cultivating castes). The Vellalars being the most powerful non-Brahmin land holding castes in the Tamil region were one of the earliest castes to embrace Dravidian ideology.

148 *ibid.*, p. iv.
149 *ibid.*, pp. xv-xvi.
In the introduction to the work Pope drew a parallel between the work of Christian missionaries for Tamil language and that of the Jains. He also identified the Saivite tradition as the most recent guardian and repository of the Tamil language:

These verses, mainly but not, I think, exclusively of Jain origin, were doubtless expurgated by the Caivas (Saivites), under whose chief guardianship Tamil literature has since remained... Perhaps the Jains fostered the vernaculars partly out of opposition to the Brahmans. Reformers and missionaries who generally address themselves to the intelligent middle classes, have often been the most assiduous students and promoters of the vulgar tongues. Quatrain 243 of the Naladi shows the feeling of hostility that existed between the North and the South; between Hindus and Jains. The great antiquity of Tamil which is the one worthy rival of Sanskrit, is abundantly plain.

Here, Pope clearly carried the ideas of Dubois much further, suggesting directly a parallel between the efforts of the Jains and Christian missionaries. Pope also noted that after the Jains it was under the Saivites that "Tamil literature has since remained." Thus, it is hardly surprising that Pope later encouraged the Saivites or the Saiva Siddhantists since they had been, after the Jains, the chief guardians of the Tamil literary tradition.

However it was in his monumental undertaking, the English translation of an important Saiva Siddhanta text, The

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151 Ibid., p. x.
Tiruvacagam (1900), that Pope boldly asserted that Saiva Siddhanta was an exclusively Tamil religion:

The Saiva Siddhanta system is the most elaborate, influential, and undoubtedly the most intrinsically valuable of all the religions of India. It is peculiarly the South-Indian, and Tamil, religion...Caivism is the old prehistoric religion of South India, essentially existing from pre-Aryan times, and holds sway over the hearts of the Tamil people...Its texts books (probably its sources) exist in Tamil only...(Classical Tamil is very little studied, yet this key alone can unlock the hearts of probably ten millions of the most intelligent and progressive of the Hindu races).\(^{152}\)

Here, Pope coupled his ardent endorsement of Saiva Siddhanta with his assertion that "it is peculiarly South-Indian, and Tamil religion". Interestingly Pope had shifted his earlier view expressed in the preface to Dubois's work that neo-vedanta was the most influential religion in the Tamil region. Further-more Pope's endorsement of Saiva Siddhanta despite his knowledge that it was the revivalism of Saiva Siddhanta that had effectively curtailed the advance of Christianity in the neighbouring Tamil region of Jaffna, Sri Lanka is particularly striking. He had even made a reference to the great anti-missionary Saivite revivalist, Arumuga Navalar of Jaffna in the same work.\(^{153}\) It was such writings by Pope that were


\(^{153}\)Pope had referred to Navalar in connection with his discussion of the story contained in the work Periyapuranam. Pope's comments reveal an uncanny insight into the nature of
utilized by Dravidian ideologues and Saiva Siddhanta revivalists as confirmations by an "impartial scholar" that Saiva Siddhanta was not only the greatest religion in India but was a uniquely Dravidian one.

The ideological thrust of Pope’s work on *Tiruvacagam* becomes even more apparent when we read in the same work his call for a Tamil revival:

The speech of a dying people may, perhaps be allowed to die; but this cannot be said of the Tamil race. Heaven Forbid. Dead languages have great uses...yet, in many ways, the living tongues are better! One cannot tell what flowers may yet bloom, what fruits may yet ripen, on the hardy old trees. Let Tamilians cease to be ashamed of their vernacular!

Thus, Pope’s endorsement of Saiva Siddhanta as “a peculiarly Tamil religion” has also to be seen within the larger context of his scarcely concealed anticipation of the fruits of the revival of Tamil language and literature.

Pope, like Caldwell before him, believed that the modern revival of Tamil language and literature had much Christian

Navalar’s ‘protestant revivalism’ as well as his easy confidence in the loyalty of his Saiva Siddhanta friends:”The accomplished editor of this Puranam(Periya Puranam) (and commentator upon it), a zealous reviver of modern times of the Caiva system(Aru-muganavalar,of Jaffna), gives his account of the meaning of this strange scene.” He had added after giving Navalar’s account:”Of course recognizing the spirit of this teaching, it may be allowed us to doubt whether such explanations would ever have been dreamt of but for Western teachings; and whether myths like these are the appropriate means for imparting this instruction.” Pope had also added in a footnote to the last comment:’I write quite unreservedly, knowing full well the courtesy and candour of my Caiva friends, who will not question my love for them, and unfeigned respect for their cherished convictions. See Rev. G.U. Pope, *The Tiruvacagam or Sacred Utterances of the Tamil Poet, Saint, and Sage Manikka-Vacagar:The Tamil Text of the Fifty One Poems with English translation, introduction and notes*, Oxford:At The Clarendon Press, 1900, p. lxiii-lxiv.
inspiration and support. He even provided a brief genealogy of this modern Tamil efflorescence in his introduction to the same work:

There exists now much of what is called Christian Tamil, a dialect created by the Danish missionaries of Tranquebar, enriched by generations of Tanjore, German, and other missionaries; modified, purified, and refrigerated by the Swiss Rhenius and the very composite Tinnevelly school; expanded and harmonized by Englishmen...and finally waiting now for the touch of some heaven-born genius among the Tamil community to make it as sweet and effective as any language on earth, living or dead.

He continued:

Of that unique genius Beschi...and of De Nobili, and (in after days) of Ellis and Stokes,—with a multitude of others, such as Drew, Caldwell, and Percival, who advanced Tamil culture,—space forbids me here to speak.

Pope thus clearly traced the genealogy of modern Tamil renaissance to the efforts of Christian missionaries. He was not content merely with providing this brief genealogy: in addition, he wanted to point to the kind of works that he hoped would follow this missionary led Tamil renaissance: "I am afraid I cannot recall more than two recent works which seem to me to give promise of a veritable re-descent in more modern attire of the Tamil Saraswati(Goddess of Learning)."

The two works he was referring to were P. Sundaram Pillai’s,

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dramatical work, Manonmaniam and V.G. Suryanarayana Sastri’s Tani-pacura-Toaai (Anthology of Solitary Songs). Sundaram Pillai was the first Tamil intellectual to embrace and articulate the Dravidianist vision of Caldwell and Pope. He was also a close friend of Pope. Suryanarayana Sastri, affectionately called ‘Dravidian Sastri’, was the head Tamil pandit at Madras Christian College and a close friend of the great evangelist and principal of the College Reverend William Miller. Pope later translated Sastri’s work into English. Sastri was an ardent Tamil revivalist and one of the first Tamils to initiate the ‘pure Tamil’ movement. Both Sundaram Pillai and Suryanarayana Sastri were English-educated Tamils and their writings generally reflected the spirit and impact of missionary writers such as Caldwell and Pope. Pope found in the work of Sundaram Pillai and Suryanarayana Sastri at least the partial fulfilment of the missionary mandate for Tamil society.

156Pope had described Sundaram Pillai in the same preface as: "The distinguished author of Manomaniyam, P. Sundaram Pillai, has-too early for us-passed into the unseen. The copy he sent me (inscribed with characteristic modesty), 'Submitted to---with the author's best respects,' is to me a valued companion. ibid., p. xiii.

157He was apparently called ‘Dravidian Sastri’ by the Tamil revivalist Damodaram Pillai. Cited in Zvelebil, Companion Studies, p. 182.

158Pope almost conveys a conspiratorial mood when he refers to his Tamil friends. He had acknowledged them in the preface, "My thanks are due to the Secretary of State for India for a liberal subsidy...and to many Tamil friends (who do not desire their names to be mentioned). Pope, Tiruvacagam, p. xiv.
CONCLUSION

This chapter has traced the ideological roots and intellectual foundations of Dravidian ideology principally to the writings of Christian missionaries and European scholar/officials working in Southern India. Drawing from the work of missionaries scholar/officials, and Orientalists, Robert Caldwell laid the intellectual foundation of Dravidian ideology. He did this not only by coining the word Dravidian but also by clearly articulating a mandate for non-Brahmin South Indians to reclaim and recover their once “pure” Dravidian civilization. The central argument of this chapter is that Christian missionaries such as Caldwell and Pope urged non-Brahmin South Indian to reclaim and recover a once “pure” Dravidian civilization in the hope of reducing the power and hold of Brahminical Hinduism on them. Caldwell’s work stimulated a great deal of scholarship on Dravidian subjects including a search to reclaim and recover an original Dravidian religion. The initial identification of the Dravidian religion with the works of non-Brahmin religious figures gave way towards the end of the nineteenth century to the identification of the religion associated with the Tamils, Saiva Siddhanta, as the original religion of the Dravidians. In the next chapter we will look at how this largely mission-inspired ideology to combat the power and
appeal of Brahmanism and the caste system was embraced and elaborated by the emerging English-educated non-Brahmin Tamil/Saivite intellectuals in their quest to fashion both an identity and nationalism for themselves.
Chapter Two

The Indigenisation Of Dravidian Ideology: Dravdianizing the Revival of Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil, 1840-1920.

Native pandits have never been surpassed in patient labour...They require in addition that zeal for historic truth and that power for discrimination...Both these classes of qualities seem to me to be combined in a remarkable degree in the articles recently contributed by learned natives to the Bombay Indian Antiquary on subjects connected with...Northern India; and those articles appear to me to be valuable not only in themselves, but also as... specimen of the kind of results that might be expected if learned natives of Southern India entered, in the same... spirit, on the cultivation of the similar, though hitherto much neglected, field of literary labour, which may be regarded as specially their own.

Robert Caldwell Comparative Grammar. (1875):

Missionary-led Orientalism concerning the "Dravidians" began to produce a significant indigenous response by the last decades of the nineteenth century. The men who were at the vanguard of these efforts were drawn predominantly from an English-educated higher non-Brahmin Tamil/Saivite background. An analysis of their writings not only illuminates how

1Caldwell wrote this in the preface to the second edition of his work in 1875, it reflects what he anticipated for the Dravidians. Caldwell, Comparative Grammar, (reprint, 1974) p. xiii.
missionary Orientalism came to be selectively adopted, extended and indigenised, but also more importantly illustrates the largely unexamined relationship between the Tamil/Saivite revivalist movement and the Dravidian movement. An examination of the work of these early pioneers is also important since it was their writings that set much of the standards and parameters for all later Dravidian ideologues and Tamil nationalists including Maraimalai Adigal.

Much of this activity and many of the protagonists involved in the indigenizing of Dravidian ideology were centred in the Presidency capital of Madras city. Many of them knew each other and often collaborated in this common “Dravidian” revival project. This chapter seeks to illustrate this significant “moment” in the early history of the Dravidian movement by examining the work and writings of three key figures whose work was not only central to these development but also best exemplifies this important early phase of the indigenisation of Dravidian ideology. They are Somasundara Nayakar (1846-1901), P. Sundaram Pillai (1855-1897) and J.M. Nallaswami Pillai (1864-1920).

Tamil/Saivite Revival And Dravidian Nationalism

The indigenisation of Dravidian ideology was not only largely pioneered by Tamil/Saivite revivalists but it was
preceded by a revival of Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil in both Sri Lanka and South India. This certainly suggests an important relationship between the Tamil/Saivite revivalist movement and the Dravidian movement. Despite this important link between the Tamil/Saivite revivalist movement and the early roots of the Dravidian movement, there has been little scholarship on the Tamil/Saivite revival movement in South India. The few studies that are available focus on the Saivite/Tamil revival in Jaffna where Dravidian ideology had little impact.

There is little information available of any sustained efforts at a Saivite/Tamil revival in Southern India before the latter part of the nineteenth century. There may have been smaller Hindu organizations, including sectarian organizations that had more local and limited mandates and appeal. From largely missionary sources there is evidence for the existence of at least two Hindu organizations, the Vibuthi Sangam (Sacred Ash Society) and the Sadur Veda Siddhanta Sabha (Four Vedas Association) in the Tamil regions around the 1830's and 1840's. There was also in existence a Hindu Literary Society founded in 1833. Many of these seemed to have been largely

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2 Most of the works on missionary activities in South India in the nineteenth century briefly allude to the existence of such organizations. See for example Eugene Stock (1899); S. Rajamanickam (1976); Young and Jebanesan (1995).

defensive organizations arising out of elite Hindu responses to what were considered missionary excesses during this period. These organizations did not, however, privilege or emphasize a particularly Saivite/Tamil revival at the expense of other Hindu traditions and sects. Moreover, many of the Hindu leaders of this anti-missionary organizations were from both Brahmin and non-Brahmin castes, nor were they exclusively of Tamil origin.¹

The Vibuthi Sangam seems to have been centred in the heavily "missionized" Tirunelveli region and the Sadur Veda Siddhanta Sabha in the area known as Black town in the city of Madras.² They were fairly short-lived and were soon eclipsed by the formation of the Madras Branch of the British Indian Association in 1852, many of whose members were drawn from those who had formerly spearheaded the opposition to missionaries during the preceding decades.³ It was the British


¹The names of the Hindu leaders of the anti-missionary struggles during this period suggests that they were not exclusively of Tamil origin. Many of them belonged to other linguistic communities such as the Telugu. See R. Suntharalingam, Politics and Nationalist, pp. 40-57.


³Suntharalingam suggest this when he argues that it was these Hindu opponents of the "missionary party" that later became the founders of the Madras branch of the British Indian
Indian Association in Madras that later formed the foundation for the Madras branch of the Indian National Congress. Thus it seems that these organizations were of a general Hindu revivalist character, accommodating all the dominant strands of Hinduism of the time rather than privileging a particularly Saivite/Tamil revival. Furthermore, there is little evidence of any systematic attempt by these organizations to inaugurate such a revival.

The First Major Saivite/Tamil Revival

The only major Saivite/Tamil revival prior to the late nineteenth century took place in the adjacent Tamil region of Jaffna. This movement began as early as the 1840's and is generally associated with the life and work of the major Jaffna revivalist, Arumuga Navalar (1822-1879). This Jaffna revival originated as a reaction against tremendous Christian missionary challenges to the religion, culture, social order and world view of the dominant castes of Jaffna. It was led


primarily by the dominant and numerically strong non-Brahmin Vellalar castes there.'

The focus of the Jaffna revivalists was the propagation of a temple-based, strict Agama-centric, Saivite/Tamil revival and the elimination of all other heterodox "impure" practices that had accreted over the years. Towards this goal, Navalar along with many of his followers established Saivite organizations and schools, and began to collect and publish in print form many of the important Saivite/Tamil works with commentaries in clear and accessible Tamil prose style.' These early efforts by Navalar laid much of the foundation for the modern Tamil literary renaissance. In fact most scholarship on the modern Tamil literary and cultural renaissance regard the work of Navalar and his associates as laying its principal foundation. His work can be also seen as one of the earliest signs of a nascent Tamil cultural nationalism in the modern period. In spirit, methods of organization, propaganda and educational work, this militant Jaffna centred Saivite/Tamil

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8 More recent scholarship has attempted to broaden the range and depth of this scholarship by tracing its emergence from the initial feeble Brahmin resistance to missionary challenges to the Vellalar-led revivalism that it later became by the mid-nineteenth century. See Young and Jebanesan, *The Bible Trembled*.

revival reflected much of the methods and spirit of its protestant Christian adversaries. Noticeable by its absence in this Vellalar-led Jaffna-centred revivalism is any trace of the anti-Brahmin, anti-Sanskrit Dravidian ideology that was to characterise the later Saivite/Tamil revival in the Tamil mainland.

What concerns us here is that the majority of the Jaffna revivalists had strong links to important Saivite centres and mutts in the Tamil mainland and often established parallel schools and publishing houses there. Many of them also lived and worked in the Tamil mainland for a substantial portion of their lives. Thus, this pioneer Jaffna-centred Saivite/Tamil revival which began as early as the 1840s exerted a significant influence on the Tamil mainland.

Jaffna revivalists such as Arumuga Navalar established parallel Saivite schools near Chidambaram and printing presses in Madras by the 1860s. Navalar also maintained important links to Saivite centres and institutions in the Tamil mainland and often attempted to intervene in their

10 The school in Chidambaram like the ones at Jaffna was named Saiva Prakasa Vidyasalai. See, P. Poolokasingam, Eelam Thantha Navalar (Eelam's Gift, Navalar) Chennai: Alamu Achakam, 1993, p. 214.

11 Yong and Jebenesan noted this when they wrote of Navalar, "Most of the 1860's he spent on the continent building a polity of institutions that introduced the peninsular model of revivalism to Tamil Nadu." See R.F. Young and S. Jebanesan, The Bible Trembled, p. 136.
affairs in his efforts to spread his own brand of Saivite Tamil revival.\(^\text{12}\) That he was given the title Navalar (great orator) by the prominent Vellalar-led Saiva Siddhanta mutt, the Tiruvaduthurai Adhinam further attests to Navalar's significance in the religio-cultural world of Tamil Nadu. Navalar was patronized by many wealthy and powerful elites in Tamil Nadu including Pandithurai Thevar and the Sethupati of Ramnad.\(^\text{13}\) Other Jaffna revivalists who exerted a powerful influence in the Tamil mainland included Sabapathy Navalar\(^\text{14}\)(1843-1903), C. Y. Tamotaram Pillai (1832-1901) and N. Kathiraverpillai (1844-1907). The writings and work of these Jaffna revivalists reflecting a nascent Saivite/Tamil nationalism exerted a significant formative influence on the pioneer Saivite/Tamil revivalists in Tamil Nadu.\(^\text{15}\) Many Tamil Nadu revivalists often refer to the writings of the Jaffna revivalists as having had a formative influence in their

\(^{12}\) See Poolokasingam Eelam Thantha Navalar.


\(^{14}\) Sabapathy Navalar was intimately associated with the Thiruvaduthurai mutt. He published a work on the history of Tamil literature entitled, Thiravida Prakasikai (Dravidian Light) as early as 1900.

\(^{15}\) In this context it is interesting to note that one of the earliest Saiva Siddhanta organizations in southern India was called Saiva Prakasa Sabai and was founded in Tiruvanandapuram by P. Sundaram Pillai and Saminatha Pillai in 1884. The central organization of the Saivite revivalism in northern Sri Lanka also carried the same name and had been founded there by 1853.
development.¹⁶

Thus, the pioneer Tamil/Saivites in South India who began to embrace Dravidian ideology emerged against the background of a Tamil/Saivite revivalism that had already begun by mid nineteenth century in neighbouring Jaffna. The Vellalar-led Jaffna Saivite/Tamil revival acted as a catalyst for a similar revival in the Tamil mainland. The Saivite schools, mutts, journals and printing houses the Jaffna revivalists founded in Tamil Nadu served as a medium through which this new spirit of Saivite/Tamil revival was conveyed to the Tamil mainland. Unlike the Tamil/Saivite revival in Tamil Nadu, the Jaffna-centred revival was principally articulated in the Tamil language.

Towards Understanding The Saiva Siddhanta Revival Movement In South India

Towards the close of the nineteenth century Tamil/Saivite revivalist organizations similar to those in Jaffna began to emerge in South India. Many of the pioneer Tamil Dravidian ideologues were often associated and involved with these Tamil/Saivite revivalist organizations. The prevalent view drawn mainly from the studies of Saivite/Tamil revival in

¹⁶The best example would be Tiru Vi Kalyanasundara Mudaliar who in his autobiography paid homage to the profound debt he owed to his Tamil teacher and Saiva Siddhanta guru, Kathiraverpillai. See Kalyanasundara Mudaliar, Tiru Vi. Ka.
Jaffna, that Saiva Siddhanta organizations arose largely as a reaction against the Christian missionary threat does not adequately explain their emergence in south India around the 1880s. The fact that Saivite revivalism in northern Sri Lanka was both a reaction against and an appropriation of many elements of the Protestant Christian missionary impact there is well established by recent scholarship. However, it would be far too simplistic to attribute the same causes to explain the emergence of Saiva Siddhanta revivalism in Tamil Nadu.

Unlike the earlier Saivite revivalists of Sri Lanka, whose primary concern and anxiety was the Christian missionary threat, the Saiva Siddhanta revivalists who emerged in Tamil Nadu toward the end of the century were largely concerned with the threat posed by the rise of neo-Vedantism and Vaishnavism. An analysis of the life and work of pioneer Saiva Siddhanta revivalists in Tamil Nadu such as Somasundara Nayakar, J.M. Nallaswami Pillai, and Maraimalai Adigal attests to the fact

17This view as mentioned previously was boldly articulated even for the case of Tamil Nadu by R. Srinivasan who sees the emergence of Saiva Siddhanta organizations in Tamil Nadu in the 1880's as a defensive reaction against the Christian missionary threat as demonstrated by what he considers their appearance "in an environment that was increasingly becoming Christianized. The founding of these was mainly to stop this Christianizing influence...The founding of a similar association in Trichinopoly in 1885 is also significant for Trichinopoly was an important centre for Catholic Proselytization." See, R. Srinivasan, "The Ideological Genesis of the Dravidian Movement", Social Scientist, Vol.VIII, No.1. Jan-June 1987, p. 10.

18See especially the recent work on the subject by Young and Jebanesan, The Bible Trembled, (1995).
that it was the ascendancy of neo-Vedantism and Vaishnavism that was their primary concern and source of anxiety. In fact Nayakar’s life and work as well as those of his major disciples tend to illustrate this anti-Vedantic and anti-Vaishnavite spirit of Saiva Siddhanta revival in Tamil Nadu rather well.

The Hindu reaction against the threat posed by Christian missionary activity in southern India had begun by mid-century, much earlier than the period of the emergence of the Saiva Siddhanta revival movement there. Some scholars have even argued that the Christian missionary threat in Madras Presidency had been effectively contained and the presidency “reclaimed by the Hindus by mid-century.”19 Furthermore, the initial Hindu reaction to the Christian missionary threat in Tamil Nadu did not take the form of a doctrinally well defined Saivite/Tamil revival as in northern Sri Lanka. Instead it was much less doctrinally defined and included in its fold, as mentioned earlier, the organizations and activities of the Vibuthi Sangam (Sacred Ash Society), the Sadur Veda Siddhanta Sabha (Four Vedas Association) and the Hindu Tract Society.

Thus the emergence of Saiva Siddhanta revival in southern India in the 1880’s cannot be viewed as a direct reaction to

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19 Young and Jebanesan (1995) following R.E. Frykenburg, particularly emphasise this point.
the Christian missionary threat but rather as an internal struggle within the various schools of Hinduism competing for power and popularity once that threat had been effectively contained. In many ways the Saiva Siddhanta revival movement in Tamil Nadu has to be seen as an attempt by elite non-Brahmin Tamils to re-exert their control over a Hindu Tamil tradition that gave them pride of place in the face of the rising hegemony of other more pan-Indian Hindu schools of thought that tended to marginalise them and their tradition. The Vellalar led Saivite revival of Jaffna had a great appeal for the non-Brahmin Tamil elites of southern India confronted with the ascendancy of more pan-Indian schools of thought that tended to privilege the Aryan-Sanskritic Hindu traditions at the expense of the more local and historically rooted Tamil Hindu tradition.  

Somasundara Navakar (1846-1901) And The Revival Of Saiva Siddhanta In South India.

In many ways Somasundara Nayakar (1846-1901) can be seen as Arumuga Navalar's counterpart in Tamil Nadu. Just as Navalar exerted a profound influence on the type of Saivite revivalism that was articulated in Jaffna, Nayakar exerted a profound influence on the type of Saivism that was articulated in Tamil Nadu. The revival of Saiva Siddhanta in South India is intimately connected with his life and work. Although there were several prominent Jaffna revivalists active in Tamil Nadu by the time Nayakar began his campaign, the nature and direction that the Saiva Siddhanta revival assumed in Tamil Nadu was substantially shaped by Nayakar's efforts. He was the main spiritual inspiration behind a number of prominent Saiva Siddhanta revivalists including J.M. Nallaswamy Pillai and Maraimalai Adigal who articulated a Tamil-Dravidian or non-Brahmin interpretation of Saiva Siddhanta in the modern period.

Although there were well known Saiva Siddhanta revivalists such as Arumuga Navalar and Capapati Navalar from Jaffna, similar figures from the same period from Tamil Nadu are not found in the extant literature on Saiva Siddhanta revivalism. According to Maraimalaiyadigal, Nayakar was the first major Saiva Siddhanta revivalist of the modern period. Adigal also links Nayakar directly with the lineage of Tamil Saiva Siddhantists that ended with the great Sivajnana Munivar and considers Nayakar as the next great servant of Saiva Siddhanta after Sivajnana Muniver. See Maraimalai Adigal, Comasundara Nayakar Varalaru, p. 53-54. The view that Nayakar is the first major Saiva Siddhanta revivalist of Tamil Nadu in the modern period is also somewhat supported by the information contained in Tiru. Vi. Ka's autobiography. In his discussion of how he became interested in Saiva Siddhanta, Tiru. Vi. Ka. maintains that he began by reading the works of Capapati Navalar, Somasundara Nayakar and Arumuga Navalar. Tiru. Vi. Ka. apart from confirming the huge popularity of Nayakar during his childhood days also asserts that the first Saivite piracangam (sermon) he ever heard was that of Somasundara Nayakar's while he was still a child. Kalyanasundara Mudaliar, Tiru Vi Ka, p. 481-82.
period. It was this radical non-Brahmin interpretation of Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil culture which formed the ideological basis of the Tamil/Dravidian nationalism in Tamil Nadu.

Nayakar's central role in the revival of Saiva Siddhanta in Tamil Nadu is attested by the writings of many pioneer Saiva Siddhanta revivalists from Tamil Nadu. A major Saiva Siddhanta revivalist in his own right, J.M. Nallaswami Pillai observed on Nayakar's death: "Till he began his ministration, the Saiva religion was but a show, tamash and temple-going and

Many scholars working on the Dravidian movement indirectly suggest this when they assert that it was figures such as Adigal and Nallaswamy Pillai (both disciples of Nayakar) who were largely responsible for the articulation of a largely Tamil-Dravidian interpretation of Saiva Siddhanta. R. Sreenivasan in his discussion of the Saiva Siddhanta revival movement in reference to the Dravidian movement names Nayakar as an important and accomplished Saiva Siddhanta figure associated with the Saiva Siddhanta revival movement. See Sreenivasan, p. 8. K. Sivaraman a contemporary authority on the philosophical and theological aspects of Saiva Siddhanta attributes the origin of Tamil-non-Brahmin interpretation of Saiva Siddhanta to P. Sundaram Pillai, Maraimalaiyadigal, Subramania Pillai and M. Balasundara Mudaliar. See K. Sivaraman, "The Role of the Saivagama in the Emergence of Saiva Siddhanta: A Philosophical Interpretation," in Slater and Weibe ed., Traditions in Contact and Change, 1980, Two of the most prominent disciples of Nayakar was J. M. Nallaswami Pillai and Maraimalaiyadigal. Nallaswami Pillai had begun taking a serious interest in Saiva Siddhanta by 1894. Nallaswamy Pillai became one of the greatest propagandist of Saiva Siddhanta in India in the modern period. He was especially effective in popularizing Saiva Siddhanta among the English reading public. He had written of Somasundara Nayakar in his introduction to his English translation of Sivajnana Botham as someone "to whom I am largely indebted by means of his lectures and books and pamphlets, for the little knowledge of Saiva religion and Philosophy which I may possess." See J.M. Nallaswamy Pillai, Sivagnana Botham of Meikanda Deva. (Madras: Sri La Sri Somasundara Nayagar, 1895), p. ix.
nothing else. The Siddhanta philosophy was hardly known by its name and the great works which contained these truths were all sealed books." Confirming that Nayakar laid much of the foundation for the Saiva Siddhanta revival in Tamil Nadu, Nallaswami Pillai continued: "It was he who for the first time (the great Sri Arumuga Navalar had published some catechisms before) brought out in simple prose all the truths of Saiva philosophy and religion and within the reach of all." These and other references to Nayakar by many revivalists suggest that although the efforts of the Jaffna revivalists led to a general awakening among the Saivite Tamils in Tamil Nadu, the efforts of Nayakar and his disciples played a significant role in shaping the type of Saiva Siddhanta revival that became ascendant in Tamil Nadu.

Around the 1870's when Somasundara Nayakar converted to

\[24\text{J.M. Nallaswamy Pillai, Siddhanta Deepika, 1901. p. 205.}\]

\[25\text{ibid., p. 206. Another Saiva Siddhantist, V.V. Ramana Sastri, speaking at the annual Saiva Siddhanta Maha Samajam (conference) held in Ramnad in the year 1910, when the Saiva Siddhanta revival movement had already gained a substantial following in Tamil Nadu had remarked of Nayakar:}\]

\textit{Sri La Sri Somasundara Nayagar Avargal was a militant propagandist who protected the faith from the attacks of its detractors, with unequalled force and reasoning. It was he who brought to prominence the superiority of the Saiva Siddhanta philosophy and its sponsors, the Samayacharyas and the Santanacharyas. His life was occupied with incessant work; and he lectured everywhere and the writings he has left behind might well form a library by themselves. Most of the present day workers, associated with this conference, count themselves among his pupils and followers. (Tamilian Antiquary, 1910)\]
Saiva Siddhanta from his earlier allegiance to Vedanta, a few Saiva Siddhanta organizations may have already been in existence in Tamil Nadu. However there is little information available on them or the kind of ideas or interpretations of Saiva Siddhanta that they propagated. The vast majority of Saiva Siddhanta organizations in Tamil Nadu only begun appearing in the 1880's. Thus it is interesting to note that the period when Nayakar emerged as a major Saiva Siddhanta revivalist roughly coincides with the emergence of Saiva Siddhanta organizations in Tamil Nadu. This fact lends further credence to the view that Nayakar was one of the earliest major Saiva Siddhanta revivalist in Tamil Nadu of the modern period.

26It is not clear when exactly Nayakar converted to Saiva Siddhanta from his earlier belief in Vedanta. Adigal believes it was sometime between the publication of his first book Vedabhasya Samaja Kandanam in 1868 and his second publication Sivathikya Ratnavali in 1873. See Maraimalai Adigal, Comacuntara Nayakar Varaluru, Madras:SISSW. 1957, p. 57.

27The Saiva revivalist schools that Navalar organized were often called Saivaprakasa Vidyalaya (School of Saiva Splendour). It is interesting to note that the Saiva revivalist organization that P. Sundaram Pillai and Saminatha Pillai had founded in 1884 was called Saiva Prakasa Sabai. A Saiva Prakasa Sabai had been founded in Jaffna as early as 1853. This may be further evidence that the early Saiva Siddhanta organizations in India were very much influenced by Jaffna revivalists.

28Although it is not clear when the Nagai-Velipalayam Saiva Siddhanta Sabai was founded it is clear that it was active when Adigal was in his teens by the late 1880's. Similarly we know from Adigal's earlier biographies that Adigal participated in two Saiva Siddhanta organizations in Trivandrum in the year 1896. R. Srinivasan in his brief discussion on Saiva Siddhanta mentions the founding of one such organization in Tuticorin in 1883 and another at Palayamcottah in 1886. See R. Srinivasan, "The Ideological Genesis of the Dravidian Movement"(1987). p. 10.
Despite the fact that Nayakar was a central personality in the revival of Saiva Siddhanta in Tamil Nadu there has been little or no scholarly attention paid to his life or work. Part of the reason for this neglect may be the fact that his writings are mostly concerned with the intricacies of interpreting of religious works, rituals and practices and it is therefore difficult to tease out their socio-political leanings in an explicit manner. Much of the writings are also in the form of a highly sanskritized Tamil (Manipravalam) that is difficult to understand for the contemporary lay reader. Thus, the role that Nayakar played in the revivalism of Saiva Siddhanta is inferred more from the writings and achievement of his prominent disciples rather than from the writings he left behind. The only extensive account of

29 Apart from Adigal’s biography of Nayakar and a brief account of him by J.M. Nallswamy Pillai (1901) written as an obituary note, there is no extensive scholarly work devoted to the life and work of Nayakar. However there are often brief references made to Nayakar in many of the Tamil works on Maraimalai Adigal or the Tamil/Dravidian movement. Of these perhaps the one that suggests most strongly the importance of Nayakar to our understanding of the Saiva Siddhanta revival movement is the article by R. Srinivasan (1987). Srinivasan had commented of Nayakar, "The most scholarly of students and practitioners of Saiva Siddhanta was not to directly influence the movement as much as two of his disciples (J.M. Nallswamy Pillai and Maraimalai Adigal)---Unfortunately, his numerous writings being written in the heavy sanskritized Tamil that was customary then, were beyond the reading capabilities of the common man." See R. Sreenivasan, "The Ideological Genesis of the Dravidian Movement", (1987). p. 8.

30 An example would be the article Nayakar wrote on the subject of Vinayaga Purana. A Purana on Ganesh. It was published in the Tamil version of Siddhanta Deepika (first issue June 1897, p. 41-45) edited by Maraimalai Adigal. The article deals with the intricacies of interpreting the words of the Purana.
Nayakar’s life and work is by his closest disciple, Maraimalai Adigal.31

Biographical Sketch Of Somasundara Nayakar

Nayakar whose original name was Arangasamy Nayakar was born to a Vaishnavite family in 1846 on the western outskirts of the city of Madras in a place called Choolai.32 His father Ramalinga Nayakar and his mother Ammani Ammaiayar belonged to the Vanniar caste.33 The Vanniars rank well below the Vellalars and hold a middle rank among non-Brahmin castes of contemporary Tamil Nadu. At least in some early English accounts of Madras city they are described aside from the Paraiyar caste, as a source of “cheap labour.”34 Their traditional occupation as oil pressers and as lighters of lamps in temples however, relegated them to a fairly

31 Adigal’s biography of Nayakar found unfinished at the time of Adigal’s death and published posthumously though rather poorly organised contains a lot of valuable information.

32 Most of the information on Naykar presented here is derived from Adigal’s biography. Adigal based much of his biography on Nayakar on the conversations and personal experiences he had with Nayakar as well as from a reading of Nayakar’s published works. For the brief account of Nayakar’s early life that he provides Adigal relied on a Tamil work entitled Saivam by Ninrai Thangavel. See Maraimalai Adigal, Somasundara Nayakar Varalaru. There is also a brief but concise summary of Nayakar’s life and work by J.M. Nallaswami Pillai written shortly after Nayakar’s death. See, J. M. Nallaswami Pillai, "The Late Sri Somasundara Nayagar". The Light of Truth or Siddhanta Deepika, Vol. IV. No.9, Feb, 1901, pp. 205-6.

33 Nayakar was the eldest of four boys and a girl.

ambivalent position in the scale of castes and in Hindu society. 35

Nayakar studied English and Telugu in a government school in the city of Madras and passed the U.C.S. examinations. 36 He also attended Presidency College, Madras, although he did not matriculate. 37 From a young age Nayakar came under the influence of a local Vedantist and religious teacher Archudananda Swamigal also known as Ekambara Sivayogi of Choolai. 38 Belonging to the same caste as Nayakar, Archudanada swamigal studied Vedanta and embraced sannyasa (renunciation) under the Sankaracharya at Kumbakonam. It was under Archudananda swamigal’s influence that Nayakar embraced Vedanta from an early age. 39

Although there is not much detailed information available

35 It seems that despite them being fairly low in the traditional scale of castes, their role as lighters of temple lamps gave them a sense of importance in Hindu society. They seemed to have improved their status to a significant degree during the colonial period. See Edgar Thurston, Castes and Tribes of Southern India, Madras:Government Press, 1909, Vol.VII, pp. 312-15.

36 See Nallaswami Pillai, (1901) "The Late Sri." 1901, p. 205.

37 ibid.

38 Nallaswamy Pillai maintains that Archudanada swamigal who he refers to as Egambara Sivayogi was a relation of Nayakar and asserts that Nayakar was brought up by him from a young age. ibid., p. 205.

39 It was also from Archudananda that Nayakar had learnt Sanskrit and Tamil. ibid.
on Nayakar’s early life and activities, \textsuperscript{40} it is clear that until the year 1881, he was employed as a clerical officer in the Madras Municipal Office.\textsuperscript{41} He was also, until his early twenties, a follower of Advaita Vedanta and both he and his guru regarded the Sankaracharya as their ultimate guru.\textsuperscript{42} It is believed that Nayakar converted to Saiva Siddhanta around the early 1870's. He converted as a result of his increasing dissatisfaction with Vedanta and also as a result of a timely exposure to Saiva Siddhanta works by a publisher of Saiva Siddhanta works, Madurainayagam Pillai.\textsuperscript{43} His dissatisfaction

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\textsuperscript{40} Nayakar married around the age of thirty and had three daughters and a son. Adigal on the basis of the age of Nayakar’s eldest daughter estimates that he must have married around the age of thirty. Maraimalai Adigal, \textit{Comasundara Nayakar}, p. 37. \\
\textsuperscript{41} Prior to this job he had also worked for a brief period as an account keeper at a leather treatment and processing plant. He had left the job after an unusually large delivery of goat and cow skins, apparently disgusted at the idea that he was earning his livelihood through the profit made from the skin of dead animals. \textit{ibid.}, p. 44. \\
\textsuperscript{42} Adigal obtained much of this information from Nayakar’s first publication \textit{Veda Bhasya Samaja Kandanam}. In it Nayakar had composed a poem entitled \textit{Paramaguru Vanakkam} (Salutation to the ultimate guru) in which he praises the Sankaracharya as his ultimate guru. Archudananda swamigal had done the same in his work entitled \textit{Thiyana Anubuthi}. According to Adigal \textit{Thiyana Anubuthi} includes a brief biography of Archudananda swamigal written in the form of a verse by Nayakar. The author of the verse is named as Somasundara which reveals that Nayakar had changed his name to Somasundara Nayakar from his birth name of Arangasamy Nayakar before the age of twenty two when these two works were first published. Adigal also asserts that Nayakar received the name Somasundara Nayakar when he underwent the Thikai (initiation) from his guru Archdananda swamigal. Adigal had obtained this latter information from another work by Nayakar entitled \textit{Kutharvatha Panchini}. See Maraimalai Adigal, \textit{Comasundara Nayakar}, p. 28. \\
\textsuperscript{43} According to Adigal Nayakar became aware of the contradictions in Vedanta and had begun to question many of the principles of Vedanta by the time he published his first work around the age of twenty two. Adigal also maintains that Nayakar had personally communicated
with Vedanta seems to have stemmed at least in part according to his disciple from the behaviour and activities of the predominantly Brahmin advocates and practitioners of Vedanta.

Adigal’s lengthy explanation of the reasons behind Nayakar’s conversion is both interesting and revealing. He presents the story of Nayakar’s conversion to Saiva Siddhanta as an inevitable outcome given the obvious contradictions between the predominantly Brahmin practitioners of Vedanta, their attitudes and Nayakar’s Sudra caste identity, his Tamil Saivite Hindu tradition and perspectives. Essentially arguing that Nayakar embraced Saiva Siddhanta as he became increasingly aware of these contradictions and as soon as he became familiar with the principles of Saiva Siddhanta. Adigal in a chapter entitled, ‘How Nayakar discovered Saiva Siddhanta’ attempted to present these contradictions:

Although Brahmin Vedantists claim at least in words that Brahman alone is real and that everything else is unreal, they do not equally consider as unreal

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to him that due to these reasons he was in a rather confused state of mind for a brief period after his twenty second year. It was around this time that Madurainayagam Pillai, a publisher of Saivite works, had visited the city of Madras in order to print Saiva Siddhanta works. The young Nayakar and Madurainayagam Pillai had chanced to meet and converse. Nayakar talked of Vedanta and the doubts that had arisen in his mind regarding it. Madurainayagam Pillai had been impressed with Nayakar and had given him some of his printed Saiva Siddhanta works such as Sivajnan Botham and Sivajna sittiar to read along with a brief summary of the principles of Saiva Siddhanta. Nayakar upon reading and reflecting on the books and words of Madurainayagam Pillai had given became convinced of the truth of Saiva Siddhanta and the fallacy of Vedanta. Thus, according to Adigal it was this brief intervention by Madurainayagam Pillai at a time when Nayakar had begun to increasingly doubt the veracity of Vedanta that had led to Nayakar’s conversion to Saiva Siddhanta. ibid., p. 32.
the claim that they are superior to the rest of the population; even though their faith maintains that the Aryan Vedas and the Tamil Vedas as equally false they still regard the Arya Veda as being derived from God and of unique excellence, while the Tamil Vedas are regarded by them as merely the invention of man and meant only to be recited by the lowly Sudras. They only regard the Arya Vedas and not the Tamil Vedas as the works fit to be recited by them for the worship of Temple deities. For researches into religion they only consider Sanskrit texts as authoritative texts and not the Tamil religious texts...Not only this, they consider Krishna and Rama as Brahmin Gods and regard and speak of Siva derisively as a Sudra God.44

For Adigal, it was the contradictions of the predominant Brahmin practitioners of Vedanta who contrary to their own professed Vedantic philosophical stance of regarding all Gods, schools of thought and castes as essentially unreal categories, in actual practice tended to privilege Aryan Gods, Sanskrit religious works and Aryan castes over what they considered derisively as the Sudra Gods, Tamil religious works and Sudra castes that drove Nayakar to embrace Saiva Siddhanta.

It was after he relinquished his job as a clerical officer in 1881 that Nayakar devoted himself fully to the task of propagating Saiva Siddhanta. Nayakar prolonged Saiva Siddhanta though his countless publications, his many lecture tours and through the numerous disciples he left behind. He was responsible for over a hundred publications some of which

44Maraimalai Adigal, Comasundara Nayakar, p. 29.
were published under the names of his disciples. They included books, journals, pamphlets and articles.

One of Nayakar’s earliest work was *Veda Bhasya Samaja Kandanam* published in 1868. It was written to counter a work published by the *Veda Samaj* and *Brahmo Samaj* condemning the practice of idol worship. Utilizing both Sanscrit and Tamil literary sources, Nayakar argued that idol worship was not only a beneficial spiritual practice but a very necessary one. Aside from demonstrating his awareness of the debates and trends among pan-Indian Hindu intellectuals and religious figures of his time, the work demonstrates Nayakar’s early leanings toward the strong temple-centred Agamic religious traditions of South India. It also illustrates his early grasp of many of the Sanscrit and Tamil Hindu religious texts.

Later in his life Nayakar wrote a treatise on temple worship entitled *Archadipam* (1885).

It is important to consider Nayakar’s efforts at Saiva Siddhanta revival against the background of neo-Hindu revival that was clearly gaining ascendancy among the English educated.

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45Maraimalai Adigal, *Comasundara Nayakar*, p. 11.

46Nayakar had cited from such diverse Sanskrit and Tamil Hindu religious texts as the *Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda* the *Upanishads*; the Tamil hymnal works of the Tamil saints Thirunvukkarasu, Kulasekara Alvar, Ramalinga swamigal; and the Saiva Siddhanta works of Thirumoolar’s *Thirumanthiram* and *Thiruvacagam*. Maraimalai Adigal, *Comasundara Nayakar*, p. 27.
upper caste Hindus in Madras spurred on by the Brahma and Arya Samajists from Bengal. Maraimalai Adigal’s account of Nayakar also depicts this early period of Nayakar’s life as one in which Vaishnavism and Vedanta were clearly on the ascendant in Tamil Nadu. One of Nayakar’s earliest Saiva Siddhanta works was entitled Sivathikvatnavali (1873) and was intended as a reply to the mounting attacks on Saivism by Vaishnavites of the time. Nayakar also began a serial publication entitled Siddhantaratnabham or Ocean of Truth around 1878 and much of his writings appeared in this series. Most were written to counter the works of Vedantists and Vaishnavites and to present the “superior” truths and philosophy of Saiva Siddhanta. His articles also appeared in the Tamil version of the journal Light of Truth or Siddhanta Deepika published by one of Nayakar’s well known disciple, J.M. Nallaswamy Pillai.

Much of Nayakar’s writings are either highly polemical or pragmatic works and often contain intricate interpretations of various religious texts, and practices. Aside from asserting the greatness of Saivism in comparison to other faiths, they also contain elucidation of the basic principles of Saiva Siddhanta, explicit instructions for Saivite practitioners on

47 Nallaswami Pillai, “The Late Sri.”, (1901). p. 205.

48 His other works included, Aabasajnana Nirotham(1885), Iramaththva Theebigainathu Aabasa Vilakkam(1888), Brahmaththva Nirubanam(1891) and Brahmanoooboothy(1892). In his later days Nayakar was also responsible for the journal Siddhantajnanabotham, ibid.
subjects ranging from how and what to worship, to which religious institutions and which type of religious priests to patronize.

For example in a series of articles entitled, "Sivapunniya Magimai", (The merits of Charitable works for Siva) published in 1897, Nayakar, after outlining some of the Saivite rituals and obligations that are essential for “true” Saivites asserted that it was due to their neglect “that the last forty years had experienced irregular rains, resulting in all kinds of cruel famines that have scorched the land causing immense damage. These depredations have increased all kinds of cruel disease among the people. To remove these blights, proper performance of Saivite rituals and obligations are essential.” Nayakar went on to outline what he considered the most important task facing the Saivites; that of improving the education, training, working and living conditions of Aathisaivar--those priests who have traditionally been engaged as Saivite priests, so that they will be able to better perform their work.

Nayakar was here clearly urging his readers to patronise those priests that were trained by the Saiva Siddhanta Mutts as opposed to those who were associated with the more pan

49 Somasundara Nayakar, "Sivapunya Magimai", Unmai Vilakkam Enum Siddhanta Thibigai (Tamil version of Siddhanta Deepika), 1897, p. 87.
Indian Vedic tradition. Thus, included in Nayakar's sermon for Saivites is a warning against engaging in other Hindu rituals or spending money on other Hindu traditions or sects. In addition, Nayakar cautioned the Nattukottai Chetties, a caste famed for their commercial successes in South India, against patronizing the services and rituals of Smarta Brahmins. He explicitly implored the Saivites to make donations only to "real" Saivite priests and practitioners, and differentiated them from the Smarta Brahmin priests who also worked at Saivite temples. He reasoned that the Smartas look upon the Saivite Agamas as inferior to the Vedic Smriti's and Saivite priests as inferior to them. His articles most likely derived from the many lectures he gave basically outlined for the Saivites a program for strengthening the Saivite tradition as opposed to the Vedic and neo-Vedantic tradition in the Tamil region. Revealing the kind of spirit he expected the Saivites to cultivate, he ended the article by asserting that he was driven to write the work through the realization that Saivites were not as patriotic about their religion as the Jains, Christians and Muslims.:

Nayakar's project of strengthening Saivism from the

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51 Ibid., pp.87-90.
challenges posed by other religions, especially Vedanta and Vaishnavism, is also evident in his article entitled, "Thirukkoil Valipadu" (Temple Worship). The article was written to elucidate the "errors of those ignorant few who were misleading people by taking segments from the alien philosophy of Christianity and calling themselves Vedantists." Nayakar continued: "By claiming that the Vedas do not sanction idol worship, and claiming that it is wrong to worship the formless Brahman through idols they are continuing to fool some people. They are even rejoicing by publishing some journals." 

Nayakar was here clearly referring to the increasing number of neo-Vedantic journals that were founded in Madras by the latter part of the nineteenth century inspired by Arya and Brahmo Samajists, the Theosophists and Vivekananda. Nayakar's stated objective in the article was to elucidate the errors and sins of these views and to demonstrate the truth of Saiva Siddhanta. Typical of many of Nayakar's writing this work too was largely combative.³³

Nayakar was well known during his time as a great orator for the cause of Saiva Siddhanta. A significant portion of Nayakar's service to the cause of Saiva Siddhanta revival was


³³ Thiru. Vi. Kalayanasundara Mudaliar in his autobiography has noted that Nayakar's writings were mostly works of contestation. See Kalyanasundara Mudaliar, Thiru Vi. Ka. p. 78.
made through the countless lectures he delivered all over Tamil Nadu. As his near contemporary and disciple, Nallaswami Pillai observed:

He (Nayakar) lectured to vast audiences in Trichinopoly, Madura, Coimbatore, Salem and Bangalore and in most other important towns and cities; and the truths which he proclaimed came as a surprise and a blessing. Not till then did the ordinary Saivite realize that behind all the forms of his religion lay a truth which a veteran European scholar styled the "choicest product of the Dravidian intellect."

Nayakar’s home base however, was the city of Madras where his name was well known during his time. His lectures were generally well attended and he cultivated a reputation as a passionate and fiery exponent of Saiva Siddhanta. Nayakar had even earned the title ‘Vaitika Caiva Ciddhanta Canta Marutam (The gale force wind of Saiva Siddhanta) for his victory in a religious debate organized by the Raja of Ramanathapuram, Baskara Setupati. The few accounts available, depict Nayakar as a man passionately committed to his work, a passionate

54Nallaswami Pillai, "The Late Sri.", (1901), p. 205.

55Thiru Vi. Ka’s life story reveals the popularity of Nayakar’s lectures in the city of Madras during Thiru Vi. Ka’s early days. See Kalyanasundara Mudaliar, Thiru Vi. Ka. p. 481.

56The religious debate is thought to have taken place sometime between 1888 and 1903 when Baskara Setupati was the reigning monarch of Ramanathapuram. Scholars of all religions had taken part in the debating competition. The victor Nayakar had apart from the title been awarded two gold rings and five thousand rupees in cash. See Thirunavukkarasu, Maraimalai Adigal. pp. 13-16.
commitment which at times, according to some “exceeded permissible enthusiasm.” The emergence of Somasundara Nayakar as a major Saiva Siddhanta revivalist by the 1880's thus marked an important watershed in the revivalism of Saiva Siddhanta in Tamil Nadu. The Saiva Siddhanta revival that Nayakar propagated was different from the earlier Saivite revival that had originated in Jaffna. Unlike the Jaffna revivalists, Nayakar was impelled more by the increasing ascendancy of neo-Vedanta and Vaishnavism than by the threat posed by Christian missionary activities in the Tamil region. Nayakar was attempting to articulate a uniquely Tamil religious response that was in keeping with the historically continuous temple based Saivite tradition of the Tamils in the face of competing challenges from neo-Vedanta and Vaishnavism as well as Christianity.

Nayakar's own social background no doubt played a

57 R. Sreenivasan. "The Ideological Genesis." 1987, pp. 8-9. A similar reference to Nayakar's passionate style of religious debate was made by T. Sadasiva Aiyer in the year 1910. He had noted: "Controversies used to be carried on several years ago in the vernacular (journals) between the learned Somasundara Naicker of Chulai and Sree Sreenivasa Sastrial of the Brahma Vidya Press and hard hits used to be given on both sides. Both together used sometimes to join forces to attack their common enemy viz. The Vaishnavas. Such controversies in the vernacular carried on by intellectual giants used to give huge delights to us, lesser mortals, in our younger days, and, as everybody knew that those learned men were fanatics...and, as everybody knew that it was a hallowed tradition of vernacular controversies for each side to call the other a fool or a rogue and even to abuse each other's ancestors and relations and to dub the other side's God a fraud so as to add hot condiments and sauce to the dry polemics..." See T. Sadasiva Aiyar, "'The Morality of the Ramayana' A Review," in Pandit D. Savarirayan ed. The Tamilian Antiquary, No.7, (Trichinopoly:T.A. Society, 1910), p. 46. (Asian Educational Services Reprint, 1986)
significant role in the type of Saiva Siddhanta revival that he helped inaugurate in Tamil Nadu. Unlike the predominantly Vellalar leaders of the Jaffna Saivite revival, Nayakar as a member of the Vanniar caste, no doubt stressed the more non-Brahmin elements and the more egalitarian strands within Saiva Siddhanta philosophy. He was also unlike the Jaffna revivalists, less concerned with caste and rituals. In fact, Adigal’s biography of Nayakar attempts to confirm and propagate this distinct genealogy of Tamil Nadu Saivite revival. In the biography Adigal emphasized the distinction between Nayakar and his Saivite predecessors such as Arumuga Na Avalar and Ramalinga Swamigal. In Adigal’s narrative of the modern Saivite revival there is little room for figures such as Arumuga Na Avalar. Instead Nayakar is presented simply as the greatest Saiva Siddhanta revivalist after the 18th century

58Maraimalai Adigal in his biography of Nayakar links Nayakar as continuing the lineage of Saiva Siddhanta saint scholars such as Meikander Deva, Arulnandi Sivacariyar, Thayumana swamigal and Sivajnana Muniver. See Maraimalai Adigal, Comacunta Nayakar, pp. 53-54. Although Adigal does not explicitly link Nayakar with the institutional lineage of Saiva Siddhanta such as the non-Brahmin Saiva Siddhanta mutts that are closely associated with figures such as Meikanda Deva there is evidence from other sources that figures such as Nayakar, Adigal and Nallaswami Pillai had strong links with some of these Saiva Siddhanta mutts, especially the non-Brahmin Saiva Siddhanta mutt at Thiruvaduthurai. It is also interesting that Nayakar is addressed by his disciples including Adigal as Sri La Sri Somasundar Nayakar, the title Sri La Sri which is also the title used to address the head of these Saiva Siddhanta mutts. This is perhaps further evidence of the conscious attempt to link Nayakar with the intellectual and institutional lineage of the non-Brahmin Tamil Saiva Siddhanta tradition.
Tamil Saiva Siddhanta saint Sivajnana Munivar. Adigal presented Navalar as a man mostly involved in ‘Purana piracangam’ (the dissemination of Puranas) and not the philosophical principles of Saiva Siddhanta. Puranas in Adigal’s view were closely intertwined with Brahminical culture.

Thus, Nayakar’s life story is in many ways representative of the revival of Saiva Siddhanta in South India. His early association with Vaishnavism and Vedanta is symbolic of the degraded position that Saiva Siddhanta endured until its revival. Nayakar’s disillusionment with Vaishnavism and Vedanta also made him an especially suitable candidate for

59 Adigal depicts the Saiva revivalism of Arumuga Navalar and Ramalinga swamigal as not consistent with the “true” philosophical legacy of the Tamil Saiva Siddhanta tradition. Ramalinga swamigal too receives a similar assessment from Adigal. For Adigal, although Ramalinga swamigal had spread the Saiva devotional spirit through his deeply emotional devotional compositions, he did not systematically propound and prolongate the philosophy of Saiva Siddhanta. See Maraimalai Adigal, Comasundara Nayakar, p. 54.

60 See Maraimalai Adigal, Comasundara Nayakar Varalaru, p. 16. Adigal makes a similar pronouncement on S. Veerappa Chettiar. In Adigal’s view though Veerappa Chettiar was proficient in Saiva works and had taught him many things about Saivam during his young days Veerappa Chettiar was even more proficient in Vedanta and regarded Vedantic works as the highest philosophical works. It was only during Chettiar’s senior years after he had listened to Somasundara Nayakar many times that he became fully converted to Saiva Siddhanta.

61 He argued that the Jaffna revivalist Arumuga Navalar did not draw the Tamil people to Saiva Siddhanta by comparing and contrasting the Saiva, Vaishnava and Vedanta philosophies and demonstrating the superiority of Saiva Siddhanta for all to understand as Nayakar had done so effectively. It needs to be recalled that the Brahmins in Sri Lanka also did not pose a threat economically, ideologically or politically to the dominant non-Brahmin castes in Sri Lanka. See Maraimalai Adigal, Comasundara Nayakar Varalaru, pp. 15-16.
propagating a Saiva Siddhanta tradition that clearly distinguished itself sharply from the Vedantic and Vaishnavite tradition. Ironically, it was Nayakar's deep familiarity with Vaishnavism and Vedanta that made him a keen and able defender and proponent of Saiva Siddhanta against the threats posed by these traditions.

Nayakar's efforts to popularize Saiva Siddhanta against the advocates of Vedanta and Vaishnavism and his relative success reflected and mirrored the socio-political struggles that were taking place in Tamil Nadu between the dominant non-Brahmin castes and the Brahmins. That Nayakar's advocacy of Saiva Siddhanta in many ways served to empower the dominant non-Brahmin castes in Tamil Nadu is evident from his relative success. Nayakar was patronized by numerous local non-Brahmin elites including heads of Saivite mutts, rajahs and zamindars. It was with their support that he was able to devote himself fully to the cause of Saiva Siddhanta. Thus

62 Adigal describes Nayakar's conversion to Saiva Siddhanta both as an inevitable outcome and partly as a result of the opportune intervention of Madurainnayagam Pillai. In many ways Adigal in his biography of Nayakar locates the story of Nayakar's adoption of Saiva Siddhanta in a much larger story how the Tamils came to reclaim their 'real' religion in Tamil Nadu despite the attempts by the Brahmins to marginalise the Tamil Saiva Siddhanta tradition and introduce their own religious tradition.

63 Nayakar was patronized by the non-Brahmin "little King" the raja of Ramanathapuram who belonged to the Thevar caste. Also the heads of many Vellalalar led Saiva Siddhanta mutts. See Nallaswamy Pillai, Siddhanta Deepika, 1901, p. 206.

64 Nallaswamy Pillai, Siddhanta Deepika, 1901, p. 206.
the efforts of Nayakar and his disciple to propagate a Tamil Saiva Siddhanta tradition in many ways set the stage not only for a Saiva Siddhanta revival but a Dravidian cultural revival in Tamil Nadu.\(^{55}\)

**P. SUNDARAM Pillai**

It is against the background of such developments in the religio-cultural landscape of Tamil Nadu that we have to locate the emergence of the English-educated pioneer non-Brahmin Tamil/Saivite Dravidian ideologues. P. Sundaram Pillai (1855-1897), was one of the earliest to embrace and extend further the Dravidian ideology inaugurated by European scholars. It was his English education that enabled him to incorporate missionary Orientalism for his own efforts as a Saivite/Tamil revivalist. Despite his English education, he was well aware of the Saivite/Tamil revival that was beginning to gather momentum in the Tamil regions. He was also personally aware of many of its protagonists.

In the first issue of the journal devoted to the propagation of Saiva Siddhanta, *The Light of Truth or Siddhanta Deepika*, the editor J.M. Nallaswamy Pillai, a disciple of Somasundara Nayakar reflected sadly:

\(^{55}\)In many ways Nayakar's efforts at the religious level to define a unique Tamil Saiva Siddhanta tradition was paralleled by the developments in philology to demarcate a Dravidian tradition from an Aryanised one.
In the death of Sundaram Pillai, M.A., we have sustained a deep personal loss, which it is not possible to replace. Our Magazine itself was started after a good deal of consultation with him and with his promised cooperation."

In another issue of the journal, Nallaswami Pillai announcing the commemoration of the twelfth anniversary of the Saiva Siddhanta Sabha of Tiruchirapally observed: "The Sabha records with deep regret the death of Srimath Gurusami Sarma who was in fact, the founder of the Saiva Samaj, out of which the present Sabha was resuscitated and of Prof. P. Sundaram Pillai, M.A. one of the patrons of the Sabha." Thus, it is clear that Sundaram Pillai was personally engaged with the Saivite/Tamil revival that was beginning to gather momentum in the Tamil region before his untimely death.

Sundaram Pillai was perhaps the most creative and brilliant of all Dravidian ideologues. His writings reflecting a creative and bold indigenisation of the Dravidian ideology were so powerful that they set much of the ideological parameters for all later developments and elaborations of the Dravidian ideology. Sundaram Pillai was born at Alleppey, the principal seaport town of the native state of Travancore in 1855. His father Perumal Pillai, a Tamil Vellalar from

66J.M. Nallaswami Pillai, "Notes" Light of Truth or Siddhanta Deepika, June 1897, p. 22.
67 ibid., pp. 95-96.
Madurai, was a small but respectable trader in piece goods. Apparently the only child of his parents, Sundaram Pillai was sent to a Anglo-Vernacular school at Alleppey. From there he went to Maharajah's College, Trivandrum where he graduated with a B.A. in 1876 standing first among the candidates from Tiruvandrum. Soon after graduation he joined the staff of his own College teaching history and philosophy at the F.A. and B.A. level. In 1877 he was appointed headmaster of the Anglo-Vernacular School, Tirunelively, but returned to his own college in Tiruvandrum in 1879 as professor of philosophy. In 1880 he received his M.A. degree in philosophy, but left academic life in 1882, to take up an appointment as commissioner of Separate Revenue in the administrative branch of Travancore government Service. In 1855, however, he returned to Maharajah's College as professor of philosophy and remained there until his death in 1897 at the early age of forty-two.

Aside from this broad outline, there is little information available on the life and intellectual development of this extraordinary man. There is also little information

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68 He replaced his former professor Robert Harvey who had gone home to Scotland on furlough. Sundaram Pillai and Robert Harvey became quite close. Robert Harvey wrote a brief biography of Sundaram Pillai at Sundaram Pillai's death. See the brief accounts of Sundaram Pillai by his contemporaries in K.K. Pillai et al. ed. Professor P. Sundaram Pillai Commemoration Volume, Madras:SISSW. 1957.
available concerning how Sundaram Pillai cultivated his interest and proficiency in the Tamil language and Saivite religion, especially in a region where Malayalam was the predominant language. He studied Tamil during his youth with V. Narayanasamy Pillai, the same teacher who later taught Maraimalai Adigal. There were also in existence two Saiva Siddhanta organizations at Tiruvananthapuram in the 1890's during the time of Sundaram Pillai.

His most influential works were published towards the end of his rather short life. These include the first modern Tamil dramatical work in print, Manonmaniyam (1891); a brilliant research article demonstrating a higher antiquity to an important Tamil/Saivite saint entitled: The Age of Tiru Nana Sambandha (1891-92); and an epigraphical work entitled Some

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69 The fact that Sundaram Pillai arranged for Adigal to teach Tamil at a local English school in Tiruvananthapuram suggests that there must have been a significant Tamil population living there at the time.

70 According to Adigal's biographies, Narayanasamy taught Sundaram Pillai during his earlier stay in Tiruvananthapuram. See for example, M. Iracamanikam, Maraimalai Adigal, Madras: India Veliyudukal, 1951, p. 15.

71 Biographies of Adigal suggest the existence of at least two Saiva Siddhanta organizations in Tiruvananthapuram in the 1890's to which Adigal was invited to lecture while he was a teacher at Tiruvananthapuram.

72 It was republished later with the title Some Mile Stones in the History of Tamil Literature or The Age of Tiru JnanaSambhandha. See P. Sundaram Pillai, "Some Milestones in the History of Tamil Literature or The Age of Tirujnana-Sambandha", The Tamilian Antiquary, Vol.1. No.3, 1909, (Republished by Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 1986, p. xi.)
Early Soverigns of Travancore (1894)."3

His most significant work was his research article first published in Madras Christian college Magazine entitled, "The Age of Tiru Nana Sambandha" in the years 1891-92. The work had a powerful and far reaching impact on all later "Dravidian" scholarship as well as Dravidian nationalism, since it was one of the earliest attempts by a Tamil scholar with a mastery of both Orientalist scholarship and Tamil literary traditions to write convincingly and with scholarly integrity in support of the antiquity and grandness of Dravidian civilization.4

Perhaps the most important aspect of the article is that it presents in a subtle and scholarly way Sundaram Pillai's adoption and translation of Dravidian ideology in the service of a Tamil/Saivite nationalism. In the article, he established a close connection between Saivite religion and Tamil identity subsuming both under a Dravidian identity. Although the article ostensibly sought to demonstrate a higher antiquity for the Tamil/Saivite saint Tirujnanasambhanda, the article had a much wider mandate as he himself made explicit

3 Sundaram Pillai was also responsible for some excellent English translations of Tamil poetical works such as Maturaikkanci, Netunalvadai, and Tirumurukarruppadai. He also wrote a Tamil treatise on science and philosophy entitled Nurtokai Vilakam. See Kamil V. Zvelebil, Lexicon of Tamil Literature, pp. 190-92.
in the conclusion. Among the 'main purposes 'subscribed by the paper' he wrote:

It gives a birds-eye view of the sacred Tamil literature of the Saivas; It controverts the opinion of Dr. Burnell with regard to the antiquity and value of Tamil literature.; It proves the utterly unfounded nature of the hypothesis advocated by Dr. Caldwell and Mr. Nelson with regard to the age of Sambandha.; An attempt is made to trace the religious history of Southern India.; Facts are deduced to prove with the help of the latest archeological researches that Sambhanda could not have lived in any period later than the early years of the seventh century...”

In short, Sundaram Pillai sought to present a brief history of the Tamils and their Saivite religion from a Dravidian perspective. To this end, he expanded with a much greater sense of authority on the conclusions first offered by European scholars in favor of the antiquity and grandness of Dravidian civilization. In presenting "a birds eye view" of Tamil Saivite literature, Sundaram Pillai cleverly linked Saivite identity with a non-Brahmin or Dravidian identity:

...By the Saiva community, I mean the Hindus that regard Siva as the head of the Hindu trinity. Saivas, in this sense, form the bulk of the population...in short, where ever Tamil is the prevailing tongue...For all the Saivas, and particularly for the non-Brahminical Tamil Saivas, Tirujnanasambhandha is the highest authority,...The Tamil Saivas have their own system of sacred literature, compiled and arranged so as to match the

\[5^{P. \text{ Sundaram Pillai, }} ^{5}\text{"Some Milestones in the History of Tamil Literature or The Age of Tirujnana-Sambhanda", } ^{5}\text{Tamilian Antiquary, (1909), pp. 60-61}\]
Vedas, Puranas, and Sastras in Sanskrit.⁷

Although not written in an openly ideological or anti-Brahmin manner as was the case in his later writings, the article presented albeit in a subtle scholarly manner Sundaram Pillai’s own unique adaptation, translation and extension of the scholarship on Dravidian civilization produced by his European predecessors. The Dravidian identity of the Tamil/Saivites is repeatedly stressed in the article. He refers for example, to the saint Tirujnanasambhanda as a ‘Dravida child’⁸, also noting that the saints hymns were originally set to ‘Dravidian’ music. He regrets the loss of the original tunes and, much in the style of Caldwell, credited this loss to the introduction of music brought by the Aryans:

The original tunes are now mostly forgotten. They were lost in the later airs introduced by the Aryan musicians of the north. Some of the old names are still retained; but it is difficult to believe that they denote, in the new system, the same old Dravidian melodies.⁹

The strength of Sundaram Pillai’s arguments rests on the brilliant use he made of ancient Tamil literary sources. He

⁷Ibid., pp. 1-2.

⁸P. Sundaram Pillai, "Some Milestones in the History of Tamil Literature or The Age of Tirujnana-Sambhanda", Tamil Antiquarian, p. 47.

⁹Ibid., p. 5.
argued against the prevailing notion held by many Orientalists that there could not have been any significant Tamil literary production before the nineteenth century and that Dravidian literature in general was but a poor imitation of Aryan literature."

In attempting to ascribe a greater antiquity to saint Tirujnanasambhanda, Sundaram Pillai argued against the later dates ascribed by such eminent 'Dravidian' scholars as Caldwell and J.H. Nelson. However, before beginning his arguments against Caldwell's chronology of the saint, Sundaram Pillai made sure to acknowledge the debt to Caldwell. In arguing against the conclusions arrived at by Caldwell and Nelson, Sundaram Pillai relied on the work of the brilliant German epigraphist of South India, E. Hultzsch, in whose name he had dedicated the entire work. He wrote of Hultzsch:

"Even Caldwell despite his endorsement of ancient Tamil literary and religious works had assigned Tirujnanasambhanda to the end of the thirteenth century. See Kamil V. Zvelebil, Lexicon of Tamil Literature, 1995, p. 165."

"Zvelebil had remarked that this had, "enormous influence on all subsequent development of Tamil literature and cultural history, as well as on Tamil and Dravidian nationalism". See Zvelebil, Lexicon of Tamil Literature, p. 192."

"He had noted: "The loss to the Tamil language and literature by the death of this venerable Tamil scholar is really great, and it may be long before that language finds so devoted a student and so patient an enquirer as The Right Rev. Bishop Caldwell." P. Sundaram Pillai, "Some Milestones in the History of Tamil Literature or The Age of Tirujnana-Sambhanda", Tamil Antiquarian, p. 15."

"Sundaram Pillai had utilized an inscription first pointed out by Eugene Hultzsch (1857-1927) to date Tirujnanasambhanda before the thirteenth century. Hultzsch had gone to India in
It was more with a sense of relief than of gratification that I received the first intimation, from Dr. Hultzsch himself, of this extraordinary confirmation of the view I ventured to advocate...against the esteemed and then unquestioned authority of Dr. Caldwell.\textsuperscript{23}

Sundaram Pillai was thus clearly taking further the ideas and views expressed by Caldwell almost a half century earlier, albeit with the help of another European scholar. Aside from demonstrating some of the 'erroneous deductions' that Caldwell had made regarding the age of Sambhandha, Sundaram Pillai also made it a point to criticise the views of Orientalists including Caldwell who generally held Tamil literary sources to be poor sources of history.\textsuperscript{24} Criticising Caldwell's view that 'these literary records are devoid of historical implications' he argued that they do provide "a most reliable data for reconstructing extinct societies and social conditions."\textsuperscript{25} Thus, the strength of Sundaram Pillai's arguments was largely derived from his effective use of

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1886 as an Epigraphist for the Government of Madras. He was also an examiner of Sanscrit and Fellow of the University of Madras. Sundaram Pillai wrote in the preface to the republication of his work:"I owe it to Dr. E. Hultzsch to acknowledge that the inception of this dissertation is due entirely to him. But for his frequent and encouraging enquiries, it would never have been written." See Sundaram Pillai, "Some Milestones." p. 38.
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\textsuperscript{23}ibid., p. 38.

\textsuperscript{24}ibid., pp. 27-29.

\textsuperscript{25}ibid.
ancient Tamil literary sources as historical sources.

The underlying message in Sundaram Pillai’s article like that of scholars such as Caldwell, was that the exclusive reliance on Sanskrit sources and the neglect of Tamil sources had led to a distorted view of Indian history and civilization particularly the Dravidian contribution to Indian history and civilization. He observed:

Indeed, it would seem that South Indian chronology has yet to begin its existence. We have not, as yet, a single important date in the ancient history of the Dravidians ascertained... What ever else there exists or not of the ancient Dravidian civilization, there exists the Tamil language with its various dialects, including the classical dialect, now gone out of use...A critical study of this dialect...under ordinary circumstances, be held as a pre-requisite for conducting South Indian researches. But, unfortunately for reasons that cannot be here explained, critical scholarship in Tamil has come to be regarded as not essential to those researches.  

Sundaram Pillai’s mission was to encourage, like his predecessors, further research in the realm of Tamil studies. He stated in the preface to the re-publication of the same work:

I beg to express my earnest hope that other Tamil scholars in the country, with better health and more

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86In a footnote to the above passage Pillai quoted Dr. E. Hultzsch’s cynical observation:”that a colloquial knowledge of one of the vernaculars with a slight smattering of Sanskrit is sufficient for editing successfully the records of by gone times.” See P. Sundaram Pillai, "Some Milestones in the History of Tamil Literature or The Age of Tirujnana-Sambhanda" Tamil Antiquarian, p. 9.
leisure, will interest themselves in such enquiries concerning their own language and history, and push them on to wider and more positive conclusions than I have been here fortunate enough to reach. It is the hope of stimulating such continued activity in however small a degree on the part of a younger generation that constitutes my main justification for this republication.

In his Tamil dramatic work, *Manonmaniam*, first published in 1891, Sundaram Pillai took the lead in creatively embracing and adopting Caldwell's Dravidian ideology to promote a sense of Tamil patriotism and nationalism. He explained that it was written "to remove the defect" of Tamil not having a significant dramatical work like Sanskrit and English. The play which is written in verse form subtly conveys to the reader a sense of Tamil nationalism. It begins with what has become now an extremely popular poem in Tamil Nadu called "Tamilitteyva Vanakam" (Salutation to goddess Tamil).

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87 P. Sundaram Pillai, "Some Milestones in the History of Tamil Literature or The Age of Tirujnana-Sambhanda" *Tamil Antiquarian*, p. xii.


89 The play was based on the English poem "The Secret Way" from Lord Lytton's *Lost Tales of Miletus* and on the Shakespearean model. See K. Zvelebil, *Lexicon*, p. 190. The Tamil scholar Subramania Aiyar had remarked of Manonmaniyam, "Though the play contains many modern ideas about love, patriotism etc. embodied in fine language, the poetical style and atmosphere of the drama are classical. See A.V. Subramania Aiyar, *Tamil Studies*, (2nd Series), Tirunelveli, 1970. pp. 68-73.

90 In the poem Sundaram Pillai commends the antiquity and youthfulness of Tamil and other Dravidian languages and contrasts it with Sanskrit which he claims though an ancient language had died through disuse. There is in parts of the poem a subtle Anti-Arianism and anti-Brahmanism. There are also passages in the poem where he contrasts what he feels the
poem began with the lines: "Oh! Tamil: If the whole world had been yours before the birth of the Aryan tongue which contains the four Vedas, is it too much to say that ye are the first born and eternal speech." The work was received well by many scholars of Tamil at the time including, as noted, by Pope.

Sundaram Pillai also wrote a brief article based on a collection of ancient Tamil verses entitled "The Ten Tamil Idylls". It was also first published in the Madras Christian College Magazine in (1890-91). Essentially a work of literary history, it deployed Tamil literary sources and criticism to advance the cause of Dravidian languages, religion and culture. He begins the article by describing ancient Tamil verses:

They are charming portraits of nature in some of her pleasant and striking moods, and for the sobriety of thought and accuracy of representation they will bear comparison with anything in the whole realm of literature. In them critics will seek in vain for that idle accumulation of hyperbolical conceits which characterise the Tamil poems of more modern times.

universal morality found in the Tamil Thirukkural with the caste-based laws of Manu.


What Sundaram Pillai is suggesting here rather subtly is that such ancient Tamil poetry was marked by its "soberness of thought and accuracy of representation" whereas more modern Tamil poetry, due to the impact of Brahmanism and Sanscrit, was mainly "idle accumulation of hyperbolical conceits". Here one can see Sundaram Pillai taking further within the context of Tamil literature the "rationalist" criticism of Sanskrit culture that was initiated by missionaries. Sundaram Pillai continued:

> It is to be hoped that as these immortal works of antiquity become better known and appreciated, that childish delight in riotous imagination which now passes for poetic taste will, give way to a more sober-minded and judicious estimate of the true functions of poesy."

One can also notice in the article Sundaram Pillai's more direct intellectual debt to the writings of figures such as Caldwell. Writing of the popular south Indian Hindu deity, Murugan, Sundaram Pillai wrote:

> It seems not altogether impossible that Muruga was originally a Dravidian deity; and that in the course of time, when Aryan civilization found it expedient to adopt the cult of the independent nations over which it came to exercise its influence, a place in the Puranic mythology was found for the War God of the Tamils, as transformed and embellished by Aryan genius, just as in more recent times, Buddhist institutions and even Buddha himself, under the name

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of Sasta, came to be absorbed into Brahmanism."

Lines such as "Aryan civilization found it expedient to adopt the cult of the independent nations," "Buddha himself...came to be absorbed into Brahmanism" clearly reveal important elements of Sundaram Pillai's intellectual genealogy.

Sundaram Pillai did not live to articulate more forcefully or in a much more elaborate fashion many of the ideas that he had formulated regarding Dravidian civilization and culture. However, there is ample evidence that he was the central indigenous source and inspiration for almost all later Dravidian ideologues, including Nallaswami Pillai and Maraimalai Adigal. Sundaram Pillai's letters to Nallaswami Pillai towards the end of his life as well as testaments of some of his associates reveal that it was Sundaram Pillai who was the foremost 'brain child' in the indigenisation of the Dravidian ideology. In a letter to Nallaswamy Pillai dated 19th December 1896, Sundaram Pillai wrote:

I regret I have not yet been able to formulate my theory for popular conviction: but am doing what I

94Chelliah, Pattupattu, p. xxii.

95Both J.M. Nallaswamy Pillai and V.P. Subramania Mudaliar had attested to the phenomenal influence of Sundaram Pillai's in a special edition of the Tamil Antiquarian devoted to the subject of the story of Ramayana. Mudaliar especially emphasized the many ideas Sundaram Pillai had on such topics. See V.P. Subramania Mudaliar, "A Critical Review of the Story of Ramayana: An Account of South Indian Castes in Tamil", The Tamil Antiquarian, 1909, Vol.1, No.2.
can to prepare the minds of gentleman like you from Ceylon to Bangalore for the full recognition of the truth when publicly announced. The Vellalas who form the flower of the Dravidian race, have now so far forgotten their nationality as to habitually think and speak of themselves as Sudras (and even more stupidly as Vaisyas),... In fact, to tell them that they are no more Sudras than Frenchmen and that the Aryan polity of castes was the cunningly forged fetters by which their earliest enemies—the Aryans of the North—bound their souls, which is worse than binding hands and feet, might sound too revolutionary a theory, though historically but a bare fact. I have converted privately several to this opinion among the leaders of the community here and there: and I must go on with the work, sometime more in the same noiseless fashion before I can trust myself to print."

He added, borrowing the ideas if not some of the very words of missionaries such as Caldwell and Pope, that "Most of which is ignorantly called Aryan philosophy, Aryan civilization, is literally Dravidian or Tamilian at bottom."

He continued: "most of the great thinkers and great philosophers and even poets who pass for Aryan, are our men, as Europeans are now beginning to find out. Let the idea work in you and you will find enough of proof yourself. What a lamentable history is ours! It crushes my heart to think of it!"

Sundaram Pillai also expressed more frankly his views

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97ibid.
regarding the Saivite religion and its relationship to Dravidians in a letter to Nallaswami Pillai dated 31st March 1896:

...I believe the Saiva system of thought and worship peculiarly our own. With our usual complaisance we have surrendered our right to it, no less than to the temples which, you know, were originally constructed by us and administered entirely by our Kurrukal (non-Brahmin priests) and which it is now a pollution for them to enter and worship with Archanaiṣc. ‘Karayan Purredukap Pambu Kudiyirukum’ (When the white ants make a nest the snake moves in and takes over) is a significant proverb applicable in many ways to the history of the Dravidian race.’

However, what captures best Sundaram Pillai’s views regarding Dravidian civilization and culture and the obstacles in the way of a proper evaluation of its contribution to Indian civilization is the brief article he contributed to the Madras Standard, a few months before his death, on the 30th of January 1897.” The article is indeed worth citing at length here as it reveals quite conclusively how the ideas associated with the Dravidian movement germinated as early as Sundaram Pillai’s time:

The history of Indian civilization is the old story of the Giant and the Dwarf. The victories in it are the victories of the vaunting Aryan, while the wounds are the wounds of the bleeding pre-Aryan... How much of the justly celebrated Hindu philosophy, Hindu Literature and Hindu Learning may be due to

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98ibid.

99The article was written as a review of Nallaswamy Pillai’s English translation of Tiruvarut-payan (Light of Grace) and was entitled ‘Basic Elements of Hindu Civilization’.
the despised non-Aryan races of India, and how little to the Brahmins who appear long ago to have grasped the key to it, is perhaps the hardest problem that the scientific historian of India will ever have to encounter. To the people at large even the all important ethnical distinction of Aryan and non-Aryan is as good as inconceivable.

He had clearly enhanced Caldwell's claims, arguing that even "the justly celebrated Hindu philosophy, Hindu Literature and Hindu Learning" may be "due to the despised non-Aryan races of India." Writing on this theme Sundaram Pillai continued:

...How ludicrous, and yet how melancholy, are the efforts made by a Veilala, a Coorg, or a Kayasta to shuffle off the natural dignity of his own independent non-Aryan position and to pass muster as a Vaisiya, a man of the masses! It will take long, long indeed, therefore, for native scholars to shake off the shackles of current notions... Till then, we have to depend only on European research...Already with the best among the savants of Europe and America, such as Goldstucker, Muir, Max Muller... the truth has found unreserved acceptance that the ground work of Hindu philosophy is not Brahminical, that neither the doctrine of an all embracing supraconcious Brahman...is consistent or compatible with the system of ceremonials and the 'milking of gods' for the material advantages which alone the early Aryan Invader of India was capable of conceiving as religion. Most of the Upanishads--those hoary compilations which still continue to be the wonder of the world--contain internal evidences of a most unmistakable character of their origin in an altogether different tribe, red in colour as opposed to the white foreigner, but subsequently admitted into the Aryan polity under the name of Kshatriyas...and to the same non-Aryan tribe belonged Buddha--the light of the East; and of a tribe, though somewhat different, being the black one, but yet equally pre-Aryan and Scythian, was born Krishna whose divine song is so unparalleled in beauty and in truth...
Thus in Sundaram Pillai's vision the ancient Tamils were an independent highly creative community free from Brahmanism and the caste system. The anti-Brahminical passages in Sundaram Pillai's writings such as "system of...milking of the Gods" for the material advantages which alone the early Aryan invader of India was capable of..." seems to have been taken out of the pages of standard missionary critique's of Brahminical Hinduism. Sundaram Pillai's prescription for the Dravidians also reveals its debt to the writings of Europeans such as Caldwell. He wrote in the same brief article for the Madras Mail:

But the attempts to find the basic element of Hindu civilization by a study of Sanskrit and the history of Sanskrit in Upper India is to begin the problem at its worst and most complicated point. India, south of the Vindhyas, the Peninsular India, still continues to be India proper. Here the bulk of the people continue distinctly to retain their pre-Aryan features, the pre-Aryan languages, their pre-Aryan social institutions. Even here, the process of Aryanization had gone indeed too far to leave it easy for the historian to distinguish the native warp from the foreign woof. But if there is anywhere any chance of such successful disentanglement, it is in the South; and further South we go the larger does the chance grow. The scientific historian of India, then, ought to begin his study with the basin of the Krishna, of the Cauvery,...rather than with the Gangetic plain as it has been now long, too long, the fashion...

Sundaram Pillai here clearly suggested the direction for reclaiming and reviving Dravidian civilization and culture in Southern India. He continued:
It is impossible therefore, to exaggerate the value of any undertaking which endeavours in any direction to expand our general knowledge of the South—our knowledge of the ancient Dravidian civilization, Dravidian Literature Philosophy or Religion, the vestiges of which, in however altered a garb, do still present themselves at every turn. Of these, the Saiva Siddhanta Philosophy is by no means the least important. It has been justly styled by the able amiable Tamil scholar—Dr. Pope—‘the choicest product of the Dravidian intellect.’

Thus, in Sundaram Pillai’s work one can see one of the earliest examples of indigenous adoptions, reformulations and extensions of ideas that had been originally articulated by figures such as Caldwell and Pope. What is also most striking in Sundaram Pillai’s adoption of the writings of these missionary scholars is how Caldwell’s more nuanced praise of Tamil/Dravidian civilization was adopted in a much more celebratory way. One of the most important of these changes has been to drop Caldwell’s vision of the Dravidian religion as “Demonolatry overlain by a thin veneer of Brahmanism” in favour of Saivite religion and Saiva Siddhanta as the original and quintessential religion of the Dravidians. Sundaram Pillai also sought to focus the process of reclamation of Tamil civilization on Tamil literary sources. For him the sources of Tamil civilization lay

100 ibid., pp. 3-4.
101 For example, Maraimalai Adigal too had also proposed that Buddha was from a Dravidian stock and that the ancient Upanishads were the work of the Dravidians.
trapped in Tamil history and Tamil literature.

J.M. Nallaswamy Pillai

The Tamil intellectual after Sundaram Pillai to contribute most significantly to the Dravidian movement was J.M. Nallaswamy Pillai (1864-1920). He was without doubt one of the most influential figures of the Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil revival movement in South India. Nallaswami Pillai’s central concern was the revival of Saiva Siddhanta and he is rightly considered as its greatest propagandist in the modern period. However, his revival of Saiva Siddhanta also went hand in hand with his efforts to revive Tamil language and literature. Nallaswamy Pillai also took it upon himself to be the eclectic and enlightened spokesperson and representative of the Tamil people, a task which he performed conscientiously for most of his life.

Unlike Sundaram Pillai, however, he vacillated on the question of being an unqualified advocate of Dravidian ideology. He began his revivalist career by endorsing and

102 Many contemporary Saiva Siddhantists including Nallaswamy Pillai’s biographer regard Nallaswamy Pillai as one of the central figures of the Saiva Siddhanta revival movement in the modern period. His biographer goes as far to suggest that Nallaswamy Pillai along with Arumuga Navalar and Somasundara Nayakar constituted the three most important figures in the revivalism of Saiva Siddhanta in the modern period. Scholars working on this period particularly emphasize Nallaswamy Pillai’s intellectual sophistication and his crucial role in popularizing Saiva Siddhanta to the wider English reading audience. See for example, R. Srinivasan, "The Ideological Genesis." (1987) p. 9.
propagating many of Sundaram Pillai's ideas regarding Tamil civilization but towards the latter part of his life he was more modest in his assessment of the independence of Tamil civilization and Saiva Siddhanta.\textsuperscript{103} Aside from his contributions as the principal propagandist for the Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil cause, Nallaswamy Pillai's work was important in helping to link the revival of Tamil with the revival of Saiva Siddhanta in South India; a task which contributed immensely to the strength and appeal of Dravidian ideology. His efforts were especially effective in introducing and popularizing Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil culture to the wider English reading public.

Nallaswamy Pillai's Saiva Vellalar family traced its ancestry to prominent personages in the traditional social order.\textsuperscript{104} His paternal side for several generations served as high administrative officials under the local Nawabs both in

\textsuperscript{103}There was much ambiguity in Nallaswamy Pillai's revivalist efforts. Though he worked with great passion for the revivalism of Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil, his revivalist efforts were not characterized by the pronounced anti-Aryan or anti-Brahmin ideology that was typical of many Dravidian ideologues.

\textsuperscript{104}Nallaswamy Pillai hailed from a segment of a Tamil Vellalar lineage that had its origin in Kanchipuram near Madras city but which had settled in the city of Tirichirapally at least two and a half centuries earlier. Since a segment of their lineage were still living in the Kanchipuram area Nallaswamy Pillai and his family maintained contact and relations with their relatives near the Presidency capital of Madras. Having relations near the presidency capital of Madras may have been of great utility to Nallaswamy Pillai and his family's Saiva Siddhanta revivalist efforts. Most of the biographical information on Nallaswamy Pillai is derived from the biography of Nallaswamy Pillai. See K. M. Balasubramaniam, \textit{The life of J. M. Nallaswami Pillai} Tiruchirapallai: Githa Press, 1965.
the Madras region and in Tirichirapally. In keeping with their role in the traditional socio-religious order and as ardent Saivites the family maintained several temples in their home town of Thirichirapally. Although Nallaswami Pillai's paternal ancestors had come from a respectable and wealthy background, his father Manickam Pillai was a man of fairly modest means who worked as a clerk at the Police office in Tirichirapally. He received an excellent English education, advancing from his local Pial school to the S.P.G. high school in Thirichirapally and then to the Presidency College Madras for his B.A. Soon after he completed his B.A. in 1884 he entered Law College and obtained a B.L degree in 1886. With the help of a local legal luminary Subramania Iyer, Nallaswamy Pillai began working as an advocate in the

105 One was the Kammatchiamman temple near the present day Tiruvanam stock and two other Vinayagar temples near the Tirichirapally fort. The biographer adds that the family's patronage of these temples testify to the strength of Saivite tradition of this Saivite Vellalar family. ibid.

106 Manickam Pillai had five sons and three daughters, Nallaswamy being the third son. The two eldest sons J.M. Subbaraya Pillai and T.J. Madurainayagam Pillai had helped fund Nallaswamy Pillai's education. The two younger brothers J.M. Doraiswamy Pillai and J. M. Nagaratnam Pillai had often aided Nallaswamy Pillai's revivalist efforts. In fact Nallaswamy Pillai's entire family seems to have been quite helpful in Nallaswmy Pillai's revivalist efforts. ibid.

107 For his B.A. he had chosen as his special subjects Logic and Philosophy and had studied under such notable Professors of the College as Dr. B. Duncan and Mr. Bilderbeck. ibid.

city of Madurai in the year 1887. Rapidly cultivating a thriving legal practice, he soon became a prominent figure in Madurai even serving as a member of the Madurai Municipal Council. It was during this period that he took an active interest in the efforts of the Indian National Congress. After working for six years in Madurai, he was assigned to the position of District Munsiff in 1893, a position he maintained for around the next twenty years.

The vast bulk of his work as a Saiva Siddhanta revivalist was accomplished during his career as a District Munsiff. Unlike his earlier work as an advocate his work as a District Munsiff probably gave Nallaswamy Pillai the necessary leisure and a stable source of income to pursue his revivalist efforts. The fact that he worked in remote towns may have also allowed him to focus his leisure time on Saiva Siddhanta. He often ran into problems as a District Munsiff

109 He was apprenticed to a local legal luminary Sir S. Subramaniam Iyer.

110 He attended at least four sessions of the Indian National Congress held in Madras, Calcutta, Bombay and Allahabad respectively. See K. M. Balasubramaniam, Life of J.M., p. 11.

111 Nallaswamy Pillai had to abandon his private practice as an advocate as he was recommended for a position as a District Munsiff. ibid.

112 He was often transferred from place to place. His first appointment was in Tirupattur Taluk. ibid.

113 It was after his appointment as a District Munsiff that Nallaswamy Pillai began his serious study and efforts at Saiva Siddhanta revivalism. ibid.
and his services were finally dispensed with by the government around the year 1912. He then reverted to his old position as an advocate in the city of Madurai for the remainder of his life.

There were many reasons for Nallaswami Pillai’s emergence as a major Saiva Siddhanta revivalist. His birth and upbringing in a Saiva Vellalar lineage with a tradition of leadership and local influence provided a base and a direction. He was also by nature inclined toward religious and literary subjects from a young age. His biographer relates how Nallaswamy Pillai along with his close friend and class-mate Guruswamy Iyer, organized an association in Tiruchirapally called the Saiva Samajam (Saivite Association), with the objective to arrange lectures on religious topics. Another influence on his religious development was the

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114 According to his biographer Nallaswami Pillay was not temperamentally suited for his job as a District Munsiff and his services as District Munsiff was finally dispensed with by the government around the year 1912. See Balasubramaniam, The life of J.M.

115 Nallaswamy Pillai’s biographer points to many sources for Nallaswamy Pillai’s emergence as a saiva siddhanta revivalist. To begin with he emphasizes the religiosity and piety of Nallaswamy Pillai’s saiva Vellalar family background. ibid., p.27.

116 ibid.

117 The meetings of the association was held at a local Saivite temple known popularly as the Naganathar Temple. Apparently the organization functioned up until the time Nallaswamy Pillai left Tirichirapally for Madras to pursue higher studies. See Balasubramaniam, The life of J.M. p.28.
lectures of a prominent religious figure from Trivandrum, Venkatagiri Sastri. Sastri’s Saivism was most likely an eclectic and inclusive form of Saivism that integrated many traditions and schools of thought.

It was however, Nallaswami Pillai’s exposure to Somasundara Nayakar, after his move Madras that seems to have decided his career as a Saiva Siddhanta revivalist. He acknowledged this in the introduction to his first major work on Saiva Siddhanta: “I may also say that my explanation of the text has the full approval of several orthodox pandits of whom I can mention Sri La Sri Somasundara Nayakar of Madras, to whom I am largely indebted for his lectures and books and pamphlets for the little knowledge of Saiva religion and philosophy which I may possess.”

Despite being exposed to the teaching of Nayakar around the early 1880’s it is only around 1894, that Nallaswamy Pillai began to embark on a serious study and dissemination

118ibid., The life of J.M. p.28.

119 Nallaswamy Pillai’s biographer describes Sastri as a first-rate religious lecturer of the latter half of the 19th century. ibid., p.28.

120He had also added, “Of course, I must not omit to mention my obligations to Brahma Sri Matakandana Venkatagiri Sastrigal, the great Saiva preacher from Malabar who is a Siddhanta, and a follower of Sri Neela Kanta Acharya”. J. M. Nallaswamy Pillai, Sivagnana Botham fo Meikanda Deva: Translated with notes and introduction. Madras:Sri La Sri Somasundara Nayagar, 1895, p. ix.
of Saiva Siddhanta. During the intervening years Nallaswamy Pillai was no doubt influenced by the growing interest in Tamil literary and religious works which had emerged by mid-nineteenth century. He was widely read and there is little doubt that he was aware of much of the literature that was being increasingly published on Tamil religious and literary themes.

Like, Sundaram Pillai, Nallaswami Pillai sought to revive and empower Tamil language, religion, literature and culture. His work also represents one of the earliest responses of the English-educated non-Brahmin Tamil/Saivite intellectuals to the writings of Orientalists and missionaries concerning Dravidian civilization. It also represents one of the earliest attempts to indigenise and take further the insights gained from this scholarship. Nallaswamy Pillai made this explicit as his aim for his journal:

Our aim is no less than to transplant on Indian soil some of those activities in the field of Indian Religion, literature and history which are carried on in far off countries by Western savants and to stimulate indigenous talent to work and achieve a moderate share of success in these departments... We have considered it a shame that we should be coached in our Veda and Vedanta by German Professors on the banks of the Rhine and the Ouse and that an American from a far off country should be the first translator of the foremost work in Tamil philosophy and that an old Oxford Professor should sit poring over the Tamil 'word'

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121 ibid., p. 31
and render it into English verse...Noble examples of these. May we follow...

His revivalist efforts were mainly channelled through the monthly journal he founded in 1897 entitled *Light of Truth or Siddhanta Deepika* in English and Tamil. Although the Tamil version lasted only for around a year, the English version survived, at times irregularly, almost until his death in 1920. Aside from his numerous contributions to the journal, Nallaswamy also published two major works of translation of important Saiva Siddhanta texts. In addition to his literary endeavours, he was also constantly engaged in numerous organizational efforts to propagate Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil.

His first major undertaking was the English translation of the central text of the Tamil Saiva Siddhanta school, *Sivajñana Botham*. There had been only one previous English translation of the work, by the Reverend H.R. Hoisington, (1801-1858) an American missionary attached to the Vattukottai seminary in Jaffna. Hoisington's translation was published a half century earlier in 1854. Nallaswamy's introduction to his own work reveals not only the pioneer nature of his revivalist efforts but also how much it owed to

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the earlier writings of European Christian missionaries.

Writing of his work in his introduction, Nallaswamy Pillai observed:

Very few Pandits could be found in Southern India who are able to expound the text (Sivajnana Botham) properly even now. For several years it was in my thoughts to attempt a translation of this work...when I had fairly begun my translation, I learnt from a note in Trubner’s Sarva Darsana Sangraha that a previous translation of this work existed and hunting out for this book, I chanced upon an old catalogue of Bishop Caldwell’s books and I subsequently traced out the possession of Bishop Caldwell’s book to Rev. J. Lazarus, B.A. of Madras who very courteously lent me the use of the book and to whom my best thanks are due. I have used the book to see that I do not go wrong in essential points and in the language of translation.  

The pioneer nature of Nallaswamy Pillai’s revivalist project is apparent from his statement that “Very few Pandits could be found in Southern India who are able to expound the text properly even now.” He also relied on Caldwell’s copy of Hoisington’s work. It reveals that these pioneer revivalists were working within a rather small intellectual circle. In the preface to the same work Nallaswamy Pillai also commented on his anxiety over the ‘sort of reception it will meet’. He was however, encouraged by the fact that:

Within the last two or three weeks I have come across three important publications, which have

prepared the public mind, here and in England, for an appreciative study of Tamil, Moral, Religious and Philosophical writings. I refer to the Rev. Dr. Pope's paper on 'Ethics of Modern Hinduism', Professor P. Sundaram Pillai's Some Milestones in the History of Tamil Literature' or 'The Age of Tirugnan Sambandha' and the recent article of the Rev. G.M. Cobban in the Contemporary Review, entitled 'Latent Religion of India'.

The passage above reveals that Nallaswamy Pillai's work was emerging in an intellectual climate that was made more conducive by the works of European missionaries such as Pope and Cobban and indigenous intellectuals like Sundaram Pillai. In the introduction to his English translation of another important Saiva Siddhanta work Sivajana Siddhiyar, Nallaswamy Pillai took the time to reflect more generally on the genealogy of his revivalist efforts:

I may be pardoned for entering into these personal details as there was hardly any bibliography on the subject in English before I commenced my work. The original translation of Sivajnana Botham and Siva Prakasam by Rev. Hoisington and that of Sivajnana Siddhiyar by Dr. Grauling was published more than forty or fifty years ago, but they did not seem to have attracted the attention of European and Indian scholars. About the time I commenced my work Rev. G.M. Cobban was familiarizing the Madras readers with his translations from Saints Pattinattar and Tayumanavar published in the Christian College Magazine. Dr. Pope's long promised Tiruvacagam only appeared in April 1900. And since then, the subject has received considerable attention at the hands of Christian missionaries like Rev. Mr. Goudie, Rev. Mr. Goodwill and Rev. Mr. Schomerus and their contributions appeared in the Christian College

124J.M. Nallaswami Pillai, Sivajnana Botham. (Preface unnumbered)
Magazine, Harvest Field, Gospel Witness, etc."

It is evident from the above passage that the revival of Saiva Siddhanta was aided significantly by Christian missionary participation and support. The passage above also makes clear that the pre-Caldwellian attempts to introduce Saiva Siddhanta in mid-nineteenth century had largely failed to arouse much interest among both “European and Indian scholars” in Tamil Nadu. Thus it was towards the latter part of the nineteenth century, well after the publication of Caldwell’s magnus opus, that the revival of Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil began to gain momentum in South India.

Nallaswami Pillai’s principal efforts were directed at foregrounding Southern Hindu religious tradition and culture which he felt was overlooked by an exclusive reliance on North Indian sources. He wrote:

The wonder however is why in spite of the Antiquity of Religion and Philosophy, and the vastness of its literature in Tamil and Sanskrit, it (Saiva Siddhanta) has attracted the attention of so few Oriental scholars. The reason is not far to seek. Most of the European scholars from Sir William Jones lived in northern India, and the school of philosophy that was brought to their notice was that of Sri Sankara and that of Saktaism...However the views of these Oriental scholars mainly influenced those in Europe so much so that in the course of time, Hinduism has been identified with the Vedanta of Sankara, in the European mind; and

with the revival of learning in India itself, this has also acted on the Hindu mind...\textsuperscript{126}

Here Nallaswami Pillai, aside from explaining how Saiva Siddhanta came to be neglected also revealed his awareness of how the Orientalist vision had in turn "acted on the Hindu mind", with "the revival of learning in India". This certainly suggests the extent to which Indian revivalists were aware of the power of Orientalist scholarship on India. Nallaswami Pillai's efforts were directed at correcting this one sided and "erroneous" representation of Hinduism. By doing in the religious realm what Caldwell had done in the linguistic one, he sought to privilege the Saiva Siddhanta tradition of South India over the neo-Vedantic tradition generally associated with Brahmanism and northern traditions.

As a Saiva Siddhanta revivalist it is hardly surprising that Nallaswamy Pillai was a great friend and admirer of Pope. Pope was a regular contributor to his journal \textit{Light of Truth or Siddhanta Deepika}. In an article contributed to the very first issue of the journal Pope observed of Saiva Siddhanta:

\begin{quote}
To the European student this mixture of philosophy and religion presents an exceedingly interesting field of investigation; since no non-Christian system so nearly resembles Christianity... The Saiva Siddhanta system itself is the choicest (pure South
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{126}Nallaswami Pillai, \textit{Sivajnana Siddhiyar}, pp. iv-vii.
Indian product of Dravidian intellect and ought to be studied by all who seek to influence the Tamil mind.

With such a recommendation it is hardly surprising that Nallaswami Pillai attempted through his journal to attract greater attention for the work of Pope. He even attempted to serialize the life and work of Pope in his journal. Pope wrote to Nallaswamy Pillai after the publication of his own exhaustive translation of the work Tiruvacagam: "I shall not derive any pecuniary profit whatsoever from the book, though scholars like Max Muller have been abundantly enriched as a reward for their Sanskritic studies. Tamil should not bring misfortune to those who study it." He also once wrote to Nallaswamy Pillai: "I am very much in agreement with what you write; but I cannot endure either the Theosophists or the


128 Nallaswami had written in the introduction to the post-humus publication of a few articles of Pope: "I was in correspondence with the late Dr. Pope about bringing out an adequate account of his life and works and he wrote to me to say that he left this duty to be performed by his sons, and Mr. J.V. Pope has kindly undertaken this pious duty and has promised to send me installments of the 'life' from June next and this I hope to publish in the Siddhanta Dipika." See The Tamilian Antiquary, Vol.I, No.VI, 1910, p.1.

Buddhists...".\(^{30}\)

On the death of Pope Nallaswamy announced in his journal:

It is with deep sorrow, we record the passing away of this great Tamil scholar, Missionary and Saint...his name was familiar to us, to most Tamil students from our youth as Popayyar...we have been in close correspondence, and we feel his loss most, as that of a personal friend. But the loss to the Tamil land and literature is immense. He loved the Tamil people and their literature. He was the greatest living scholar, among the living or the dead...

Nallaswamy ended his obituary announcement with the following words:

if he was born in the old days, he would have been catalogued with the 63 (Saivite) Saints. His service to the Saivite religion and Siddhanta Philosophy are incalculable as he was the first to bring its importance to the light of the English speaking world. May his soul rest in Sivam!\(^{31}\)

What perhaps best reveals the complex genealogy of Nallaswamy Pillai’s revival project is the statements he had made a few years after founding his journal:

The nature of our work and its scope and latitude may be summed up in the brief epigram, ‘Siddhantam matter in the Siddhantham manner for the Siddhantins’...If this feverish wish of ours be realized, and our journal be instrumental in doing ever so little to rouse the dormant minds to their sense of duty and make them feel the benevolent duty of Saivism in the Universe, and the dethroning

\(^{30}\)Cited in Nallaswamy Pillai’s introduction to a republication of a few of Pope’s article. See The Tamilian Antiquary. Vol.1, No.VI, 1910, p. 2.

of the devil (Pasa) by the love of God (Patignana) then and not till then we will boldly be able to assert that we have in a measure achieved that task we originally imposed on ourselves through our desire to serve, aye, if need be, to be crucified for Saivism, Amen.132

Most of Nallaswamy Pillai's writings first appeared in the journal *Light of Truth or Siddhanta Deepika*, the principal organ of his revivalist efforts. Founded to coincide with the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria's reign, the journal generally adopted a fairly pro-British stance in its pages. In the first issue there was an article entitled "A Diamond Jubilee: A Benediction" in which he praised Queen Victoria and asserted that the Tamils "are better off to-day in some respects and our Mother Empress (God Bless Her) is all hale and strong".133 Though the journal was intended primarily to be the voice and organ of the Tamil Saivites, it maintained a high scholarly and literary standard and was quite eclectic and cosmopolitan in character. The contributors aside from Indians included European scholars and Christian missionaries.

The journal's primary constituency is also reflected in the message to the queen by the head of a prominent-Vellalar led Saiva Siddhanta mutt in the inaugural issue of the

132 *ibid.* (highlighted by me)

journal:

His Holiness the Ambalavana Pandara Sannadhi of the Tiruvavuduthurai Mutt, Kumbakonam, has sent a telegram to the Queen, in which His Holiness "begs to approach Her Majesty's throne on behalf of himself and the numerous disciples of the Saivite community of Southern India...Various charitable functions and public festivities have been organized by His Holiness in memory of the occasion. Amongst other things, is to be established a permanent Chattrum and water pandal at Kumbakonam..."134

The journal also fastidiously observed and noted many of the developments pertaining to Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil studies in its pages. Accounts and transcripts of the proceedings of various Saiva Siddhanta organizations, lectures as well as descriptions of various functions, festivals and gatherings related to Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil were regularly noted in its pages. For example a notice in the first issue read: "The Trichinopoly Saiva Siddhanta Sabha celebrated its 12th anniversary and the Royal Jubilee yesterday..."135 In addition, books and articles relating to Saiva Siddhanta and Hinduism were regularly noted and often reviewed in its pages.

Although the main focus was on Saiva Siddhanta, it was accompanied by a broad Tamil revivalist agenda. This agenda

134ibid., p. 22.

135ibid., p. 22.
is evident in a close reading of Nallaswamy Pillai's description of the aims of the journal:

Our journal will devote itself to bring out translations of rare works in Sanskrit and Tamil, both literary and philosophical and religious...to bring into the Tamil all that is best and noblest in the literature and philosophy of the west, to supply to it, its deficiency in the field of science and history...Greater attention will be paid to the Languages and history of South India and the Dravidian Philosophy and religion will find their best exposition in its pages; and in this respect it is intended to supply a real and absolutely important want."

The journal consistently advocated the revival of vernacular languages and literatures of Southern India particularly that of the Tamil language and literature and often sought the support of government and public patronage towards this end. In the third issue of the journal, Nallaswamy Pillai in an article entitled "Importance of Early Dravidian Literature" utilized the words and ideas of figures such as Earnest Gover, Sir Walter Elliot and Sundaram Pillai to urge for a "resurrection of Tamil literature". Echoing the words of Reverend Caldwell he observed:"my purpose in this communication is to express a hope that some of the alumni of the Madras University may be induced to explore its recesses, in the hope of throwing light on the normal(Dravidian)

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literature, manners, customs... of their own land; following
the example of their distinguished countrymen in Bombay and
Bengal."

However, unlike many later Dravidian ideologues, he did
not wish to alienate the Tamil Brahmins in the process. His
strategy was to include the Brahmins in the revival and thus
noted in the same article Brahmin sympathy and encouragement
for his revivalist venture by publishing the words of a
"valued Brahmin friend": "We have vast treasures of wisdom
locked up in our ancient Tamil literature...The glamour of
the Sanscrit literature still holds sway of the public mind
both Indian and foreign. The field of Tamil is completely
neglected. The resources of money and labour one can secure
should be entirely devoted to the resurrection of the Tamil
literature..."

English translations with commentaries especially of
ancient Tamil literary "gems" by both European and Tamil
scholars regularly appeared in the journal. Books, articles
and journals pertaining to Tamil studies were regularly noted
and reviewed in its pages. For example, the publications of
the great "rediscoverer" of Tamil works, U.V. Swaminatha

137J.M. Nallaswami Pillai, "Importance of Early Dravidian Literature." Siddhanta
Deepika, Vol.1, No.3. p. 61.

138Nallaswami Pillai, "Importance of Early Dravidian." Siddhanta Deepika, Vol.1, No.3.
p. 61.
Aiyer, as well as his services to the cause of Tamil were noted in the journal: "Every moment he could spare from his hard drudgery at College, he devotes to his labour of love in recovering long lost works from almost a heap of debris of old cadjan leaves."

In many ways Nallaswamy Pillai's journal sought to provide a broad forum and voice for the various efforts that were undertaken for the revival of Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil beginning in the latter part of the century. In the September 1897 issue for example, he reproduced an earlier announcement in the July issue of the Tamil journal Vivekachintamani for improving "Tamil". After noting that the July issue was "prefaced with the full portrait of the late lamented Rao Bahadur Professor P. Sundaram Pillai" Nallaswami Pillai listed the recommendations made. They included:

To form a committee of able scholars selected from among officers and pensioners and to entrust them a fund for the improvement of the Tamil language; The committee to undertake the publication of correct editions of ancient Tamil works... and to award scholarships to really able men devoted to the culture of Tamils; To increase the pay and prospects of Tamil pundits in schools and Colleges; The University to institute an examination for Tamil pundits and to grant degrees..."

He also included the following announcement: "Our readers may be aware that many of these suggestions were also put forward

by us in our last issue, but to expect that any progress will
be made in these directions without the hearty cooperation of
Government and the University is perfectly futile."i:

Thus, the successful albeit at times irregular
publication of the journal aside from reflecting Nallaswami
Pillai's important role in the Dravidian revival movement
also reflects the emergence by the last decade of the
nineteenth century of a significant number of Tamil scholars
and laymen interested and engaged in the Tamil/Saivite
revivalist effort. The majority of them belonged to the
higher non-Brahmin Tamil/Saivite castes.

Thus by the turn of the 20th century a significant number
of scholars were emerging in Tamil Nadu who were not only
engaged in building upon the Saivite/Tamil revival that had
first originated in Jaffna, but sought to combine it with the
call for an anti-Brahmin, Dravidian cultural renaissance that
had been inspired by the writings of European missionaries
and scholar officials. This chapter has attempted to trace
the intellectual, religious and socio-cultural background of
these efforts by looking, in particular, at the work and
writings of Somasundara Nayakar, Sundaram Pillai and
Nallaswami Pillai. Their writings are important not only

1897, p. 95.
since they laid the intellectual and ideological basis for a
Dravidian cultural revival in Tamil Nadu but also because
they profoundly molded the intellectual development of one of
its most ardent exponents, Maraimalai Adigal.
PART II

THE LIFE AND CAREER OF MARAIMALAI ADIGAL, 1876-1950.
Chapter Three

The Formative Years 1876-1898

*History is the essence of innumerable biographies.*
Thomas Carlyle, *On History* (1830)

Vedachalam Pillai, popularly known by his “pure” Tamil name, Maraimalai Adigal was the central ideologue of the Dravidian movement. It was through his life and work that the ideas inaugurated by the pioneer Dravidian ideologues found their most forceful, passionate and popular expression. Adigal greatly extended, elaborated and refined the ideas of these pioneer ideologues to construct a Tamil nationalist ideology that despite its celebration of all non-Brahmin Tamils reflected the values, concerns and pre-eminence of the higher non-Brahmin castes. Most of the pioneer Dravidian ideologues--many of them older contemporaries of Adigal--directly or indirectly played a significant role in Adigal’s life and work. It is in all these senses that Adigal was a central figure in the development of Dravidian and Tamil nationalism in South India. This section, through a detailed analysis of
the life and career of Adigal seeks to illuminate the significant factors, personalities, groups and institutions involved in the making of a major Dravidian ideologue and in the construction, articulation and popularization of Dravidian ideology.

Adigal was born in the year 1876, only twenty years after the publication of Caldwell’s famous philological work and on the eve of an emerging Indian nationalism. He was born at a time when English educated Indians were increasingly turning toward re-interpreting and reviving their own traditions and cultures in light of the western impact and European scholarship. Adigal’s birth and early youth coincided with the remarkable efflorescence in Tamil literary and cultural activities that began gaining momentum by the latter half of the nineteenth century. Although a “Tamil renaissance” had begun by mid-century, especially in neighboring Jaffna, it was only towards the last few decades of the century—during the period of Adigal’s childhood and youth—that it began gaining momentum.

Adigal’s early years laid much of the foundation for his future role as a major Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil revivalist

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1The year 1876 was also the year that the Indian Association was founded in Calcutta. It was an early precursor to the Indian National Congress founded around a decade later. Other prominent figures born around this time were Aurobindo Ghose (1872) and Mohamad Ali Jinnah (1875).
and as a central Dravidian ideologue and propagandist. His family, caste background, mission education, early exposure to ancient Tamil literary works and Saiva Siddhanta provided him with the necessary foundations for a such a career. During his early years Adigal also came into contact with most of the pioneer "Dravidian" ideologues and Tamil and Saiva Siddhanta revivalists in Tamil Nadu. They not only inspired him to work for the revival of Tamil and Saiva Siddhanta but also influenced the way he shaped and articulated this revival. They included his Tamil teacher V. Narayanasamy Pillai, the pioneer Tamil Dravidian ideologue P. Sundaram Pillai, Adigal's guru and Saiva Siddhanta revivalist, Somasundara Nayakar and a major revivalist of Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil, J.M. Nallaswami Pillai. Adigal's early cultivation of Tamil and Saiva Siddhanta coupled with his exposure to such important revivalist figures gave him the necessary foundation and inspiration to launch himself as a major spokesman and propagandist for Saiva Siddhanta, Tamil and Dravidian nationalism.

Birth and Family Background

Maraimalai Adigal, was born on the 15th of July 1876 in the coastal village of Kadampady just two miles north of the ancient port city of Nagapattinam. The city of Nagapattinam is
located approximately one hundred and fifty miles south of the

city of Madras on the coast of Tamil Nadu. Adigal’s father

Chockanatha Pillai, belonged to the Soliya Vellalar caste.

Most accounts describe him as a fairly successful and

respected man in his village. Some describe him as a medical

surgeon with a successful practice and another house in the

City of Nagapattinam. Although it is unlikely that

Chockanatha Pillai was a Western-trained surgeon it is quite

probable that he was a fairly wealthy man. As a Soliya

Vellalar, he may have owned some ancestral lands in the

area. Adigal’s mother Chinnammai belonged to the Senai

Talaivar Chettiar caste. Adigal’s own account of his


3 The biography of Adigal by M. Iracamanikam suggests that Chockanatha Pillai was a wealthy landlord. See M. Iracamanickam, Maraimalai Adigal, Madras:India Veliyudukal, 1951, p. 9. Adigal while residing in Madras in his early twenties occasionally referred in his diaries to his mother’s visits to Nagapattinam to inspect the harvest from their lands. Adigal kept a diary in English from 1898 to 1950. Adigal’s diaries are unpublished and are available at the Maraimalai Adigal Library in Madras city. Adigal’s diaries will be referred to in the dissertation as "MMAD", a shortened form for "Maraimalai Adigal Diaries."

4 This information was obtained on a research visit to Nagapattinam in 1994 where I met some of Chinnammai’s relatives. The Chenai Thaliavar Chettiar caste has some local prestige as one of their caste members was regarded as a local saint Arukkavi Alagamuthu Pulavar whose image is installed in a local Murugan temple, Kumarak Koil in Nagapattinam. See R. Athikesavap Pillai, Thiru Nagaik Kumarak Koil Ennum Meikandamurthy Varalaru,(The History of Meikandamurthy at Nagai Kumara Temple) Nagapatinam:Nagai VaaraValipadu Manrathinar, 1975.
background\textsuperscript{5}, as well as the various biographies available of Adigal, only refer to Chockanatha Pillai's Soliya Vellalar caste genealogy and do not mention Chinnammai's background or caste.\textsuperscript{6}

As a powerful landowning agricultural caste, and next in ritual rank only to the Brahmins in the Tamil region, the Vellalar caste played a dominant role in Tamil society and culture. The Soliya Vellalar, a sect of the Vellalar caste are considered to be the "original" indigenous peasantry of the Chola country and are the largest Vellalar subcaste of the Tanjavur region.\textsuperscript{7} Among the various Vellalar subcastes in Tamil Nadu, the Soliya Vellalar probably hold a middle rank.\textsuperscript{8}

The Chettys are principally a trading caste. The Senai


\textsuperscript{6} There is little detailed information available on Adigal's early life beyond the bare outlines provided by the extant biographies. Much of it of course wrapped up in hagiographical prose.

\textsuperscript{7} According to Thurston the Soliya Vellalar are in turn divided into three subsect, the Vellan Chetties, Kodikals and Kankanilnattars, who do not intermarry. It is not certain which subsect Adigal's father belonged. See Edgar Thurston. \textit{Castes and Tribes}. Vol.VII, p. 375.

Thalaivar Chettiar subcaste most likely owes its origins to its earlier role as military officers in local states. They do not rank as high as the Vellalar caste in Tamil society nor do they enjoy the same prestige that the Vellalar caste has acquired as a result of its long history of dominance in Tamil society and culture. The power and prestige that the Vellalar caste continues to maintain in Tamil society is reflected in the emphasis given to Adigal’s father’s caste background and the neglect of his mother’s caste background in the extant biographies of Adigal.

Chockanatha Pillai is described as a dark, sturdily built, handsome man while Chinnammai is described as a beautiful fair skinned woman with a regal appearance. Chinnammai, who was much younger than Chockanatha Pillai was Chockanatha Pillai’s second wife and Adigal was the only child of their union. Adigal had at least two step-brothers and a step-sister. He was born when Chockanatha Pillai was in his sixties and

\[\text{This descriptions of the appearance of Adigal’s parents are from Thirunavukkarasu, Maraimalai Adigal, pp. 1-2.}\]

\[\text{This information again was gleaned from my research trip to Nagapattinam in early 1994, where I interviewed Chinnammai’s relatives.}\]

\[\text{This is corroborated by Adigal’s reference to the existence of at least two brothers and a sister in his diaries. Adigal refers to a brother, Arunchalam Pillai, a step brother Kalyanasundara Mudaliar and an elder sister in his diaries. Adigal refers to them in connection with attending his brother’s daughter’s wedding in 1899. See MMAD, 1899.}\]
Chinnammai was in her forties. Adigal was given the name Vedachalam Pillai, the suffix Pillai here indicating his father's caste genealogy. According to most accounts, Adigal was named after the presiding deity Vedacalam (mountain of Vedas) at the sacred Shiva temple at Thirukkalukunram to which Adigal's mother journeyed to perform various penances to conceive Adigal.\textsuperscript{12} He later changed this Sanskritic name Vedachalam to the "pure" Tamil one of Maraimalai Adigal around the year 1916 when he launched his campaign for pure Tamil.

\textbf{Nagapattinam at the Turn of the Century}

Nagapattinam and its environs, where Adigal spent most of his early life, no doubt played a significant role in molding his personality, vision and outlook. By the latter part of the century, Nagapattinam and its environs reflected in its ethnic composition, social structure, institutions and architecture a blending of traditional Brahminical as well as local cultural forms along with a variety of cosmopolitan cultural influences that was in keeping with its history as a port city.

Historically, Nagapattinam was the main port city of the

\textsuperscript{12} Thirunavukkarasu, Maraimalai Adigal, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{13} Although there is no way of verifying the story one cannot help appreciating how the story serves to cast a hallowed aura over Adigal's birth at the same time as it serves to deflect questions about why Adigal was born so late in the life of his parents.
region known as Tanjavur. The Tanjavur region encompassing the river Kaveri is the most fertile area in Tamil Nadu. As a result it has also been the most prosperous and densely populated region, and has provided the socio-economic and cultural basis of Tamil civilization’s greatest royal dynasty, the Cholas. The Chola empire which reached its zenith around the twelfth century C.E. was founded on a successful collaboration between the dominant warrior/cultivating castes of the region and Brahmins. The Brahmins were endowed with lands in the fertile Tanjavur region in exchange for their role in a complex process of cultural fusion and diffusion that legitimized warrior/landed caste primacy as well as propagated under their patronage a curious blend of local Tamil as well as Brahminical/Sanskritic learning and culture.

One of the legacies of this feature of Tanjavur history is that Brahmins and Brahmanism are nowhere more numerous and powerful in the Tamil region than in the Tanjavur area. After the demise of the Cholas around the thirteenth century C.E. the Tanjavur region was ruled by a succession of rulers including the Nayaks of Vijayanagara, Muslim and Maratha rulers. The region was annexed by the British in 1799 and by 1855 the British had effective control of the entire region.

14 Burton Stein presents this thesis in his work. See Peasant, State and Society in Medieval South India. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1980.
Having long been a center of largely Hindu/Tamil imperial power and patronage, the Tanjavur region was left with certain marked socio-cultural legacies. The region is rich with magnificent Hindu temples and mutts. There is also a marked conservatism in matters of religious rituals, ritual purity and caste exclusiveness. Many scholars attribute this marked religious and social conservatism to the preponderance of Brahmins and Brahmanism in the Tanjavur region. In addition the dominant non-Brahmin landed cultivating castes in the region, the Vellalars have adopted much of the Brahminical norms and Sanskritic life-style and culture.

Belonging to the Tanjavur cultural complex, Nagapattinam too shares many of these socio-cultural legacies. The city of Nagapattinam itself has two large historic Hindu temples. The majority of the temples are Saivite temples revealing the dominance of the Saivite tradition in the area. In fact, Nagapattinam has even been referred to in the Saivite literature as Sivarajadani (Royal ground of Siva). The most ancient of Saivite temples in Nagapattinam and one which Adigal and his family patronized a great deal was Nagai Neelayathatchi Amman Koil. The temple holds an important place in Saivite history and hagiography due not only to its long history but also due to the fact that a great number of canonized Saivite saints over the years graced it and sung its
praise. More recently, prominent Saivite figures such as Meenatchi Sundaram Pillai, Ramalinga, Kodaka Nallur Sundarar swamy and Somasundara Nayakar were associated with this temple.¹⁵

Being the main port city for the region, Nagapattinam has in addition enjoyed a much more complex and cosmopolitan history. Even the early Tamil sources depict Nagapattinam as a wealthy port city with a tradition of learning.¹⁶ Being a port city, Nagapattinam long enjoyed the settlement of diverse trading communities and embassies from places as far afield as Arabia, East Asia, South East Asia and Sri Lanka even before the Europeans began arriving by the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In addition to the exchange of goods, the traders brought along with them their religious and cultural influences. For example, the Muslim population in Nagapattinam, estimated to be around 20 percent, owes its origins to the Muslim trading communities that had begun playing a significant role in the oceanic trade as early as


¹⁶M. Iracamanikam provides a brief account of the cosmopolitan religious history of Nagapattinam in his biography of Adigal. He asserts that the famous medieval Saivite saint Sekkilar had referred to Nagapattinam as a mirror to the civilizations of the world. See M. Iracamanickam, Maraimalai Adigal, pp. 1-8.
the medieval period. Nagapattinam was also known as an important center for Buddhism.

The Dutch took over Nagapattinam from the Portuguese in the year 1660 and made the city the headquarters of their trade on the Coramandel coast. By 1781 Nagapatinam passed into British hands. This long history of European presence ensured in addition a strong European and Christian influence in the city. The earliest missionaries were Portuguese Roman Catholics who began arriving in the latter part of the sixteenth century. Protestant missionary influence began with the beginning of their first mission in the neighboring port of Trangébar in 1706. However it is really from the beginning of the nineteenth century that Protestant missions began to exert a strong and persistent influence in the Nagapattinam region.

These diverse cultural influences on Nagapattinam and its long cosmopolitan history clearly had a significant impact on local society and culture. A detailed anthropological study of


18 According to S. Manickam between 1552 when Francis Xavier the first Portuguese missionary arrived in India and 1706 when the first Protestant missionaries arrived the Roman Catholics carried on extensive work among the Tamils through the famous Madura mission founded in 1606 by Robert de Nobili. This mission's work extended from Madurai to Vellore and from Tanjavur to Satyamangalam near Coimbatore. See S. Manickam, *The Social Setting of Christian Conversion in South India*. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1977, p. 39.
Tanjavur villages in the 1950's by the anthropologist Kathleen Gough found that the residents of coastal villages around Nagapattinam displayed a much more secular world view and in general were more relaxed in matters of ritual purity and caste rules compared to their brethren closer to the Kaveri basin. She also found that the coastal villages around Nagapattinam were more likely to be controlled by non-Brahmin Vellalars and Chettiars than Brahmins. Gough attributes the more secular outlook and greater sense of freedom displayed by residents in areas such as Nagapattinam on the eastern region of Tanjavur to the more cosmopolitan history of this region.

At the time of Adigal's birth in 1876, Nagapattinam was one of the six British administrative subdivisions of the Tanjavur District. It also served as the main railway terminus and workshop for the Southern Indian Railway system. As a fairly important administrative subdivision and as the main Railway terminus Nagapattinam had a significant European population. It was however, no longer an important trading port. The newly constructed port of Tuticorin further South deprived Nagapattinam of much of its oceanic trade. The oceanic

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19 See Kathleen Gough, Rural Change, p. 353. Kaadampady where Adigal was born a few miles north of the city of Nagapattinam is a coastal village. Like many such villages in the Tanjavur area the topography is flat consisting mostly of level alluvial soil interspersed here and there with coconut and palmyra trees. Much of the land is utilized for rice cultivation. The area is largely devoid of forests except for patches of shrub land.
trade that was still conducted was mostly in the hands of Chetty and Muslim traders and was largely with Sri Lanka, South East Asia and Burma. In terms of economic activity Nagapattinam by the latter part of the nineteenth century was a declining town. In terms of literacy, however, the Tanjavur region including Nagapattinam was next only to the city of Madras. According to the 1901 census 10.1% of the population could read and write. However it was mostly male literacy, the gender break down being 20.3% males and 0.9% females.

Adigal’s Early Life

Like many Tamil families in Nagapattinam, Adigal’s parents were Saivites. Although some accounts suggest that Adigal’s parents were ardent Saivites, it is more than likely that their religiosity was of the kind that was fairly typical of an average middle class Tamil family with Saivite leanings. Adigal’s father seems to have played little more than a symbolic role in his life. He was brought up mostly by

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21 Imperial Gazetteer of India, 1907, p. 240.

22 M. Iracamanikkam suggests that Adigal’s parents were ardent Saivites and that Chcokanatha Pillai in particular was well versed in the Saivite Thirumurais. See Iracamanikkam, Maraimalai Adigal.
his mother and her relatives. Adigal himself makes little reference to his father in his diaries or writings aside from the brief reference he makes to his father’s Vellalar genealogy and wealth in his account of his early life.

Chockanatha Pillai was quite old when Adigal was born, and died when Adigal was still a child. In addition, Chockanatha Pillai must have shared his responsibility for Adigal and his mother with that of his other wife and children. The accounts vary considerably in their estimate of Adigal’s age at the time of his father’s death. They range anywhere from the age of two to twelve. Whatever may have been the accurate date of his father’s death, we may be fairly certain that Adigal’s father was significant in Adigal’s life largely as a symbolic figure and by his absence.

The lack of paternal care and attention was somewhat assuaged by Chinnammai’s devotion to Adigal. He was after all

23 Almost all the available accounts including Adigal’s own, stress the fact that he was brought up under the sole guardianship of his mother.

24 Many years later, close to his fiftieth year Adigal returned to his ancestral village and observed: “In our return journey from Nagore we went to see at Kadampadi the spot where my father Sri Sockalingam Pillai and our ancestors lived; the very face of the spot with its palm grove had completely changed. I viewed it with a melancholy heart; gave Rs. 1 in charity to my late step-brother Mr. Vyapuri Pillai’s girl by his concubine.” See MMA Diary entry for 10th March 1924.

25 Adigal’s biographers vary in the age they ascribe to Adigal when his father died. M. Iracamanikkam places it at age two. Thirunavukkarasu places it at age twelve while Alagaradigal places it at age eight.
her only son. The available accounts including Adigal’s own, suggests that it was Chinnammai who took on the entire responsibility for bringing up and educating Adigal. There is much to suggest that Adigal grew up very much under the shadow of Chinnammai. The brief accounts of his early childhood available certainly point towards Adigal as very much a “mummy’s boy”. They depict him as a rather shy solitary bookish little boy not given to playing with other children or in groups. 26

Adigal is also described as standing apart from other children by his generally clean, neatly dressed, well groomed and studious appearance. One biographer describes how Adigal from a very young age would follow closely his mother’s religious rituals. How he would rise early with his mother, take his morning ablutions with her, sit with her during morning prayers and accompany her to the temple sporting the sacred ash of a devout Saivite. 27 He seems to have maintained many of these early traits all throughout life. He was always very particular about his diet, personal hygiene and health. He was also very neat and tidy and took great care over his personal appearance as well as his personal possessions.

Thus accounts of Adigal’s early life indicate a rather

26 Thirunavukkarasu, Maraimalai Adigal. p. 2.
27 Iracamanikkam, Maraimalai Adigal. p. 11.
shy, solitary and highly imaginative boy given to reading rather than playing in groups. It is quite possible that Adigal’s parents different caste backgrounds, Chockanatha Pillai’s dual commitments and early death had a significant impact on Adigal. Given the rigidity and endogamous nature of caste in South Asia and given the fact that most marriages there involve not just the two individuals but entire families the possibility for conflicts and tensions are enormous in even the most successful inter-caste marriages.28 The possible effects of these conflicts and tensions on a particular child would be too hard to predict with any degree of accuracy and would in any case vary with the individual case. In general however, one could speculate that it may lead to increased feelings of insecurity in children brought up by parents of inter-caste marriages. If this was indeed true in Adigal’s case, it would have compounded the insecurities Adigal must have felt at his father’s divided commitments and early death.

Adigal’s family background and early life may help explain some of the character traits that are particularly evident in Adigal’s later years. From a psychoanalytic perspective one can speculate that children with backgrounds such as Adigal’s may be more prone to feelings of greater

28Even much later in life Adigal noted the fact that he and his wife lacked any "loving" relatives. See MMAD.
insecurity and anxiety in later life. It is possible that such early backgrounds have the potential to produce individuals who often attempt to transcend their feelings of insecurity through an escape into the life of the mind and imagination or alternatively engage obsessively in sensual gratifications.

One could also speculate that children of such intercaste marriages as Adigal may be more predisposed to developing more inclusive identities for themselves that transcend the more narrow conflicting caste-based identities of their parents, identities which in a way seek to bridge the gap between the conflicting aspects of the parents' identities. Adigal's life long preoccupation with fashioning a modern Tamil identity and his general antipathy toward the caste system and Brahmanism could be seen as deriving at least part of its motivation from such a source. One of the more enduring personality characteristic of Adigal that is evident from his diaries is a sense of a perennial dissatisfaction and restless energy, which he seems to have largely channeled into intellectual, literary pursuits and sensual gratification.

Adigal's Education

Like his early life there is little information available on Adigal's education apart from the fact that he was sent to the Anglo-vernacular Wesleyan mission high school in
Nagapattinam from an early age. According to one of his biographers Adigal attended a "traditional" Pial school before being sent to the Wesleyan mission school. Although it is not clear when exactly Adigal began attending the high school it is certain that it was around the early 1880's. He left the school in 1894 at the age of eighteen after having completed the fourth form. It was at the Wesleyan Mission High School that Adigal received what was to be his only formal English education.

Although most accounts including Adigal's own account of his experience at the school are quite brief and perfunctory there is little doubt that the education he received at the school exerted a profound and enduring influence on his life and career. During the 1880's when he attended the school, the Anglo-Vernacular Wesleyan Mission high School in Nagapattinam aimed at providing a superior English education with a view to attracting the higher classes and castes of the area. Much of the missionary aims of the school was directed at inculcating in the students a deep appreciation for Christianity and English culture through the study of selected works of English literature and philosophy. The school had among its staff many great missionary educators of the time. Although there is

29M. Iracamanikkam states that Adigal was sent to a neighboring Pial school at the age of five before being sent to the Wesleyan Mission High School. See Iracamanikam, Maraimalai Adigal, p. 11.
little detailed information available on Adigal’s career and experience at the school, the accounts available of another important Tamil revivalist figure who attended a sister school around the same time suggests that such a mission education often exerted a powerful formative influence.

Thiru Vi. Kalyanasundara Mudaliyar, (Thiru Vi. Ka.) who later became a Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil revivalist as well as one of the most popular non-Brahmin Indian nationalist figure in the Tamil region was also a product of a Wesleyan mission high school. He attended the sister school, the Wesleyan mission high school in the city of Madras a decade or so later and left a fairly detailed and candid account of his early life and education in his autobiography. Thiru Vi Ka wrote of his experiences at the mission school as foundational for his later engagement with what he termed “Indian national service”. He wrote of the many teachers both European and Indian Christian for whom he developed a great admiration and with whom he cultivated very close relationships. He also narrated how it was the wife of a Tamil Christian teacher at the school who first inculcated in him a taste for Tamil grammar. She had achieved this through teaching him Tamil.

30 Since he is generally referred to as “Tiru Vi Ka,”(a shortened version of his name) in the Tamil scholarly community, henceforth he will be referred to as that. See T. V. Kalyanasundara Mudaliyar, Thiru Vi. Ka Vazhkkai Kuri (Thiru Vika Notes on Life), Madras:SISSW. 1982.
grammar from the book on the subject by Reverend G.U. Pope.\textsuperscript{31}

Writing of his close and intimate relationships with many of his European teachers, he recounted the death of one of his favorite teachers, the principal Mr. G.G. Cox, as a great personal tragedy for which he sought consolation by regularly visiting his grave stone.\textsuperscript{32} Tiru Vi Ka also attributed his liberal views on caste to his experiences as a teacher at the Thousand Lights Wesleyan mission school whose students were predominantly drawn from the lowest castes. He had noted in his autobiography that "it was the Christianity that the Wesleyan mission gave me that formed the inspiration for my work in the service of the Indian nation."\textsuperscript{33}

Another teacher with whom Thiru Vi Ka developed a close bond was Krisnna Rao who was a Telugu Brahmin convert to Christianity. He described his love for Krishna Rao as beyond words and observed, "Krishna Rao lived within me and I lived within Krishna Rao."\textsuperscript{34} Observing how he and Krishna Rao would hold long debates on every subjects including religious subjects he noted that these discussions broadened his vision and almost changed his life. Without stating it literally, he

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{31}Kalyanasundara Mudaliyar, \textit{Thiru Vi. Ka}, p. 42.
  \item \textsuperscript{32}ibid., p. 45.
  \item \textsuperscript{33}ibid., p. 203.
  \item \textsuperscript{34}ibid., p. 45.
\end{itemize}
strongly hinted that he might have embraced Christianity as a result of his mission education and his close relationships with the teachers there. He was, however, saved, he asserted, from this crisis by the timely appearance at the school of N. Kathiraver Pillai, a Tamil pundit and ardent propagandist of Saiva Siddhanta.

Kathiraverpillai was a disciple of the Jaffna revivalist Arumuga Navalar and was at this time a major propagandist for Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil in Madras. It was Kathiraverpillai’s lectures and sermons that drew Thiru Vi Ka away from the school and possibly from the brink of Christian conversion and launched him in his career as a Saivite/Tamil revivalist and Indian nationalist. Thiru Vi Ka even conceded that his Christian teachers were aware of what was happening to him and had warned him: “Kathiravel is a fanatical religious demon. This demon will also possess you and your education will be destroyed. You are a student! So beware!” Thiru Vi Ka’s description of his experience at the Wesleyan mission school strongly suggests that at least some students of mission schools at this time came face to face with a crisis of religio-cultural identity.

Thiru Vi Ka’s descriptions of his experiences at the mission school also suggest that it was foundational for

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35 See Kalyanasundara Mudaliyar, Thir Vi Ka, p. 46.
broadening his vision of the world and for the cultivation of an interest and engagement with literary, religious, philosophical and artistic subjects. His autobiography is quite unwittingly full of anecdotes that support the thesis that English education was the main inspiration for the modern Tamil cultural renaissance. Thiru Vi Ka’s description of his experience at the Shakespeare Club organized by the editor of Madras Times, "Klin Barlow" is a case in point. He wrote: "(in the club) both English and Indian scholars would analyze the heavenly poetry of Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Shelly, Keats, Byron, Coleridge and Tennyson. Pure nectar would rise...They would nourish my body and my spirit". Describing the origin of his interest for art, Thiru Vi Ka noted quite revealingly: “Once I went with European missionaries to visit Mahabalipuram. A Scottish lady stood motionless beside a statue of an elephant, fully absorbed in the statue. The scene attracted me. The seed for art was planted within me. On the return trip the lady lectured us on art. From thence on I became fanatically devoted to art.”

Although Adigal’s experience at the mission school may not have been as intense or as memorable as Tiru Vi Ka’s, the education that Adigal received at the mission school, much as

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36 See Kalyanasundara Mudaliyar, Thir Vi Ka, p. 46. (My translation)

37 See Kalyanasundara Mudaliyar, Thir Vi Ka, p. 86.
in the case of Thiru Vi Ka, was instrumental in broadening his vision and developing in him a taste for and engagement with literary, religious, philosophical and artistic subjects. As with Thiru Vi Ka, Adigal’s mission education no doubt laid an important foundation for his revivalist efforts in Tamil and Saiva Siddhanta. As one of Adigal’s biographers confirms, Adigal’s skills in debating, public speaking, as well as researching and writing on literary and historical themes, he developed while he was a student at the mission school.

Adigal’s own account of his experience at the Wesleyan Mission High School is quite brief and perfunctory. This may have been due to his need to present himself as an “authentic” Saivite revivalist. According to his brief account, he began attending the school from a very young age. He wished to learn both English and Tamil at the school and the level of mastery and skill in both languages won for him many prizes from the principal of the school. Adigal also claimed that he soon developed an interest in reading more advanced works in English and Tamil and became increasingly disenchanted with the less advanced prescribed text books at the school. He also maintained that he was regarded as a very studious and

38See M. Iracamanickam, Maraimalai Adigal.

39 Adigal provided this brief account of his early life and education as part of the collection of essays which he published called Cinthanaik Katuraikal, (Reflective Essays). See Maraimalai Adigal, Cinthanikk Katturaikal, Madras:SISSW.1980, pp. 63-64.(first edition, 1908)
intelligent student by both the teachers and fellow students alike.

Continuing his narrative of his early life, Adigal noted that by the age of sixteen, he developed a great interest in learning advanced Tamil and since the level of Tamil taught at the school was unexceptional he sought out a local Tamil pundit and bookseller V. Narayanasamy Pillai from whom he began to learn ancient Tamil grammar and literature systematically. In the same year Adigal, with a view to encouraging Tamil and Hinduism among the students of the school, he founded and ran with great enthusiasm an association called the Indu Mathaabimana Sangam (Hindu Loyalist association). Adigal concluded his brief account of his early education by relating that a year after his marriage in 1894, when his first child was born, he felt that his mother could no longer support all of them and left the “English” school with the intention of procuring a job.

Although Adigal’s account of his education at the mission school is rather brief one can infer that he was exposed to a broad English literary curriculum. His boast of receiving prizes for both English and Tamil at the school and his interest in more “advanced works in both Tamil and English” also suggests the strong influence of the school. Adigal’s search for a traditional Tamil pundit outside of the school
and his founding of the *Indu Mathabimana Sangam* parallels Tiru Vi Ka’s attraction for his Tamil teacher and Saiva Siddhanta mentor Kathiraverpillai. Thus, Adigal like Tiru Vi Ka seems to have rediscovered his own tradition at least in part as a result of his experience and reaction to the mission school.

There are also many other parallels between the educational experiences of Tiru Vi Ka and Adigal. It is most likely that Adigal developed his keen interest in writing, debating and public speaking during his school days itself. He probably cultivated these interests from participating at the various English and Tamil literary associations and debating societies at the school. One of Adigal’s biographers, Iracamanickam, quite perceptively foregrounds his experiences at the school in the development of his career as a Tamil Saiva Siddhanta propagandist. He suggests that Adigal acquired the practice of thoroughly researching the topics on which he would write or speak from the school library. Iracamanickam also suggests that Adigal would often attend the meetings and lectures of various Tamil and English literary/cultural associations in the Nagapattinam region.

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The Wesleyan Mission High School, Nagapatinam

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41 *ibid.*, pp.12-14.
The Anglo-Vernacular Wesleyan Mission high School in Nagapattinam, probably the first of its kind outside Madras at the time it was founded, has a long and interesting history. It was founded by the Methodist Missionary James Lynch in 1823. The school which began as a primary school with only six students, was gradually upgraded to a middle school, high school and finally to a College status, although the College was later moved to neighboring Mannargudi. From its inception the missionaries who ran the school were clear about its role and purpose: to propagate the Gospel. From the beginning when the school was only a primary school the curriculum was decidedly Christian. A contemporary scholar, S. Manickam, working on the nineteenth century Methodist missions in the Thanjavur/Trichinopoly area observed of these schools:

The schools were opened and closed with prayer by the missionary in charge. In the mornings scriptures were read and explained to the pupils. They also learnt by heart Wesley’s Catechism, the Ten Commandments, the Creed and the Lord’s Prayer and

42 The Methodist mission and school in Nagapatinam was founded by the Methodists in their bid to extend their sphere of operation from Northern Sri Lanka to South India. One of the reasons for the choice of Nagapatinam was that it was ideally situated beside the ocean highway between the two countries. In fact many Methodist missionaries including James Lynch came to Nagapatinam after having served some time in Northern Sri Lanka, bringing with them the experiences they had gained there. See Sundararaj Manickam, The Social Setting of Christian Conversion in South India, Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1977, pp. 47-48.

43 This information is also found in the current Wesleyan Mission High School student calendar. The school is now called Church of South India High School. See Church of South India High School Student Calendar, 1992-93.
repeated with accuracy and fluency a number of passages from the Bible. In addition they were taught secular subjects such as English, geography, writing and arithmetic, Nigandus and Kural.\textsuperscript{11}

Over time the school was gradually upgraded to meet the increasing demands of the students. By the 1850’s its policy makers began to centralize resources in order to provide a superior English and vernacular education to attract the higher classes and castes of the Hindus.\textsuperscript{12} The central reason for this mission policy was the missionary attempt to utilize for their own purposes the great demand for English education that arose as a result of the policy of the colonial government to offer those Indians with a sound English education appointments in public services.\textsuperscript{13} Many mission educators firmly believed that the only way to woo the higher classes and castes into the Christian fold was through a superior English education.

Thus by the 1880’s when Adigal was a student, the school adopted the policy of providing an excellent standard of education albeit with a decidedly Christian purpose and perspective. The school like most mission schools at the time

\textsuperscript{11} Manickam, \textit{The Social Setting}, p. 122. Nigandu as Manickam explains is a "metrical gloss" containing synonyms and meaning of words."

\textsuperscript{12} Manickam, \textit{The Social Setting}, p. 141.

\textsuperscript{13}\textit{ibid}. 
attempted to ensure that all the teaching staff were Christians, though this was not always possible. Many of the students came from influential families in the area. They were largely drawn from the higher castes and classes. The majority were Brahmins although there were a significant number of students from the higher non-Brahmin castes such as the Vellalars and Chetties. At the College level however, the Brahmins formed the vast bulk of the students. The students at the high school were taught with the view to preparing them for the Matriculation exam that was administered by the University of Madras.

In keeping with its mandate for excellence the High School in Nagapattinam attracted some distinguished missionary educators. One such figure was Reverend William O Simpson who took charge of the school in 1856 and did much for its reputation. Manickam described Simpson’s impact:

In 1856 the Rev. William O. Simpson took charge of the English school at Nagapattinam. Soon the fame of the new teacher spread, and Brahmins and young men of other castes clustered eagerly around the Rev. Simpson. He stimulated them to study western literature, science and the Bible. His broad mind and deep sympathy and his genial humour at once began to win for him an extraordinary influence over

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48 Manickam provides a breakdown of the distribution of students from the various communities attending the Protestant Colleges in Madras Presidency in the 1880’s. *ibid.*, p. 225.

49 *ibid.*, p. 141.
his students... Some interesting cases of baptism from the upper castes were recorded.\(^5\)

Manickam’s brief description of Simpson’s impact underscores the tremendous impact that missionary educators had on the minds of Indian students. Many of the missionary educators were very effective teachers. They took great pains to study local languages and traditions and were in addition deeply sensitive to the cultural, intellectual, spiritual and economic needs of their students. In the 1880’s when Adigal was a student, the school had one of the most outstanding missionary educators in South India, Reverend Hare Findlay who took charge of the school in 1882. Findlay was a “distinguished M.A. graduate of Oxford and London Universities.”\(^6\) He soon became widely respected for the quality of his scholarship and as an excellent educator. He was made the first principal when the high school was raised to the status of a College. A mission chronicle observed of Findlay:

As a Christian teacher and head of a missionary College, no man in South India has, in a similar sphere and during the same time, done much to win for Christianity the admiration and reverence of Hindu students, or succeeded further in impressing a manly Christian stamp on the young lives of those

\(^{50}\)Ibid., pp. 141-142.

\(^{51}\)Ibid., p. 149.
who passed under his influence.\(^5^2\) Findlay had such a powerful impact on the school and its students that even after the students moved on to study at places such as Madras they were still referred to as 'Findlay’s students'.\(^5^3\) It is fairly certain that he was at the school throughout much of Adigal’s schooling there.

There were many ways in which missionary educators in schools such as the Wesleyan Mission High School, Nagapattinam sought to provide an excellent education while at the same time communicate Christian ideals, beliefs and perspectives to their students. The school curriculum was often designed keeping in mind the larger missionary goal of winning students to Christianity. Some missionary educators felt that the teaching of European sciences, literature, history and philosophy by itself would eventually lead to the dismantling of the whole social and religious edifice upon which Hinduism rested. Others preferred a more direct approach.

The increasing role of government in all spheres of education especially from the 1880’s onwards meant that it was more difficult for mission schools to teach Christian religious instructions to non-Christian students directly.


\(^5^3\)When the College was later moved to neighboring Mannargudi in 1898 Findlay transferred to Manargudi. Manickam, The Social Setting, p.150.
These developments as well as the missionary fear of a Hindu backlash made many missionary educators to be less direct in their teaching of Christianity. Subjects such as English literature, history and philosophy were often utilized for the purpose of teaching Christian ideals, beliefs and perspectives. The authors of the prescribed books were often carefully chosen on the basis of how well their writings conveyed the teachings, principles and beliefs of Christianity. So much so that many of the students knew much of the teachings of Christianity without ever having read the Bible. 

Many mission educators who taught in such elite mission schools and colleges also began to emphasize the long term Christian benefit of their schools to the community at large rather than count their dividends based on the number of individual conversions. These missionary educators began to see their schools and colleges as places from which Christian ideals and principles were being disseminated gradually to the society at large through the medium of their students. Such missionary institutions played a leading role in the intellectual transformation of society in India. They were often places where many of the issues of the day were debated.

by students and staff alike. The Reverend William Miller, Principal of Madras Christian College expressing his views on the role of Christian colleges observed:

The best things of all would be if in any important center the Christian College could take the foremost place. If it could thus be the leading factor in the guidance of thought and feeling, the leavening factor of the great society might be antedated by generations.  

W.H. Findlay too had a similar perspective:

The steadily pursued aim of the District policy has been to spread through this mass of caste Hinduism the leavening influence of Christian education and Christian literature, while at the same time seeking a hearing, as far as might be, for the direct appeal of the Gospel. Wide dissemination of truth, aiming at the gradual transformation of the community as a whole, has been preferred to methods that would give more rapid numerical results.  

The "Christianized" attitudes and views of Hindu students including Adigal, who graduated from such schools confirm the success of such missionary educational policies.

Hindu Opposition

As with most mission activity in South India, the Wesleyan mission and Wesleyan Mission High school in Nagapattinam and surrounding areas experienced a great deal of opposition from the local Hindu/Tamil population. This is

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56ibid.
hardly surprising given the fact that the Tanjavur region historically was the heartland of Brahminical Hinduism in South India. A missionary working in the Tanjavur/Trichinopoly area for several years observed sadly:

It has almost become a common place in our missionary literature that the Negapattiam and Trichinopoly District is 'the most stony ground in India'...In our district we have a type of Hinduism to deal with which is not found in most other places. The influence of Western civilization has not wrought such great changes in the thoughts and habits of the people as it has in more Northern districts. Brahmanism still holds, practically undisputed sway over the minds of the people."

The strong and persistent opposition to Christian missions and their agenda in the Tanjavur region made another missionary remark, "that the conversion of just a few high caste Hindus in Tanjavur was of greater significance for the Christianization of India than the conversion of a whole village of Shanars (A caste whose traditional occupation involved toddy tapping) of Tinnevelly."\(^5\) According to S. Manickam it was in Nagapattinam that the Wesleyan Methodist missionaries encountered the most persistent and systematic opposition from the earliest times. As early as 1837 efforts were made by influential Hindus in Nagapattinam to destroy

\(^5\)Cited in Manickam, *The Social Setting*, p. 79.

\(^6\)ibid.
Christian literature and books obtained from the mission. Although Manickam does not provide us with a chronological account of the opposition, it is clear from his writing that Hindu opposition to the missionary agenda only got worse with time:

In Negapattiam, the most systematic and persistent opposition was encountered. Frequently the Hindus of that town had large processions headed by a camel or elephant in order to break up the worship held in mission premises. Rival Hindu meetings were held in close proximity to those of the missionaries, and the most determined efforts were made to draw away the congregations. Twice during the year 1884 Negapattiam and its neighborhood were flooded with tracts and handbills...

There were many similar incidents of opposition and at times open hostility to missions, missionaries and mission schools in the Tanjavur area, stimulated by what S. Manickam calls 'Aryan' or Hindu Revivalism which began to gain momentum towards the end of the nineteenth century. There is no doubt that these events created in the minds of the local population a certain degree of suspicion and distrust of missionaries and their agenda.

The Wesleyan mission High school in Nagapattinam too suffered set backs as a result of these and similar incidents. In the 1860’s the Wesleyan schools in Nagapattinam and

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59 Ibid., p. 114.
60 Ibid., p. 72.
Mannargudi were entirely disrupted for a time over the demand for separate seating arrangements in the schools for children belonging to the Parayar caste. In the 1870's the school lost more than half its students who left to join a rival Hindu school founded solely as an alternative to the mission school. The inspector of school observed of the incident:

This school was examined on the 26th and 27th September, 1877, under the very unfavorable circumstances, as about two months previously no fewer than 147, or more than half the strength of the school at the time, had during a certain panic induced by certain proceedings on the part of the temporary manager of the school, deserted to join a 'Native High School' whose establishment was due to those proceedings. The majority of those boys being Brahmins, the school was deprived of the best part of its intellect. The results of my examination was nevertheless moderate, good on the whole.

In the 1880's when Adigal began his education, the controversies and tensions that such events generated were no doubt still very much in the air. Although there is no reference to them in Adigal's own account of his early life or in the extant biographies, Adigal was no doubt exposed to the debates and polemics that the missionary challenge sparked in the local population. He after all was growing up in a period in the latter part of the nineteenth century when the Hindu backlash against the missionary challenge was gaining

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61ibid., p. 125.
62ibid., p. 142.
momentum not only in the Nagapattinam region but all over India. Adigal’s founding of *Indu Mathaabimana Sangam* reflects his own engagement with these conflicts. It is in the context of this conflictual religious and intellectual background that Adigal’s early life and education has to be located.

**Adigal’s Early Mentors**

Adigal began to associate with important figures spearheading the revival of Tamil and Saiva Siddhanta in Nagapattinam from a very early age. His early interest and association with such figures inspired and influenced him to a large extent in his career as a Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil revivalist. Madurainayagam Pillai (1851-1920) of Thirisirapuram, Tirichirapally was one of the earliest and most important mentors. Madurainayagam Pillai who belonged to the Vellalar caste was related to the celebrated early nineteenth century Saivite/Tamil poet Meenatchisundaram Pillai. He is considered to have been related to the famed nineteenth century Tamil poet, pandit and Saivite, Thirisirapuram Meenakshisundaram Pillai. He was also on close friendly terms with many of the students of this famed poet such as Thiyagaraja Chettiar as well as other great Tamil pandits.
religion “and with the help of a local “big man” and Saiva devotee in Nagapattinam, Veerappa Chettiar, he founded at Nagai the Nagai Velippalayam Saiva Siddhanta Sabai.” This Saiva Siddhanta association, through the significant role it played in the life of Adigal and his guru Somasundara Nayakar, played an important role in the revival of Saiva Siddhanta in South India.

Although it is not exactly clear when Madurainayagam met Adigal it must have been at a fairly young age. According to one of Adigal’s biographers, Alagaradigal, Madurainayagam befriended Adigal and his family when Adigal was five years old. He asserts that Madurainayagam acted very much as a guide and father figure for Adigal after Adigal’s father’s death. By doing so he alleviated to some extent Adigal’s mother’s burden.” Although many of the extant biographies of Adigal do not underline the decisive role Madurainayagam played in

64Most of the information on Madurainayagam Pillai was obtained from the brief biography of him written by Adigal’s later patron Thiruvarangam Pillai in the work Maraimalaiyadigalar Pamanikkovai. See Maraimalai Adigal, Maraimalaiyadigalar Pamanikkovai. Madras:SISSW. 1976,(first edition), pp. 103-108.

65Veerappa Chettiar, considered a big man in Nagapatinam, is associated with one of the early Saiva organization in Nagapatinam called the Muthi mandapam Thévara Thirukootam(Hymn Association of Muthimandapam). He is also considered to have been a friend of Arumuga Navalar of Jaffna and Meenakshisundaram Pillai. See Alagaradigal, Maraimalaiyadigalar Varalatru Matchi. Madras:SISSW. 1977. p. 287.

66Ibid., p. 286.
Adigal's early life and career, there is little doubt that he played a central role in Adigal's early immersion in Tamil and Saiva Siddhanta.

The significance of Madurainayagam becomes more apparent when we recall that most of Adigal's important early mentors and patrons including Adigal's Tamil teacher V. Narayanasami Pillai, Saivite patron Veerappa Chettiar and Saiva Siddhanta guru Somasundara Nayakar were prior associates of Madurainayagam Pillai. Veerappa Chettiar who was a local 'big man' and philanthropist was an active patron of Saiva Siddhanta and the first president of the Nagai Velipalayam Saiva Siddhanta Sabai. He had earlier founded a Saivite organization called Thevara Thirukootam (Saivite Hymn Association) in Nagapattinam. Revealing again the connection between Jaffna Saivite revival and Tamil Nadu revival, Veerappa Chettiar was is considered to have been a friend of the Jaffna revivalist Arumuga Navalar.\(^6\)

According to Alagaradigal, it was Madurainayagam Pillai in consultation with Narayanasamy Pillai who decided that it would help Adigal to be introduced to Veerappa Chettiar. According to this account, Veerappa Chettiar was impressed with Adigal and had helped and encouraged him a great deal.\(^7\)

\(^{6,7}\)Ibid.

\(^{6,8}\)Ibid., pp. 287-88.
Adigal was also later introduced to his Saiva Siddhanta guru, Somasundara Nayakar through the good offices of Madurainayagam Pillai.

Madurainayagam's central role in Adigal's early life is also confirmed by Adigal's reaction at his death. At the news of Madurainayagam's death, Adigal noted in his diary: "Mr. Paramasivam wrote the death of his father Sri Math Madurainayagam Pillai Avargal who was my old friend from my young days and who was an important person in molding my mind and leading me in the path of virtue and Saiva Siddhanta...I was deeply moved at the news of his death..."

Thirunavukkarasu's biography of Adigal also confirms Madurainayagam's significant role. He suggests that Madurainayagam played almost a parental role for Adigal noting that in his own young days a day would not pass at their home without some talk about 'Ameena Aiya' (Madurainayagam Pillai) and that at Madurainayagam's death his parents reacted as if they had lost their own parents. The poems Adigal composed to mark Madurainayagam's death also confirm the central role he played in Adigal's life.

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69See MMAD entry for the 8th of April 1920.

70Thirunavukkarasu, Maraimalai Adigal, pp. 102-104.

"The poems are quite moving and reveal Adigal's great sense of loss and grief. In one particular verse Adigal wondered how useless he would have turned out if not for the wise guidance of Madurainayagam Pillai, and in the same poem, Adigal also attributes his move away from
Adigal and Narayanasamy Pillai

Beginning in his sixteenth year, Adigal began to learn Tamil systematically from V. Narayanasamy Pillai. Narayanasamy who belonged to the Kallar caste was a Tamil pandit and book store proprietor in Nagore and Nagapattinam. His bookstore contained almost all the ancient Tamil works that were available at the time. Narayanasamy is reputed to have studied Tamil literature under the famed Tamil/Saivite poet Thirisirapuram Meenatchisundaram Pillai and grammatical works under Muthuveeraya Upathiyayar. The pioneer Dravidian ideologue, Sundaram Pillai as well as the famous Nagore Muslim poet and pandit V. Gulam Kathiru Naavalar also studied Tamil under Narayanasamy Pillai. Narayanasamy Pillai was well versed in many of the ancient Tamil works available at the


Maraimalai Adigal, Cinthanaikkaturaikal, p. 63. According to Alagaradigal, Adigal began learning Tamil from Narayanasami Pillai from the age of ten. He had begun studying more advanced Tamil works from the age of sixteen. See Alagaradigal, Maraimalai Adigalar, pp. 286-87.


Arasu, Maraimalai Adigal, p. 9-10. According Iracamanickam, It was during Narayanasamy Pillai’s brief stay at Thiruvandrum (Thiruvankaar Seemai) that Sundaram Pillai studied under him. See Iracamanickam, Maraimalai Adigal, p. 15.
time and like many great pandits at the time was also famous for his ability to recite by heart many of the classical works.⁷

According to Adigal’s own account, he studied with Narayanasamy Pillai from his sixteenth to his twenty-first year, during which time he mastered many of the ancient Tamil grammatical and literary works. He studied such ancient Tamil works as Tolkappiam, Iravanar-Agapporul, Pattupatu, Kalitogai, Silapathikaram, Seevaka Sinthamani and Saivite works such as, Periyapuram, Thirusitrampala Kovaiar, and Thanigai Puranam.⁷⁷ Many of these works were recently “recovered” ancient Tamil works.

Despite the significant role that Narayanasamy Pillai played in Adigal’s life there is little information available on Narayanasamy Pillai. Adigal’s enthusiasm for the ancient more “pure” Tamil works may have been due to the influence of Narayanasamy. The fact that Sundaram Pillai and Adigal, both former students of Narayanasamy, turned out to be ardent Dravidianists also suggest that Narayanasamy may have been

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⁷⁵ According to Iracamanickam, Narayanasamy Pillai was well versed in grammatical works such as Tolkappiam, Sangam works such as Purananuru, medieval Tamil works such as the Thirumurai’s and early modern works such as Itihasa Purana’s.

⁷⁶ Iracamanickam, Maraimalai Adigal. p. 15.

partly responsible for their Dravidianist leanings. The fact that Narayanasamy belonged to the Kallar caste may have had some impact on the way he viewed, interpreted and taught Tamil. The Kallar though a fairly well-to-do non-Brahmin martial/agricultural caste in the Tanjavur region, as a result of being traditionally associated with the thieving profession and highway robbery, rank well below the Vellalar castes. Kallar are also found in the Madurai region where they go by the name of Paraimalai Kallar.

The Tanjavur Kallar were generally classified as landholders by the British whereas the Paraimalai Kallar of the Madurai region were classified as one of the criminal tribes. There is little doubt that despite the fact that the Kallar in the Tanjavur region largely pursued agriculture they nevertheless suffered from the popular image of Kallar as a thieving caste. Given Narayanasamy Pillai’s caste status, it is quite possible that he preferred the less

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78 Sivathamby also suggests this in his work. See, K. Sivathamby, Tanittamil Iyakkaattin Araciyat Pinnani,(The Political Background of the Pure Tamil Movement), Madras:Chennai Book House, 1979, p. 39.

79 Thurston suggests that in the Tanjavur region, the Kallar as a result of their profitable agricultural practices look almost like the Vellalar in their appearance and dress. Thurston’s account suggests that this was not always the case. See Edgar Thurston, Castes and Tribes., Vol.III, pp. 53-91.

80 Much of the above information on the Kallar caste was obtained from V, Karuppaiyam, Kinship and Polity: A Study in Socio-Political Organization Among the Upland Kallars of Thanjavur District in Tamil Nadu, University of Madras, 1990, p. 108.
Brahminical/Sanskritised ancient Sangam period and literature of the Tamils where such things as the inequities of caste were less evident.

Adigal and the Indu Mathaabimana Sangam (Hindu Loyalist Association)

It is from Adigal’s sixteenth year, the same time as he began studying under Narayanasamy that Adigal established the Indu Mathaabimana Sangam (Hindu Loyalist Association)—an organization to promote Hinduism and Tamil among the students. These two initiatives both beginning in the same year suggests that they may have been taken by Adigal with a common goal in mind. A thorough mastery of Tamil was important in gaining an understanding of many of the religious texts of the Tamils. Adigal may have undertaken a systematic study of Tamil with a view to becoming somewhat of an authority in Tamil religious works, especially the Saivite works. He may have undertaken these initiatives under the guidance of Madurainayagam Pillai.

The fact that Madurainayagam Pillai was a devout Saivite and that he was studying Tamil Saivite works under Narayanasamy Pillai suggests that Narayanasamy Pillai too may have been a Saivite or at least someone who was partial to it.\footnote{Alagaradigal, Maraimalai Adigalar. p. 287.}
suggests that Adigal by the age of sixteen was involved with a group of people who were Saivite or Saiva Siddhanta revivalists. They were men such as Madurainayagam Pillai, Veerappa Chettiar and Narayanasami Pillai. These men exerted a significant influence on Adigal’s early life and vision. In many ways Adigal can be seen as their protege.

According to the extant biographies, Adigal would teach many of the works he learned from Narayanasamy Pillai to his fellow students in the Indu Mathabimana Sangam which he founded and ran. The title of the organization, "Indumathaabimana Sangam, (Hindu Loyalist Association) as well as the fact that it was founded in opposition to the mandate of the mission school suggests that the association’s objective was to defend Hinduism against the onslaught of Christian proselytization in the school. The significance of Tamil in the association reveals that it emphasized a more Hindu/Tamil response to the Christian threat. Thus it is quite likely that the association was intended to promote a Saivite alternative for the students at the Christian Mission School. Adigal may have been guided and influenced in these efforts by his Saiva Siddhanta mentors. It is important to recall here that Adigal was also an active member of the Nagai

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Velipalayam Saiva Siddhanta Sabai during his school days."

The Making of a Tamil Scholar

Adigal left the Wesleyan Mission High School when he was eighteen years old. He had cultivated a keen interest in both English and Tamil literary works by the time he left school. According to one of his biographers, he had developed a keen interest in English literary figures such as Shakespeare, Shelly, Oliver Goldsmith, Byron and Addison during his school days itself. His command of the English language by the time he left school was such that he was able to compose a poem to the Hindu deity, Murugan in English. The few photographs available of Adigal during this time present an attractive studious and pious looking young man of average height and build and fair complexion.

From around his sixteenth year, when Adigal started studying Tamil systematically under Narayanasamy Pillai, he began to be exposed to an emerging world of Tamil literary print culture, scholarship and the scholars associated with it, which had begun by mid-nineteenth century. Some of the pioneering efforts at rediscovering, editing and publishing

84Ibid., p. 18.
85Thirunavukkarasu, Maraimalai Adigal. p. 8.
ancient and obscure Tamil works only began to gather momentum in the second half of the nineteenth century. Adigal’s early youth and the beginning of his Tamil studies coincided with this process of “recovery”. The fact that he studied such recently “recovered” ancient Tamil works such as Cilapatikaram (K, Suparaya Chetty, 1872), Iravanar Akapporul (Tamotaram Pillai, 1883), Civakacintamani (U.V. Saminatha Iyer, 1887) and Kalitokkai (Tamodaram Pillai, 1887) under Narayanasamy confirms that Adigal was exposed to this wider Tamil literary world at least from the time he began studying Tamil under Narayanasamy Pillai.

There are also a few anecdotal incidents from Adigal’s life which confirm his early immersion in the emerging Tamil literary culture and scholarship. They were culled from some notes on Adigal’s early life by Madurainayagam Pillai. Some time during Adigal’s student days he met an inspector of schools named Williams. In response to Mr. William’s query as to who he was, Adigal simply replied ‘Vidwan’ (Scholar), a term which is generally used to denote an accomplished Tamil

86 The names of the author and date of publication are that of some of the first editors and publishers of these ancient and “rediscovered” Tamil works. They are derived from Zvelebil. See Kamil V. Zvelebil, *Companion Studies to the History of Tamil Literature*, Leiden and New York: E.J. Brill, 1992, pp. 218-222.

87 Adigal’s student and biographer Alagaradigal reports that these anecdotes were culled from Madurainayagam Pillai’s notes of Adigal’s early life. See Alagaradigal, *Maraimalai Adigalar*, p. 288-89.
scholar. Williams surprised by a "child" claiming to be a scholar enquired as to what he knew, Adigal replied "Including grammar, literature and Sangam works I know Sivajnanabotham and Sivajnana Siddiyar." The incident indicates that Adigal identified himself as a Tamil/Saivite scholar early in life. It also reveals his early interest in ancient Tamil and Saivites works. Another incident reveals Adigal's attraction for the life of a Saivite sannyasi. Moved by a visit to a Saivite Mutt with Madurainayagam Pillai during his young days, Adigal had expressed his wish to become a Saivite sanyasi (renounced ascetic). Madurainayagam Pillai had quickly reprimanded him saying that his primary duty was to be of help to his mother. On another occasion while Madurainayagam Pillai was making arrangements for him to obtain a clerical position, Adigal expressed a wish to be a school teacher. These incidents aside from shedding light on Adigal's early attitudes and inclinations also confirm the significant role played by Madurainayagam Pillai in Adigal's early life.

88ibid., p. 289.
89ibid., p. 290.
90ibid.
91The major shortcoming of these anecdotes is that they do not provide any chronological details on when exactly the above incidents took place. Alagaradigal maintains that they all took place before Adigal's twentieth year.
Marriage to Soundaravalli

Adigal was married in 1893, at the age of seventeen to Soundaravalli who was three years his junior. She was Adigal’s maternal uncle’s daughter. It is not certain whether it was a love marriage or an arranged marriage. Adigal’s son and biographer Thirunavukkarasu, presents it very much as a love marriage. According to his account, Soundaravalli lived on the next street and knew Adigal since the age of three. Thirunavukkarasu describes Soundaravalli as a very dark skinned, slim but extremely good natured girl. Adigal, being of a rather a shy solitary nature, Soundaravalli was one of the few playmates of his childhood days. Adigal’s mother Chinnammai was not keen on the growing bond between her fair and handsome son and such a dark skinned girl. She would often reprimand them or try to prevent them from playing or being together. Apparently this did not disrupt their growing attachment. Thirunavukkarasu even relates an incident in which Adigal’s mother Chinnammai lined up some beautiful girls and asked the seven or eight year old Adigal to point to the girl he would like to marry. Adigal, much to the disappointment of his mother had pointed to “black Soundaram who stood in the corner like a black vine.”

Thirunavukkarasu does not tell us how Chinnammai’s

92Thirunavukkarasu, Maraimalai Adigal. pp. 5-6.
disapproval of the relationship was later resolved. What is interesting in Thirunavukkarasu’s account is that he emphasizes Soundaravalli’s deference and obedience to Adigal right from the beginning of their relationship. He relates how Soundaravalli would obey Adigal’s every wish from the time when they were merely children; how Soundaravalli would climb trees to pluck fruits or dash to the shop to buy sweets at Adigal’s request. Thirunavukkarasu also relates a few incidents from their wedding ceremony to emphasize Soundaravalli’s deference toward Adigal. In one of the incidents Adigal was supposed to lift Soundaravalli’s feet and place it on an ammi (grinding stone used for cooking) as part of the wedding ritual. Soundaravalli considering that it would be beneath Adigal’s dignity to touch her feet, lifted her own feet and placed it on the ammi. For Thirunavukkarasu, these early incidents foreshadowed Soundaravalli’s life long devotion and service to Adigal.

Given the fact that Adigal identified himself as a Vellalar on the basis of his father’s caste, it is interesting to note that he married someone from his mother’s caste whose caste status was clearly below that of his father’s. It is also interesting that Adigal loved and married a girl who was very dark skinned in a cultural environment that clearly considered light skin to be more aesthetically desirable. It
is all the more surprising when we note that Adigal himself on several occasions in his adult years revealed his attraction toward lighter skinned women. If it was indeed a love marriage as Thirunavukkarasu suggests there is little evidence from Adigal’s later life that the original passion was sustained. A year after their marriage, in 1894 their first child Chintamani was born. Adigal named her after the ancient Tamil poem Civaka Cintamani which he had learnt under Narayanasamy. It is after the birth of their first child that Adigal decided to end his schooling with a view to procuring a job to support his fledgling family.

Adigal’s Early Writings

There is little information available on Adigal’s early writings aside from the fact that he wrote for a number of Tamil journals beginning around his teen age years. One of his earliest contributions appeared in Thiravida Manthiri (Dravidian Minister), a Tamil weekly from the neighboring French enclave of Karaikal. The Thiravida Manthiri began circulation in June 1893 and was edited by S. Viswalingampillai who was originally from Sri Lanka. Since the journal only began publishing in 1893, Adigal must has been at least seventeen when he began writing for it. Consistent with

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See MMAD.
his origins, Viswalingampillai’s journal aimed at a Tamil/Saivite revival in the tradition of Arumuga Navalar. His self introduction in the first issue is quite revealing both about himself as well as the kind of subjects with which the journal dealt:

...I am a student of the highly acclaimed, learned Arumuga Navalar. During the time of Arumuga Navalar I was the chief Tamil pandit at the Saiva Prakasa Vidyasala(school) at Chidambaram. Recently, at the request of some landed magnates I stayed at their estates to teach them Tamil. Before that I was engaged as a Tamil pundit at Nagapattinam Native High School and Kumbakonam Town High School. Presently I am engaged as a Tamil pandit at Salem Osoor Board High School.4

As a student of Arumuga Navalar, Viswalingampillai no doubt sought to propagate a Tamil/Saivite revival. The journal’s title Thiravida Manthiri (Dravidian Minister) however, suggests that in addition, Viswalingampillai was influenced by the ideas of figures such as Caldwell. The fact that he was being patronized by some landed magnates in Thirevenkaatu also suggests that he was riding the increasing interest in a Tamil/Saivite revival that was gaining currency among many of the Tamil regions landed magnates.

The fact that Adigal was writing for Thiravida Manthiri suggests that he was exposed to the type of Jaffna

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Tamil/Saivite revival as well as the Caldwell-inspired ideology quite early in his life. Viswalingampillai’s journal was concerned with such “Dravidianist” issues as writing in “pure Tamil” that was more typical of the concern of scholars in Tamil Nadu. In the first issue Viswalingam Pillai contributed an article with the title, “Thisai Vadacol Kalavac Cirapput Tamil” (The word for direction in Tamil “Thisai” is a non-Sanskritic pure Tamil word) under the pen name “Thanitamil Kaata Virumbuvon” (A man who wants to demonstrate the use of pure-Tamil). The article clearly confirms that Adigal began to be exposed to such “Dravidianist” issues from a fairly young age.

Another Tamil weekly that Adigal was writing for around this time was Nagai Neelalosani. It had begun circulation in 1890 and like Thiravida Manthiri was devoted to a Tamil/Saivite revival. It’s editor, Sathasivam Pillai lived in Nagapattinam and was a friend and mentor to Adigal. Other journals Adigal wrote for in his early years included Baskara Jnanaothyam (1893), Indumathaabimani (1896), and Sajjanam (1896).  

95ibid., p. 170.
96Alagaradigal, Maraimalai Adigalar. p. 288.
Adigal and Sundaram Pillai

It was around this time during Adigal's late teens, that Adigal came into contact with the pioneer Dravidian ideologue P. Sundaram Pillai. The meeting was made possible by Adigal's Tamil teacher Narayanasamy Pillai. Adigal himself has provided a brief account of how they met. After reading the highly acclaimed Tamil drama Manonmaniyan by Sundaram Pillai and after learning that Sundaram Pillai once learnt Tamil under his own teacher Narayanasamy Pillai, Adigal wrote a letter in poetic style about himself and his teacher to Sundaram Pillai. Sundaram Pillai, pleased with the letter, requested Adigal and Narayanasamy Pillai to visit him in Tiruvanandapuram, and Adigal and his teacher journeyed to Tiruvanandapuram towards the end of November 1895. Adigal was nineteen years old at the time. Sundaram was surprised to find that someone as young as Adigal composed a letter with such poetic elegance. They spent a week together and Adigal's precocious knowledge of ancient Tamil works had made a strong impression on Sundaram.  

A year later, towards the latter part of 1896, Sundaram found a position for Adigal as a Tamil teacher at an English school.

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97 According to Iracamanickam, the letter also included praise of the work Manonmaniyan in poetic form. M. Iracamanickam. Maraimalai Adigal, p. 31.

98 The works he mentions include Tolkapiam, Pattupattu and Kalithogai and later poetical works such as Silapathikaram and Seevaka Sinthamani.
school in Tiruvananthapuram." During his time there Adigal delivered lectures on Saiva Siddhanta at the two Saiva Siddhanta associations there, and also lectured on the subject of dramaturgical Tamil at Maharaja’s College at the request of Sundaram Pillai. This lecture took place on the 12th of September 1896 and was chaired by Sundaram Pillai. Adigal only taught for two and a half months at Tiruvananthapuram, noting that the physical environment there was not conducive for his health.

Adigal’s stay with Sundaram Pillai must have had a significant impact on Adigal. Sundaram Pillai, after all, was one of the most brilliant pioneer Tamil literary historian, researcher and Dravidian ideologue of the modern period. By the time Adigal met him, Sundaram Pillai had established himself as a major scholar. The play Manonmaniyam had already been accepted as a text book at the University of Madras. The University of Madras had also made Sundaram Pillai a Fellow of the University in 1891 and availed itself of his services as an examiner in Tamil, History and Philosophy. Sundaram Pillai as noted earlier had also earned a great reputation for his scholarly works in English. The research article "Age of Thiru Jnana Sambandha" won him the recognition and admiration of a

99The school was run by a person named Marthandanthambi.

100Maraimalai Adigal, Cinthanaikkaturaikal, p. 66.
fairly large circle of Indian as well as European scholars. One of his English admirers Sir M.E. Grant Duff was so impressed that at his suggestion Sundaram Pillai was made a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society. Similarly his work "Early Sovereigns of Travancore" earned him membership in the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland. He was also conferred the title of Rai Bahdur by the British Government in May 1896 in recognition of his contributions to the field of South Indian history.

It was only eight months prior to meeting Adigal that Sundaram Pillai wrote in the introduction to the re-publication of his work, *The Age of Tirujinana Sambhanda*:

I beg to express my earnest hope that other Tamil scholars in the country, with better health and more leisure, will interest themselves in such enquiries concerning their own language and history, and push them on to wider and more positive conclusions than I have been here fortunate enough to reach. It is the hope of stimulating such continued activity in however small a degree on the part of a younger generation that constitutes my main justification for this republication.***

Thus, Sundaram Pillai no doubt encouraged Adigal to follow in his own footsteps in defending Tamil/Dravidian civilization in the wider scholarly arena. A letter of recommendation that Sundaram Pillai wrote for Adigal also confirms his sincere regard and concern for Adigal’s future success:

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I am indeed glad to have had the occasion to interact closely with Mr. (Nagai) Vedachalam Pillai during his week long visit to Trivandrum. As evidence of the next generation’s limitless possibility for gaining a better knowledge of Tamil, his cultivation of a fine knowledge of Tamil at such a young age is indeed satisfying. At a time when the love of one’s mother tongue is at such a low ebb it is praise worthy to note that he has totally devoted himself to the critical study of Tamil. His knowledge and critical understanding of such ancient Tamil works as Pattupattu, Kalitogai and Seevaka Sinthamani is what earned my respect. At a time when the numbers of Tamil teachers are shrinking if he is well encouraged I believe firmly that he will become an excellent teacher. I believe he is already well qualified to teach Tamil grammar and literature at the High School level. If he at least acquires the English knowledge required for the F.A. level it is my considered opinion that he would become well qualified to research and write on Tamil works according to Western historical methods and perspectives.

This letter dated 2nd December 1895 confirms that Adigal received the encouragement and blessings of perhaps the most influential pioneer Dravidian ideologue by his nineteenth year. Sundaram Pillai’s emphatic endorsement, particularly of Adigal’s knowledge of ancient Tamil works in the letter is revealing of their shared aims. The last line of the letter indicates quite succinctly what Sundaram Pillai considered the most urgent task facing the Tamil intellectual of his day: to research and re-interpret the Tamil literary and grammatical corpus according to the Western historical and critical

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102 Cited in Arasu’s biography of Adigal. See Arasu, Maraimalai Adigal, p. 17-18. (My translation)
methods. The letter also contains an insightful evaluation of Adigal’s knowledge of English and a suggestion for its improvement. The fact that Sundaram Pillai followed up his recommendation by arranging a job for Adigal the following year further attests to Sundaram Pillai’s engagement with Adigal.

The impact Sundaram Pillai had on Adigal is most clearly evident in the kind of work that engaged Adigal for the remainder of his life. Like Sundaram Pillai Adigal presented and propagated a “Dravidian” reading of Tamil language, literature and history using Western historical methods and scholarship. The major difference however was in Adigal’s level and use of English scholarship. Sundaram Pillai was clearly much more at home in English scholarship than Adigal and wrote largely for a wider English reading scholarly audience. Adigal focused largely on largely untapped Tamil reading audience.

Adigal and Somasundara Nayakar

By the end of 1896, Adigal was once again back in his hometown of Nagapattinam, having just returned from his two and a half month stay in Tiruvanandapuram. It was shortly after his return to Nagapattinam in the early part of 1897 that Adigal met his Saiva Siddanta guru, Somasundara Nayakar.
Although he had listened to Nayakar’s powerful sermons and discourses on Saiva Siddhanta since his school days, he had never been personally introduced to him. It was the appearance of a series of Adigal’s scholarly essays in a local vernacular journal written in defense of Nayakar’s views that first sparked Nayakar’s interest in Adigal.

In the early part of 1897, a series of articles written by a Vedantist critical of Nayakar’s religious views began appearing in a local vernacular journal Sajjana Pathirika. Adigal responded by writing a series of articles critical of the views of the Vedantist and supporting the views of Nayakar. Adigal’s articles appeared in the journal Nagai-Neelalosani under the pen name of Murugavel. Nayakar was so impressed with Adigal’s writing that he wrote to Nagai-Velipalayam Saiva Siddhanta Sabha seeking information about its author. Madurainayagam Pillai, an active member of the Sabha and close friend and mentor to Adigal wrote back to Nayakar providing him with details of Adigal and his

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107 The journal also known simply as Sajjanam was a Tamil weekly that had been launched in March 1896 from Nagapattinam. Sajjanam which means the sound of war was most likely devoted to religious and literary controversies of the time. Samy, Patompanan Nutrandu, p. 180.

108 The Tamil weekly, Nagai-Neelalosani was launched from Nagapatinam in the year 1890. Like Sajjanam it probably articulated many of the religious and literary controversies of the time, however, unlike Sajjanam it was most likely devoted to or sympathetic to a Saivite or Saiva Siddhanta perspective.
background. Nayakar had expressed an interest in meeting Adigal, and a few months later on his next lecture tour to Nagapattinam, Nayakar and Adigal met for the first time.

They were drawn to each other from their first meeting. Adigal’s own brief description of their initial encounter narrated albeit from a third person perspective still provides important insights into their initial reaction to each other:

Nayakar upon meeting and interviewing Adigal began to love and praise him as if he were his own son. On the morning of his return to Madras, Nayakar had said to Adigal, “We shall soon get you down to Madras! It will be your presence in those parts that shall bring results.” After his return to Madras Nayakar began corresponding with Adigal with much love and affection. Adigal in turn considering Nayakar like his own father and teacher began corresponding with him with much love and affection.

This somewhat formal description of their initial encounter nevertheless reveals two important elements of their relationship. First of all it suggests that from their initial meeting there had been a strong attraction between them, much like that between a father and son. Secondly and more importantly, it reveals that Nayakar quickly decided that Adigal would be extremely useful to his Saiva Siddhanta revivalist efforts in the Presidency capital of Madras.

Adigal’s relationship with Nayakar began in early 1897 and lasted until Nayakar’s death in the year 1901. Though the

105Maraimalai Adigal, Cinthanaik Katturaikal. p. 67.
relationship was relatively brief in duration, lasting a mere four years it was a close and intense relationship. Meeting Nayakar was an extremely significant event in the life and career of Adigal. It was after meeting Nayakar that Adigal began to come into his own and gain a certain degree of esteem and popularity as a Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil revivalist. In many ways Adigal’s relationship with Nayakar had a profound transformative impact on Adigal.

From the time Adigal met Nayakar in early 1897, he was increasingly drawn into a Saiva Siddhanta revival project and a circle of revivalists that had as its principal spiritual guide Somasundara Nayakar. Adigal began writing on Saiva Siddhanta subjects at the instigation or express request of Nayakar and his associates. One of Nayakar’s earliest requests was for him to write a commentary on the Saivite work *Thugalaru Botham* by Sikalich Cittrampala Nadigal. Nayakar was so impressed with Adigal’s commentary that he allegedly remarked that it was comparable to the commentary composed by the last major Saiva Siddhanta saint, Sivajnana Muniver and had it published it at his own expense.¹⁰⁶ Some of Adigal’s articles that appeared in *Nagai Neelaicsani* were also collected and published in 1899 at Nayakar’s expense as part

¹⁰⁶Maraimalai Adigal, *Cinthanaik Katturaikal*, pp. 67-68.
of a series entitled *Sivajnana Botham*.

**Adigal and Nallaswamy Pillai**

It was through Nayakar, that Adigal was introduced to the prominent Saiva Siddhanta revialist J.M. Nallaswamy Pillai, who as noted earlier was also a disciple and close associate of Nayakar. Adigal was invited to Madras in early 1897 by Nayakar to meet Nallaswamy. At this time Nallaswamy was in search of a Tamil editor for an English and Tamil monthly he wished to launch devoted to Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil entitled, *The Light of Truth or Siddhanta Deepika* (The Tamil version was called, *Unmai Vilakkam allatu Siddhanta Deepikai*). Nayakar recommended Adigal for the position and the two first met in Madras. Nallaswamy was at the time working as a judge at Cittoor approximately seventy five miles west of Madras, in present day Andhra Pradesh. The meeting was successful and Adigal accompanied Nallaswamy to Cittoor some time between early to mid 1897 and began working there as the Tamil editor for the journal.

Adigal worked as the Tamil editor of *Siddhanta Deepika* only for the first five issues. The first issue was published

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107 The essays had been written by Adigal in opposition to the writings of a Vedantist. Although Adigal suggests that the work *Sivajnana Botham* was published by him in the year 1899 there is no trace of the work or reference to it in any Bibliographical lists on the works of Adigal. See Maraimalai Adigal, *Cinthanaik Katturaikal*, p. 68.
on the 21st of June 1897. Being the Tamil translator for the journal exposed Adigal precisely to the challenges that Sundaram Pillai had urged for him. The journal sought to re-interpret the wide corpus of Tamil religious and literary works utilizing a largely western scholarly perspective for a Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil revivalist cause. There could have been no better preparation for Adigal’s career as a scholar and propagandist for Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil. Nallaswmy Pillai’s journal invited some of the best scholars and scholarship on Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil at the time.

Working as the Tamil translator for the journal was an ideal preparation for Adigal’s future role as a Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil revivalist. For the twenty one year old Adigal, it must have been quite challenging to translate the works of some of the leading scholars on Saiva Siddhanta, Tamil literature and allied subjects of the time. Not only were the important Saiva Siddhanta texts with elaborate commentaries by accomplished scholars translated but also related works on religion and Tamil literature. For example, Adigal translated from English erudite commentaries that appeared as a series in the journal on Saivite works such as Thirumular’s Thirumanthiram, Arul Nandi Sivacharya’s Sivainana Siddhivar and the poems of Thayumanavar. Adigal also translated commentaries on ancient Tamil poetry such as
Kurincippatu, Mullaiippatu and even English poetry taken from such Victorian journals such as the Pall Mall Magazine. These commentaries were for the most part written by scholars with a strong background in the English scholarly tradition.

The Tamil edition of Siddhanta Deepika however, had a slightly different emphasis than the English edition since it aimed for an exclusive Tamil reading audience. It was clearly less cosmopolitan in its flavor. Most of the articles were more narrowly confined to Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil subjects. They were in addition more prescriptive than philosophical or comparative. Furthermore, some of the articles on Saiva Siddhanta were written by actual practitioners of Saiva Siddhanta rather than by scholars. They included the writings of figures such as Somasundara Nayakar and heads of Saiva Siddhanta mutts. The intimate connection between Tamil and Saiva Siddhanta is also more evident in the pages of this journal. A few articles on the Tamil language published in the journal by the Saivite saint Ramalinga illustrate this connection.

After completing his work for the fifth issue of Siddhanta Deepika, towards the end of 1897, Adigal returned to Nagapattinam. As in the case with his teaching duties in Trivananthapuram, it is not clear why Adigal’s work with Nallaswamy Pillai and the journal was suddenly terminated. It
is quite possible that Adigal found the work far too demanding for the remuneration involved. He may have also felt that he was not getting the credit due to him as the articles he translated did not carry his name. Adigal’s diaries generally suggest that Adigal for the most part had a rather ambivalent relationship with Nallaswami which eventually broke out into open hostility later in Adigal’s life. However, the experience of being the Tamil editor for such a “high class” journal as Siddhanta Deepika must have nevertheless given Adigal a great deal of prestige and legitimacy among Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil scholars. It must have also further stimulated his interest in pursuing a career as a Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil scholar.

It is after his return from Citoor, from the beginning of 1898 that Adigal began regularly to maintain a diary. It is thus, from the beginning of the year 1898 that we have a much more reliable and detailed information regarding his life and work. The diary entries reveal that Adigal by the beginning of 1898 was deeply immersed in the study of Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil. For example he noted on the 4th of January 1898: “Today

108As noted earlier, Adigal maintained a diary in English from the year 1898 to a few weeks before his death in 1950. Selected passages from the diaries have been edited and translated into Tamil and published. See A.R. Venkatachalapathy, Maraimalaiadigalar Narkurippukal 1898-1950,(Diaries of Maraimalai Adigal, 1898-1950) Madras: Maraimalaiyadigal Pathipakam,1988.
morning made by heart the Sutram, 'aruvagai marabir parpanap pakkam' in Tolkkapiyam Poruladikaram." Tolkkapiyam is the oldest known Tamil grammatical work. Two days later he noted: "Today began to make by heart the 7th Sutram of (Sivajnana) Siddhiar..."

He would also occasionally write verses from ancient Tamil literary works at the bottom of each day's diary entry. On the 6th of January 1898 Adigal wrote a verse from the ancient Tamil poem Kurinchi Pattu:

Salpum viyapum iyalpum kunrin,
macu arak kalii vayanku pukal nirutal,
asu aru katci aivarkum, an nilai,
eliya ennar,
(Honour, good name, and virtue's power,
Once lost, not spotless Brahmans can restore) 

Kurinci Pattu, is a poem that treats the illicit romance of two lovers from different areas of the ancient Tamil country. Their different origins and their secret liaisons set against the background of the ever present fear of parental and societal disapproval serves to heighten the poignancy of the romance. The verse Adigal copied in his diary expresses the heroine's fear of dishonor and disapproval of her illegitimate romance. Adigal's own mixed caste background may have made

109 See MMAD, 1898.
110 The translation is by G.U. Pope and is cited in J.M. Somasundaram Pillai, Two Thousand Years of Tamil Literature, Madras, 1959. p.116.
this poem especially resonant for him. Another verse Adigal noted around the same time is taken from Thirukkural:

Aniccapuk kalkalaival peyta; nusuppirku nala padaa parai:

(She hath adorned herself with anitcha flowers but hath not removed the stems from them; alack her waist will be crushed beneath the weight and will presently break)

Adigal seems to have particularly enjoyed the erotic and sensual themes found in great abundance in ancient Tamil poetry. Such tastes and sensibilities however easily coexisted with his religiosity and love for Saivite works. He often wrote down verses from such Saivite works such as Sivajnanabotam and Tiruvacakam in his diaries. In a more youthful melodramatic vein he also noted the Tamil saying, "Irupatu poy Irapatu mei" (Existence is false, Only Death is true).

Adigal was also keeping abreast of contemporary scholarship on Tamil literature and history, especially that written by his early mentor: "Today noon I read ten pages in the "Age of Tirujnana Sambhandar written by my great patron

111 Adigal noted this verse from Thirukkural below his diary entry for the 14th of January 1898.

112 Translation is by V.V.S. Aiyer. See V.V.S. Aiyer, Thirukkural, Tiruchirapalli: Sri Ramakrishna Tapao vanam, 1989. p. 274.

113 Adigal noted this saying in his diary entry for the 9th of January 1898. See MMAD.
the late Sundaram Pillai Avargal..."Having read the work of another prominent Tamil scholar and friend, he noted on the 5th of February 1898: "Today I read the article "Tharkappu Niyamam" by my dear friend Suriyanarayana Sastri.""

His diary entries also reveal that although he was only twenty-two years old at this time, he had already established himself as a Tamil scholar of some standing. He was giving private lessons to a number of mature students of Tamil. They included the brother of a noted Tamil Pandit, Gulam Kathiru Navalar and the manager of the Wesleyan Mission High School, "Mr. Smith." They also reveal that by 1898 he was quite immersed in working for Nayakar and others associated with Nayakar and the revival of Saiva Siddhanta. He would often get instructions from them to write on various subjects connected with Saiva Siddhanta. Generally older than Adigal, Nayakar and his associates acted towards Adigal as they would toward a young protege. He would get requests from them to correct certain Tamil manuscripts they had written for publication, write verses of praise of important figures or commentaries on religious works.

One of Adigal’s earliest pamphlets was written during

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114See MMAD, 19 January 1898.

115See MMAD.

116See MMAD entries for 23 February 1898 and 22 February 1898.
this time. It was titled Mutakuralvada Nirakaranam. It was written in opposition to a work entitled Mutarkural Vatam that had presented a Vedantic interpretation of the highly esteemed Tamil work, the Thirukkural. Adigal challenged the author's Vedantic interpretation by basing his arguments from the newly “recovered” ancient Tamil grammatical work Tolkappiam, especially the section called Porulatikaram in Tolkappiam. As he noted in his diary, it was published with the help of Nayakar around January 1898: “Today finished Mutarkuralvata Nirakaranam and sent it along with Mutarkuralvatam and another pamphlet named Sooniyavadi Maruppu to Mahadeva Pillai, a clerk in the Engineers Office in St. Thomas Mount...” This work along with his earlier writings defending Nayakar reveal that by the year 1898, Adigal was deeply immersed in the battles between Vedanta and Saiva Siddhanta that were being conducted in the vernacular journals.

As a young protege who had to prove his dedication and loyalty, Adigal may have felt under a great deal of pressure and possibly imposed upon at times during this period. His entry for the 20th January 1898 regarding the request by the editor of Nagai Neelalosani, Sadasivam Pillai, reveals his

117 Adigal had noted briefly in his diary entries the argument he used in the article. See MMAD entries for 4th and 8th January 1898.

118 See MMAD entry for 6th January 1898.
occasional irritation at these demands:

This morning Mr. Sadasivam Pillai avargal invited me and requested me to write a criticism on 'Theerthapathy Pisaram'. Though I did not get any leave fit for me, these trifles, yet the strangers give me a great deal of trouble. O mighty Siva when will you give my patient soul an everlasting rest. I am undergoing many difficulties in mind though not in body."\(^{113}\)

Since Nagai Neelalosanai was an important revivalist journal, Adigal could not afford to displease its editor. These relationships were not however one sided, as they enabled Adigal to acquire their favours and patronage in return.

Procuring a position as Tamil Pundit in Madras

By the early part of 1898, Adigal had acquired the friendship and patronage of a great number of people associated with Nayakar and his Saiva Siddhanta revivalist efforts. It was through their help that he was able to obtain a position as an assistant Tamil pundit at Madras Christian College(MCC)--a premier institution of higher education in Madras--in March 1898. Adigal’s diary entries during this period reveal the kind of influences that were brought to bear toward his appointment at the College and the nature of the interests that were behind Adigal’s move to Madras.

As promised by Nayakar at their initial meeting in

\(^{119}\) See MMAD entry for 20th January 1898.
Nagapattinam, Adigal’s appointment at MCC and his move to Madras were to a large extent engineered by Nayakar and his associates. They not only encouraged Adigal to apply for the upcoming vacancy at MCC but perhaps brought to bear some influence in his appointment at the College. Adigal received information on the vacancy at MCC and how he should apply for it as early as the 13th of January 1898. He noted on that day:

I received a card from Mr. Valaitha Desikar, another one from Sri La Sri Somasundara Nayakar Avargal and a letter from Mr. T. Balasundara Mudaliar avargal relating in it to send a letter to Mr. Rungiah Chetty, Professor of Madras Christian College, after the model of that which he wrote to me and a puranilai valthu (greeting) which I sent by the 6½ clock through mail.

Balasundara Mudaliar, often referred to as Thandalam Balasundara Mudaliar, was a close friend and disciple of Somasundara Nayakar. At the time, he was working as the Tamil translator for the city of Madras. With Adigal’s move to Madras he became one of Adigal’s chief benefactors and a close friend. Adigal was also on close friendly terms with V. Suryanarayan Sastri (1870-1903), chief Tamil Pandit at MCC well before his appointment at the College and was corresponding with him regularly by this time.

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120 See MMAD.

121 See MMAD entry for 15th January 1898. On the 15th January 1898, two days after receiving the letter with instructions from Balasundara Mudaliar, Adigal wrote a letter to Suryanarayana Sastri who, the chief Tamil Pandit at MCC as well as Somasundara Nayakar.
Adigal's visit to the Vellalar-led Saiva Siddhanta mutt, the Thiruvaduthurai Adhinam, in late January 1898 at the request of Nayakar was also connected with his intended move to Madras. Adigal noted on the 25th of January, "I received a card for Sri La Sri Somasundara Nayakar avargal in which he ordered me to go to the holy mutt in Thiruvaduthurai". The next day he observed:

This morning I composed a poetry on the holy ascetic in the Thiruvaduthurai mutt. By the evening I went to visit Veerappa Chettiar who took me to Subaraya Mudaliar avargal when he gave me a letter to the holy sage of the Thiruvaduthurai mutt.

It seems that Adigal's visit to Thiruvaduthurai mutt was ordered by Nayakar in order for him to receive the blessing of the mutt's head before embarking on his work for Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil in Madras. Adigal only managed to have an audience with the head of the Mutt after two days there. He noted:

This morning even we did not get occasion to visit his holiness Mr. Pandara Sannathi avargal; but only this evening at about 7 o'clock we got a very good opportunity to visit his holiness, when his holiness asked me in what branch of learning I was clever; In answer to this, I told that I was clever only in Tamil and told the Tamil books learnt. Having heard this his holiness was very glad."

The fact that Adigal reported that the Mutt's head was happy.

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122 See MMAD entry for 29th January 1898.
with his skills in Tamil is extremely suggestive of the kind of Saiva Siddhanta that the head of the Saiva Siddhanta Mutt wished to encourage. Having pleased the Mutt’s head with his knowledge of Tamil and receiving a shawl in recognition, Adigal returned home. Two days after returning from the mutt, on the 3rd of February, he observed in his diary:

This morning received a card from Mr Thandalam Balasundara Mudaliar avargal relating in it that he was very glad to hear that I had gone to the Thiruvaduthurai and that I would succeed in my effort to get the Pandits place at the Madras Christian College.”\(^{123}\)

Less than a month later, by the end of February 1898, Adigal received a letter from Mr. Rungiah Chettiar of MCC, offering him the position of assistant Tamil Pandit at the College.\(^{124}\)

Thus Adigal’s diary entries during this period strongly suggest that a certain amount of influences were brought to bear on Adigal’s appointment at the College and his subsequent move to Madras. It is also clear that Nayakar and some

\(^{123}\) See MMAD. Adigal had also curiously noted on his diary entry for the 4th of February 1898:”I received a card from Sri La Sri Somasundara Nayakar avargal stating that he was unsatisfied of my going to Tiruvaduthurai mutt. Today I wrote poetry praising Sri La Sri Somasundara Nayagar Avargal.” See MMAD.

\(^{124}\) Adigal noted in his diary on the 24th of February 1898:”This morning I received a letter from Mr. Rajiah Chettiar avargal in which he told me that school were prepared to offer me an Assistant Pandits place on Rs.25, with no allowances as I wrote; and asked me whether I would accept this offer.” See MMAD.
figures engaged with the revival of Saiva Siddhanta played a significant role in aiding Adigal’s appointment and move to Madras. The extant biographies of Adigal, however, treat his appointment at MCC and his move to Madras as a largely individual accomplishment based purely on Adigal’s brilliant knowledge of Tamil.\textsuperscript{125} MCC’s hiring of Adigal—a man who was clearly aligned with the Saiva Siddhanta revival movement—has also to be located and understood within the wider context of the ascendancy of neo-Vedantic Hindu revivalism in Madras at the time encouraged by the Theosophists. As we shall see in the next chapter, MCC was clearly against this neo-Vedantic revival.

Thus, an analysis of Adigal’s formative years reveals that his family, caste background, mission education and early exposure to Tamil studies and Saiva Siddhanta—through the friendship and patronage of important non-Brahmin revivalist

\textsuperscript{125} What is highlighted in the extant biographies is Adigal’s excellent performance at the selection exam. Thirunavukkarasu’s account from which most of the other accounts take their cue begins by describing the difficulties faced by the school authorities at the time in selecting suitable candidates to teach Tamil: It was a time when Tamil teachers learnt Tamil from traditional teachers and not from regulated bodies such as Colleges and Universities. Since there were many such traditionally qualified candidates at the time, all with letters of recommendation from their teachers it was difficult to select suitable Tamil teachers. Reverend Miller, principal of MCC at the time, fully aware of these difficulties, had decided to overcome these difficulties by instructing his head Tamil Pandit, Suryanarayana Sastri to organize an exam for all the potential candidates. Sixty candidates had sat for the selection exam including Adigal’s chief rival Kathiraverpillai of Jaffna. Thirunavukkarasu’s asserts that Adigal despite being the youngest candidate was selected on the basis of his great knowledge of Tamil and sheer brilliance. See Thirunavukkarasu, 	extit{Maraimalai Adigal}, pp. 20-24.
figures—all played a significant role in his emergence as a Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil scholar and revivalist. Though many of Adigal’s early patrons belonged to higher non-Brahmin castes, his Tamil and Saiva Siddhanta teachers belonged to castes lower down in the scale of non-Brahmin castes. Thus Adigal, unlike many of the Jaffna revivalists, learned what is considered the two most important planks of Tamil identity, Tamil and Saivism, from teachers who hailed from fairly lower caste backgrounds. Their influence no doubt played a significant role in the kind of Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil revival that Adigal later promoted.

Under the patronage and guidance of these early mentors, Adigal soon became an integral member of a network of mostly non-Brahmin Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil revivalists. In the next chapter we will look at how this foundational exposure to Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil was enhanced, broadened and consolidated by his work with Nayakar and his presence in the intellectual and cultural heart of Madras presidency and by the more cosmopolitan influences he encountered there.
Chapter Four

The Forging of A "Dravidian" Saiva Siddhantist (1898-1903)

The hope that a nation can be made of such worn out stuff as the Hindu, generated an unwarranted and mischievous pride in our pristine past. It was expanded by a few misguided western lady enthusiasts whose dissatisfaction with the existing state of European society read a sublimity and grandeur into our past history almost unequalled and unprecedented. Their eloquence... appealed too powerfully to the religious instinct of this slave of religion. The result was the collapse of all hopes of reform, of creating... a virile nation on the existing present and a cry for return to the state of primitive Rishihood.


Adigal moved to the largest and most cosmopolitan city in Madras Presidency, the city of Madras on the 4th of March 1898. He was barely twenty two years old at the time. His entry into Madras life was greatly facilitated by Somasundara Nayakar and others connected with Nayakar and his revivalist efforts. At the time of Adigal's move, the city, as the intellectual, cultural and administrative hub of the presidency, was increasingly drawn into the vortex of


\[2\] He noted in his diary of taking the 4 O'clock evening train from Nagapattinam the previous day and arriving on the 4th of March 1898. See MMAD, 04-03-1898.
nationalist politics and the neo-Hindu revivalism that undergirded it. It also served as a centre for voices of more regional, vernacular and sectarian interests and groups, including that of the Tamil/Saivites—many of whom were not particularly attracted by the nationalist mandate. The close proximity to Nayakar and other revivalists, his position as a teacher at a premier Christian College and the mix of powerful indigenous and European intellectual and cultural influences that the city afforded enabled Adigal to emerge as an important “Dravidian” spokesman for Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil.

It was in Madras that Adigal established his reputation as a leading Dravidian ideologue. Emerging as the closest disciple and protege of Nayakar was crucial in gaining for Adigal the necessary legitimacy as an important spokesman for Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil. Teaching at a premier Mission College and living at the intellectual and cultural centre of the Presidency, he was exposed to a great range of cosmopolitan as well as English intellectual and cultural influences.

Working as a Tamil pundit at Madras Christian College provided not only a rich, cosmopolitan and intellectually stimulating environment for Adigal but more importantly a religio-cultural environment that was conducive to his “Dravidian’ leanings. These influences as well as his
increasing immersion in European Orientalist works and English literary culture during this period, enabled Adigal to broaden and expand his skills as a major Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil revivalist. By launching his journal *Jnanacagaram* (Ocean of Wisdom) soon after the death of Nayakar, as the official organ of a Saiva Siddhanta association that Nayakar originally founded, Adigal sought to gain the mantle of Nayakar and play a central role in the revival of Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil in Tamil Nadu. The central role he played in the *Arutpa*/Marutpa controversy, beginning in the year 1903, also confirms that he was emerging as the leader of a Saiva Siddhanta wing that sought to eclipse as well as distance itself from the more conservative wing that had originated in Jaffna. Adigal's leadership as well as the popularity that he gained from this controversy suggests that he, as well as the brand of Saiva Siddhanta revivalism he was propagating, was well on its way to becoming a powerful force in Tamil Nadu.

**Madras At The Close Of The Nineteenth Century**

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3 The *Arutpa*/Marutpa debate originated as a result of the conflict between the Jaffna Saivite/Tamil revivalist Arumuga Navalar and his contemporary in Tamil Nadu, the Saivite saint, Ramalinga. Navalar claimed that the poems of Ramalinga should not be considered as *Arutpa*(divine songs) but as Ramalinga's hymns. His supporters began to call Ramalinga's hymns as *Marutpa*(Dark Songs). The same controversy and debate was rekindled at the beginning of this century and fought over by Navalar's disciple Kathiraverpillai and Maraimalai Adigal.
During the colonial period, Southern India excluding the princely states came to be known and administered under the British Indian administrative division known as Madras Presidency. The administrative, military and commercial and cultural heart of the presidency was the city of Madras located on the Coromandel coast. In fact, the rise of Madras as a major city in the subcontinent was directly related to its role in the development of British commercial and imperial interests in Southern India. Despite the European presence in Madras from as early as the seventeenth century, Madras retained much of its early communal and village structure at least until the beginning of the nineteenth century. Many areas of the city retained their communal distinctiveness even during the early twentieth century. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, Madras city with a population of over 250,000, was the largest most cosmopolitan city in Southern India, easily outflanking earlier pre-colonial centres of commercial and cultural activity. By the closing decades of

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4 The area now known as the city of Madras was one of earliest places to come under English control in India and was founded in 1693 as a commercial base and military foothold.


the nineteenth century, the population had almost doubled, totalling over 400,000. 

At the close of the nineteenth century when Adigal moved to the city, nationalist sentiments and neo-Hindu revivalism that undergirded it, was the predominant ideological force among the educated elites in Madras. Neo-Hindu revivalism and nationalism were especially promoted by English-educated elites in Madras, a great many of whom belonged to the higher castes. The world of the Tamil/Saiva Siddhanta revivalists that Adigal entered through his connections with Somasundara Nayakar was generally opposed to this neo-Hindu revivalism that the nationalists patronized and propagated, through both the English and the vernacular media. In the eyes of Nayakar’s brand of Saiva Siddhanta revivalists, the neo-Hindu revivalists were seeking to impose an alien, northern based “Aryan” Vedanta on the Tamil lands and thus were seeking to usurp and submerge the real religion and heritage of the Tamils.

In many ways these religio-cultural and socio-political developments in the Presidency was intimately connected to and

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* The first official scientific census was taken in the year 1871 and revealed a population of 397,552. Though the city itself had expanded since then, the population has now increased to around four million; over an eight fold increase in just 100 years. Most of the phenomenal growth in population took place after the second World War. See S. Muthiah, *Madras Discovered*. New Delhi: East-West Press Private Ltd., 1987, p.19
paralleled the gradual expansion of English education among Indians in Southern India. It was the English-educated Indians, representing the emerging elite who spearheaded many of these developments in the presidency and the developments that they helped bring about largely reflected their own caste and class concerns and interests. Since the majority of the English-educated Indians were drawn from the higher castes in South India, the socio-political and cultural projects they sponsored largely reflected their particular interests.

English Education and the Emergence of a New Elite

Until the 1840's, English education in the presidency including the city of Madras was largely in the hands of Christian missionary societies and private individuals. In addition to elementary education in the vernacular for the masses, missionaries provided higher education in English in order to attract the higher castes and classes. The colonial government in the presidency did not take any substantial initiative in the field of “native” education until the

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1840's. When they finally did, it was largely as a response to the rising tide of Hindu elite demands for English education that did not interfere with their religious faith. The earliest significant government venture in education was the establishment of the High School of the Madras University in 1841. The school was founded on the model of the English public school and was intended for the elite classes and also as a feeder school to the proposed colleges and universities. Another school which was opened during this time with the help of a large native endowment, as an alternative to Mission schools was the Pachaiyappa High School. By 1857, a University level education system was in place in the presidency with the establishment of the University of Madras as a supervisory and examining body.

While there was only one College in the Presidency in 1858, the Presidency College, by 1871 there were eleven new colleges in South India. In the next decade this figure

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9 The earliest government initiative in education in South India was the College of Fort Saint George founded in 1812. It was primarily intended for the training of European civil servants posted to Madras Presidency although like the College of Fort Williams in Calcutta it became the institutional foundation for the Madras school of Orientalism. The scholars and staff associated with this College may have been instrumental in shaping government policy toward ‘native’ education. See Trautman, Aryans and British India, (1997); Zvelebil, Companion Studies, (1992).

doubled to twenty five. In the period 1857-67 only 937 candidates had passed matriculation in the whole of South India. In the next few decades there was rapid growth in Collegiate education. By 1896, there was around a total of 34,311 matriculates in the whole Madras precedency. A similar growth rate was observed in the numbers of Arts and professional degrees conferred during this period.

A striking feature of the statistics concerning English education in South India in the nineteenth century was the marked preponderance of upper caste Hindus, especially Brahmins in every field and at every level of higher education. Of the thirty six who graduated from the High School of the Madras University by 1855, twenty were Brahmins, only twelve were non-Brahmin Hindus the remainder being Eurasians and Christians. These figures are especially striking when seen in light of the fact that Brahmins

11 Much of the statistics on education in Madras presidency in the nineteenth century is derived from Suntheralingam’s excellent study. See Suntheralingam, Politics and Nationalist, pp. 100-120.

12 For example, for the decade 1877-1886 a total of 12,880 candidates passed matriculation, a figure which exceeded the 12,363 matriculates in Bengal in the same period. See Suntheralingam, Politics and Nationalist, p. 101.

13 ibid., p. 109.

14 ibid.

15 ibid., p. 65.
constituted barely three percent of the population of the presidency. The non-Brahmin Hindus who were attracted to English education were generally from the higher non-Brahmin landowning and mercantile castes. Similarly the statistics for the graduates of University of Madras in the nineteenth century also reveal an overwhelming preponderance of Brahmin graduates. For example, for the year 1894, 68.8% of the graduates were Brahmins, 19% were non-Brahmin Hindus, 8.2% were Indian Christians, Europeans and Eurasians constituted 3.3% and Muslims only 0.7%.

The Brahmin preponderance in education reflected their earlier predominance in the administrative machinery of pre-colonial states. The Maratha Brahmins who played important roles under the Maratha Tanjore dynasty were the earliest to take advantage of Western education and were soon emulated by the Tamil Smartha and Sri-Vaishnava Brahmins. Thus, as Suntheralingam points out, non-Brahmin Hindus, although comprising four fifths of the population of the Presidency produced only around one fifth of the graduates in the nineteenth century.

Another striking aspect of the educational statistics of the Presidency was its

16 ibid., p. 113.

17 Many of the Tamil Brahmin graduates came from the Tanjore region, the seat of Brahminical culture in the Tamil region. According to one estimate, no less than 144 of the 599 Arts graduates of Madras University between 1858 and 1877 were natives of Tanjore and were mostly Sri-Vaishnava and Smartha Brahmins. ibid., pp. 114-15.
uneven distribution among the different linguistic groups in the presidency. The Tamil speaking graduates far outnumbered graduates from other linguistic groups.  

Public service was the largest single outlet for western educated classes, and here again the preponderance of Brahmins was striking. A survey of the caste and ethnic affiliation of public servants who were earning Rupees 10 and above in 1886 reveals that Brahmins although three percent of the population held over 42 percent of the jobs. The non-Brahmin Hindus despite comprising 86.6 percent of the population only held 36.5 percent of the jobs. It was mostly the graduates of Madras University High school that formed the basis of the Indian administrative elite in the presidency by mid-nineteenth century, and the graduates of the various Colleges affiliated to Madras University formed the bulk of the professional elites in the presidency. It was these factors that led to the popular perception by the latter part of the nineteenth century of a Tamil Brahmin hegemony in public life in South India.

18 For example between 1858 and 1894 a total of 1900 Tamils graduated with a B.A. degree from the University of Madras, a figure that exceeded the combined total of all other linguistic groups of South India. ibid., p. 112.

19 ibid., p. 123.

20 Sundaralingam provides a table of these statistics. See ibid., p. 124.

21 ibid., p. 80.
The preponderance of elite Hindu castes, especially the Brahmins in Western education had a significant impact on socio-political and cultural developments in the Presidency. Modern political organization which began around the mid-nineteenth century was in large measure stimulated by elite Hindu fear of Christian missionary excesses and what was seen as the Madras government's partiality to missionary interests. Political organisation in Madras, after a brief period of leadership by the Hindu commercial elite in mid-nineteenth century, passed into the hands of the western educated Hindus drawn predominantly from the Brahmin castes. They were the professional elites and since they were freer from the fetters of government patronage they were the ones who initiated nationalist political organization in the Presidency in the 1880's.

Religio-Cultural and Political Developments at the turn of the Century

It was these western educated Hindu elites who first embraced and espoused the Hindu revivalist and reformist currents that were emerging by the mid-nineteenth century as a reaction against Christian missions and English education.

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17 ibid., p. 81.
18 ibid.
This neo-Hindu revivalism which had its origins in Bengal emphasised a revitalised, philosophically oriented neo-Vedantic Hindu revival and resistance to the challenges posed to Hindu religious and social practices by Christian missions and the western impact. The Madras elites were very receptive to these Hindu revivalist and reformist currents and sought to connect Madras with such currents by the second half of the nineteenth century.

For example, in response to a South Indian lecture tour undertaken by the Brahmo Samaj leader Keshub Chandra Sen in 1864, a Veda Samajam (Veda Association) was organized in Madras by two young law graduates of Madras University. A Tamil monthly journal entitled Thathuya Bodhini (Philosophical Sermons) was also launched in the same year by the Veda Samajam. The neo-Vedantic, non-sectarian, reformist strand of the Brahmo creed and its disavowal of idolatry and ritualism appealed to many of the western educated Hindu elites in the Presidency. The emphasis on Jnana yoga (philosophical understanding) in contrast to Bhakti yoga (practice of devotion) and the primacy given to higher

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24 ibid., p. 80.

25 M. S. Sambhandhan, Thamil Ithaliyal Varalaru (History of Tamil Journals) p. 131.

26 Another Bengalee Samajist who made a significant impact in the south was Bipin Chandra Pal who in 1881 delivered a patriotic speech in Madras entitled, "National Improvement". See Suntheralingam, Politics and Nationalist, p. 234.
Sanskritic philosophical and literary culture enabled the upper castes to maintain their pre-eminent role in Hindu society while eliminating the more obvious "excesses" of that culture which were in any case associated with the lower castes. These influences emanating mainly from Bengal and Bombay inspired English-educated Hindus to found both Hindu revivalist and reformist organizations in South India. However, the extent of radicalism and reform in Madras was constrained by the general conservatism of the English-educated upper caste elites in South India.  

By the 1880's support for Brahma Samajists began waning only to be replaced by a more aggressive Hindu revival that was sweeping India. It was helped if not stimulated a great deal by the work of the Theosophical Movement, which was gaining in influence by the end of the 1870's. The Theosophical movement founded by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and Henry Steel Olcott in 1875, drew much of its ideological inspiration not only from its dissatisfaction with contemporary understanding and practices of Christianity in

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27 The dominant Hindu reformist current in Bombay was the Prarthana Samaj which contained elements of Bhakti and Jnana Yoga. Personal communication Narendra Wagle.

28 Radicalism and reform in the south was largely confined to the social and familial concerns of the upper castes such as child marriages and enforced widowhood. More pressing social issues such as the rigidity of the caste system or intercaste marriages were scarcely addressed. See Kenneth W. Jones, Socio-Religious Reform Movements in British India, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 167.
the West but also of the aggressive "materialist" goals of western civilization. Arriving in India in 1879, the Theosophists soon grew popular among the upper caste English-educated Hindus through their criticism of western culture and Christianity and their generally uncritical praise of Indian religions. As one contemporary scholar noted wryly of the Theosophists, "The transformation from one civilization to another brought the Theosophists from a position of critics and dissenters to one of champions of orthodoxy and the status quo." By 1880 there were annual conventions designed to bring together Theosophists from all parts of India. Many of the early Indian nationalists, including Allen Octavio Hume were members of the Theosophical Movement and the rise of Theosophy in India in many ways paralleled the rise of Indian nationalism. In 1881 and 1882 Olcott and Blavatsky toured the South with great success. Branch societies were established in such places as Madras city, Tuticorin, and

\[\text{\textsuperscript{29}}\text{Jones, }\textit{Socio-Religious Reform}, \text{p. 169.} \]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{30}}\text{ibid., p. 183.} \]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{31}}\text{Suntheralingam suggests such a position with his description of the relationship between the Theosophical movement and the early patrons of Indian nationalist organizations. He also asserts that many of the annual meetings of the Theosophical movement were often held close to the meetings of the Indian National Congress so that delegates could go to the Congress meeting soon after the Theosophical meetings. See Suntheralingam, }\textit{Politics and Nationalist.} \]
Tirunelveli. Interestingly, Tirunelveli, the most heavily missionized place in Southern India, had the distinction of having the first branch of the Theosophical society in South India.

Since the South was especially responsive to the Theosophists, by 1882 the society’s headquarters was firmly established at Adayar near Madras city. What is important to note about the impact of the Theosophists is that their work helped give new life to the ideas of the primacy of “Aryan” Sanskritic culture in India and in the process empowered the upper castes especially the Brahmins in South India. In his numerous lecture tours and annual conventions, Olcott spoke of India’s early achievement, which he considered was essentially brought about by the ancient Aryans and their Sanskrit culture. For Olcott it was Sir William Jones who had first unveiled for the West this “splendid garden of Sanskrit literature”, while Orientalists of the calibre of Max Muller had demonstrated that:“Aryavarta was the cradle of European civilization, the Aryans the progenitors of the Western


33 The movement’s three main objectives according to one of its founder were: “to promote a feeling of brotherhood among men, regardless of race, creed or colour; to promote the study of Aryan and other religions, philosophies, and sciences; and to promote experimental research into the hidden laws of nature and the latent capabilities of man.” Cited in R. Suntheralingam, Politics and Nationalist. p. 292.
peoples, and their literature the source and spring of all Western religions and philosophies." 34

It was the aim of the society to regenerate India to her former glory "resting upon the Vedas." In Madras city, Olcott appealed to the Indians to cooperate with the society in its mission for the restoration of India's "ancient religion, for the vindication of her ancient glory, for the maintenance of her greatness in science, in the arts, (and) in philosophy." 35 To this end, the society proposed in the early 1880's, practical schemes such as the setting up of special Sunday schools, where Hindu children could learn the basic tenets of their faith. Sanskrit schools were also established under the Society's auspices in the city of Madras and in major mofussil centres throughout the Presidency. A more ambitious project was Olcott's grand plan for a "national Sanskrit movement" in India which would revolve around the Adyar Oriental Library which the society established at their headquarters in Madras in 1886. Olcott's vision was for Adyar to become "a second Alexandria" in the East. 36 The Theosophical Society also encouraged other Hindu revivalists and their organizations to work on their own initiative. One such revivalist was the

34 Cited in Sunderalingam, Politics and Nationalist, p. 294.

35 ibid., p. 297.

36 Cited in Suntheralingam, Politics and Nationalist, p. 303.
leading champion of Hindu revivalism in the South, Sivasankara Pandiah, a Gujarati Brahmin and teacher at Pachaiyappa High school. Inspired by the Theosophical Society to work for the "moral and spiritual regeneration" of the country, Pandiah established the Hindu Tract Society in 1887 with branches in the major towns.

The Theosophists in the South largely attracted the upper caste English-educated Hindus, both the professional and administrative elites. Every branch of the Society had a lawyer or a teacher, and every branch committee included either a deputy collector, district Munsiff, or Tashildar. Although traditional Hindu priests and pundits were not often listed as members, they participated in many of the functions held by the Society. Much of the financial support for the movement came from the merchant classes. 37

The rising tide of an aggressive Hindu revival in the 1880's spurred by the Theosophists is evident in the student response to the arrival of Blavatsky after an overseas visit in 1884. Many students from Madras including Madras Christian College (MCC) presented her with an address in which they expressed their gratitude for "that gigantic labour of love--the vivifying on the altars of Aryavarta the dying flame of

37 ibid., p. 299.

38 ibid.
religion and spirituality." Reflecting this new Hindu revivalist spirit which celebrated the achievement of the ancient Aryans, a writer wrote in the Madras Christian College Magazine:

Some of the loftiest problems that are yet awaiting solution were boldly grappled with by the Aryans at a time when the European nations of the present day walked in darkness—How this gifted and intellectual race spread over the greater part of India, how it produced a brilliant literature...and how it afterwards fell from its political and literary eminence, till a great nation raised it from the depths of national weakness are facts of the greatest interest. 

This aggressive Hindu revivalism also meant that relations between Hindu revivalist movements and the Christian missions became progressively worse from the 1880's onwards. This is especially evident from the student disturbances at the Madras Christian College over the conversion of a Brahmin student in 1888. Pandiah, the leading revivalist blamed the College troubles on "the gross insult offered to Hinduism by the bigoted Missionary Professors" and announced the establishment of a "Hindu Theological College Fund." 

39 ibid., p. 308.


41 ibid. Suntheralingam provides a detailed account of this disturbance.

42 Cited in Suntheralingam, Politics and Nationalist, p. 308.
Pandiah, however, was soon forced to resign from Pachaiyappa College following a sharp exchange of letters between him and William Miller, principal of Madras Christian College in July 1888. Although Pandiah did not realize his hope of a Hindu Theological College or University, he established in its place a Hindu Theological High School in 1889. The institution attracted much financial support including a donation of Rupees 15,000 by the Raja of Ramnad in 1891.

From the 1880's it was this kind of aggressive Hindu revivalist ideology that dominated public life in the presidency. The position of the conservative Hindu elites was further strengthened with the arrival of Annie Besant in Madras in 1893. Supporting the simplicity of Indian life, the close family ties and even the four-fold caste system, Besant asserted, "I regard Hindooism as the most ancient of all religions, and as containing more fully than any other the spiritual truths named Theosophy in modern times. Theosophy is

43 *ibid.*, p. 309.

44 *ibid.*, p. 310.

45 The debates sparked by the Age of Consent Bill in the 1880s and 1890's also confirm that it was the conservative revivalist wing that was ascendant until well into the early decades of the twentieth century. The debate essentially turned on the question of state intervention in issues of Hindu social reform. Despite the bold efforts of the reformist wing of the Hindu elites who advocated state intervention, the majority of Hindu elites in South India was against state intervention. *ibid.*
the ancient Brahma Vidya of India.” As the reformers lamented, Besant strengthened the “spiritual pride” of the Hindus “with a bigotry and plausibility of reasoning unknown to the orthodox.” Swami Vivekananda’s tour and stay in South India in the 1890's also significantly aided neo-Hindu revivalism in South India although in a slightly different vein. Vivekananda’s more militant and masculine brand of neo-Vedantic revival accompanied by a radical critique of Hindu social practices endeared him even to many western educated higher non-Brahmin castes in south India. It was this mix of neo-Hindu revival, that despite its radicalism, privileged the “Aryan, Brahminical, Sanskritic tradition” that informed the intellectual and cultural life of Madras towards the closing decades of the nineteenth and early decades of the twentieth century.

The New Elite and Vernacular Print Culture

Although largely embraced by the English-educated middle and upper classes, these religious and cultural developments soon made their presence felt at the level of the vernacular print culture. It was only through the vernacular medium that

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47 Vivekananda’s radical critique of some Hindu social practices may have been inspired by his own non-Brahmin caste background as a Kayastha.
these new developments could derive both their legitimacy as well as be effectively conveyed to a wider readership.

Vernacularisation, thus played an important role in indigenising these ideas and developments in the Presidency. However, the vernacular print culture inhabited a different cultural space than Orientalist print culture. Its participants included, aside from English-educated classes, traditionally trained pundits, religious specialists and intelligent Tamil lay public. Adigal, like Somasundara Nayakar before him, began his career very much engaged in this cultural space and began his writing career immersed and enmeshed in these vernacular debates.

Printing presses, largely monopolised by missionaries and the government up until the end of the eighteenth century, passed into Indian hands by the early decades of the nineteenth century. Although the ideological trajectory of Tamil religious journal culture has not yet received detailed scrutiny, it is possible to outline the broad contours of its development. The early Tamil journal publications reflected mostly the missionary and governing interests of its sponsors.

48 Such vernacularization heralded the emergence of nationalism in this case both regional and national. Benedict Anderson links the emergence of such vernacular print culture with the development of capitalism with his notion of "print capitalism." See Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities, London, 1983.
The first half of the nineteenth century saw the gradual efflorescence of Tamil journal publications and journalism by Tamils. Journals devoted to news, religious subjects, and those with broad educational mandates were published. It is in the second half of the nineteenth century, especially in its closing decades that journals began to give voice primarily to strong sectional or sectarian interests. Reflective of the multiple and competing religio-cultural developments in the Presidency, many of the journals began their career as organs of sectarian religio-cultural organizations.

Tamil journals advocating a neo-Vedantic revival as well as a Saivite revival began to proliferate only in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Those advocating a neo-Vedantic Hindu revival began as early as the 1860's. As noted earlier, one of the earliest journals to advocate such a revival was the journal Thatuva Bodhini (1864) established as the organ of Veda Samajam.49 Other notable neo-Vedantic journals in Tamil included, Lalitha Pirasanothaya (1887), Vedanta Deepikai (1887), Brahma Vidya (1888), Vaithheega Siddhanta Deepikai (1890) and Arvan (1906). A systematic propagation of a Tamil/Saivite revival began appearing in print culture only after mid-century in the aftermath of the

49There were other Tamil Brahmo journals such as the Pirammakivana Podhini established in 1878. See A. M. Samy, Pathombatham Nutrandu Tamil Italkai (Nineteenth Century Tamil Journals), Madras: Navamani Pathipakkam, 1992, 82,
Jaffna led Saivite/Tamil revival. Many of them were published by the Jaffna revivalists. The most prominent being Saiva Uthaya Banu (Jaffna, 1880) (Madurai1884); Saiva Abimani (Jaffna, 1884); Jnana Mithiran (Madras, 1891); Sivaratna Makudam (Madras, 1884) and Siddhanta Deepikai (1897). Most of these journals were monthlies. Beginning around the 1880's vehement and heated battles took place between Vedantists and the Saiva Siddhantists through the medium of these Tamil journals. In fact figures such as Somasundara Nayakar made his reputation partly based on these vernacular battles that raged towards the latter part of the nineteenth century. In many ways these battles at the religio-cultural level both heralded and laid the ground work for the more overtly political battles that emerged later.

Early Life In Madras City 1898-1901

Adigal's early life in Madras was largely devoted to working with the close collaboration and supervision of Nayakar for the revival of Saiva Siddhanta. It also involved

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50Samy, Pathombatham, p. 104. Most of this information on Tamil journals was obtained from Sambhandan and Samy's works on Tamil journal publications. Although Samy claims that Somasundara Nayakar established a Tamil Saivite monthly by 1867 entitled Siddhanta Ratnakaram it is quite doubtful that it was a regular journal. See Samy, Pathombatham, p. 85.

51There were also Tamil Vaishnavite monthlies such as Valmiki Ramayana Vacanam and Thiruvaymoli by the 1870's. See Samy, Pathombatham, p. 100.
playing an active role in the raging battles between the Vedantists, at times Vaishnavites and the Saiva Siddhantists that took place largely through the vernacular journals. It is important to recall here that it was Adigal’s able refutations of the Vedantists that initially attracted Nayakar and that he was invited to Madras by Nayakar with the intent that he would be important asset in these debates.

Adigal’s diaries reveal that his early life in Madras was very much centered around Nayakar and others associated with Nayakar and Saiva Siddhanta. He spent his first day in Madras at Nayakar’s home in the Madras suburb of Choolai and the next day arrangements were made for him to stay at the house of a close disciple and associate of Nayakar, T. Balasundara Mudaliar. The powerful role Nayakar played in Adigal’s life during this period is also revealed by the fact that it was Nayakar who chose an auspicious day for Adigal to begin teaching at Madras Christian College.12 Adigal’s wife and daughter soon joined him in Madras and their first home in Madras was a house allocated for a local Saivite temple.13

With his move to Madras Adigal and Nayakar began to work in close collaboration, propagating Nayakar’s brand of Saiva

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12 Adigal noted in his diaries that upon the advice of Nayakar he had conveyed to the College authorities that he would begin teaching from the 9th of March 1898. See MMAD 09-03-1898.

13 It was the house allocated for the Sri Arunacalam temple in Madras. See MMAD.
Siddhanta revival through books, pamphlets, journals and lectures. Adigal’s writing skills as well as his proficiency in Tamil, especially of the recently “recovered” ancient Tamil works made him an important asset on the side of Nayakar. In addition, Adigal brought to Nayakar’s brand of Saiva Siddhanta revival the ideas and scholarly methods he gained from his exposure to the writings of pioneer Dravidian ideologues such as Sundaram Pillai and Caldwell. They provided an important arsenal for Nayakar’s brand of Saiva Siddhanta revival in its campaign against neo-Vedanta and Brahminical culture in Tamil Nadu. Their intimate relationship and collaboration during this period is evident from a cursory glance at Adigal’s diary entries. For example, Adigal noted on 26th of September 1898: “I began to write a criticism of an article written by Mr. Senthil Iyer avargal. And in the evening I went in the coach to Sri La Sri Nayakar avargal and read it to him.” In addition, he was often requested by Nayakar to write commentaries on various Tamil Saivite works or an introduction for some of Nayakar’s own writings. On the 14th of February 1899, Adigal noted: “This morning Sri La Sri Nayagar avargal came and told me to write an introduction in verses to Vedaranya Puranam and bring it to Chulai tomorrow.” He would also often edit Nayakar’s writings.

54 See MMAD.
Adigal’s move to Madras also brought Adigal emotionally closer to Nayakar. They would visit each other almost on a daily basis. Nayakar would either visit Adigal or send a coach for Adigal and his family to visit him. On some days Adigal would spend the entire day at Nayakar’s house. Of such a day Adigal noted: “This early morning I took oil bath and after taking meals I went to Sri La Sri Nayagar avargal and began to read Sivajnanabotam in the presence of God Subramaniam by the order of Sri La Sri Nayagar avargal.”\textsuperscript{55} Nayakar who was well known in Madras for his passionate lectures and incessant campaigns for the cause of Saiva Siddhanta kept a busy schedule of lecturing, writing and attending Saivite festivals and functions. Adigal would often accompany him on his frequent lecture trips in and around Madras, and at times be requested by Nayakar to lecture after him or instead of him. Just two days after arriving in Madras, Adigal attended one of Nayakar’s lectures: “This evening at 4. O’clock I went and had the happiness to listen to the lecture delivered by Sri La Sri Nayakar avargal.”\textsuperscript{56} They would also often attend Saivite festivals and events together. According to Tirunavukkarasu’s account Nayakar would never tire of praising Adigal’s talents

\textsuperscript{55} See MMAD, 22-06-1898.

\textsuperscript{56} See MMAD, 06-03-1898.
and abilities at many of these public occasions.\(^{57}\)

Adigal's diaries reveal that he treated Nayakar very much as his guru and with the reverence due to a guru. He would often note in his diaries during this period: "This evening I went to worship Sri La Sri Nayakar avargal." never failing to use the title Sri La Sri when referring to Nayakar. The title is generally used to refer to accomplished Saiva Siddhantists, such as the heads of Saiva Siddhanta mutts. Nayakar was in his fifties and Adigal in his early twenties when Adigal moved to Madras. Adigal's biographer, Thirunavukkarasu, described the relationship between Nayakar and Adigal as having been much closer than that which normally exists between a guru and a disciple. He compared it to that between a father and son. Adigal's diary entries certainly confirm this view.

The fact that Nayakar hailed from the Vanniar caste, a caste considered significantly lower than the Vellalar caste does not seem to have affected their relationship. In fact, Adigal seems to have thrived under Nayakar's tutelage much more than with his earlier mentors. Adigal's family was also close to Nayakar's family. Nayakar's wife Sivajanam, according to Thirunavukkarasu treated Adigal like her own son. Thirunavukkarasu's account presents their relationship rather

\(^{57}\) Thirunavukkarasu, *Maraimalai Adigal*, p. 29.
vividly describing how both Nayakar and his wife would fuss over Adigal’s young family. Nayakar and his wife would remind Adigal to take the customary weekly oil bath on Saturdays and how Sivajanam would request Adigal to take rasam and kasam that she would have especially prepared for him. Adigal also tutored Nayakar’s only son in Tamil and English despite the fact that he was quite mentally disadvantaged. These descriptions, confirmed largely by Adigal’s diary entries, suggest that Adigal was quite close to Nayakar during this period. Being the only son and having lost his father at a young age Adigal seems to have responded well to Nayakar’s great interest and concern. It is with Nayakar’s help and partnership that we see Adigal emerging as a truly confident public figure of some standing.

Almost all of Adigal’s writing was aimed at countering the claims of neo-Vedantic Hindu revival that were ascendant during this time. Adigal’s proficiency at doing this in Tamil derived both from his exposure to critical European scholarly methods as well as his knowledge of ancient Tamil literature and Saivite works. The majority of Adigal’s writings during

58 Thirunavukkarasu, Maraimalai Adigal, pp.28-30.

59 See MMAD, 03-09-1898.

60 It is important to recall here that Adigal was not so successful in his earlier moves to both Trivandrum and Sitroor.
this period appeared in the Tamil journals and publications associated with Nayakar as well as some others devoted to the Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil revivalist cause. 61

Revealing both the kind of articles and the type of journals he was writing for, Adigal noted in his diary on the 19th of October 1898: "My articles entitled "Nithilamani" and "Mayavadi Mathakulappam" for the journal Siddhanta Jnanabotham were collected by Mr. Narayanasamy Nayakar." 62 The title "Mayavadi Mathakulappam" (Confusion of religion by Mayavadist's (Vedantists)) makes clear the nature of the article he was writing. The journal Siddhanta Jnanabotham was closely associated with Nayakar. Jnana Bodhini was edited by two Tamil revivalists, Suryanarayana Sastri and Purnalingam Pillai. 63 The articles Adigal wrote during this period such as "Mutarkuralvatanirakaranam", "Mayavadi mathakkulappam", "Vetrumai Mayakkam" and "Nakkirannar Theivapulamai Mathci" represent the kind of work that engaged his attention. The titles themselves proclaim their anti-Vedantic and pro-Saivite

61 They included the journals Siddhanta Jnanabotham, Nagai Neelalosanai and Jnana Bodhini.


63 Purnalingam Pillai was an ardent "Dravidianist" and Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil revivalist.
stand. In addition much of what Adigal records in his diaries during his early life in Madras reveal a tremendous immersion and engagement with Tamil religious and literary works. Unlike later periods, especially after the death of Nayakar in 1901, when he began to cultivate a greater interest in European scholarship and literature, the first few years of Adigal’s life in Madras reveal an immersion in Tamil religious and literary works and debates.

**Friends and Patrons in Madras**

With his move to Madras Adigal moved into a circle of Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil revivalists many of whom were centred around the figure of Nayakar. Nayakar’s estrangement from his former role as a Vedantist and his passionate campaign on behalf of Saiva Siddhanta must have attracted around him many figures similarly drawn to Saiva Siddhanta revival and opposed to the ascendancy of neo-Vedantic revivalism in Madras. Many of these Saiva Siddhanta revivalists were also keen patrons of Tamil. Most of them were also drawn from the powerful non-Brahmin Vellalar caste. One such figure was T. Balasundara Mudaliar (d. 1908). Mudaliar was a close friend, patron and guide to Adigal from the
beginning of his residence in Madras. Often referred to as Thandalam Balasundara Mudaliar in Tamil works, Mudaliar was a staunch Saiva Siddhanta revivalist and a close associate and disciple of Nayakar. A member of the dominant Vellalar caste, he worked as a Government Translator during Adigal’s time in Madras. He was a well respected man with important connections and his status and connections made him a valuable member of Nayakar’s Saiva Siddhanta circle and a key figure among Nayakar’s Saiva Siddhanta associates.

If Nayakar was Adigal’s spiritual guru at this time, Mudaliar was a guru for Adigal’s more worldly concerns. Mudaliar was a constant source of material and moral help for Adigal during his early life in Madras. As noted earlier,

64 Adigal often refers to Mudaliar as his patron in his diaries. On the 19th of June 1898 he noted: "This noon Mr. T. Balasundara Mudaliar avargal my great patron and his wife came to see my child." See MMAD.

65 That Mudaliar hailed from "good" caste is also suggested by Thirunavukkarasu who describes him as a man of excellent caste origins and of his family as belonging to Annapillai Street--a street no doubt associated with higher Vellalar genealogy. See Tirunavukkarasu, Maraimalai Adigal.

66 According to the short introduction to Adigal’s "Irangat Paakal" (Poems of Grief) at the death of Mudaliar published as a collection of Adigal’s poetry, Mudaliar had been a principal at the Madras Thondaimandala Thuluva Velalar High School and a translator at the High Court in Rangoon. In the poem Adigal praised Mudaliar’s learning, knowledge of English and Tamil but above all his fine qualities as a man in his poem. See Maraimalai Adigal, Paamanik Kovai, (Madras, 1976) pp. 109-110.

67 Mudaliar’s standing among Nayakar’s disciples is evident by the fact that he was chosen to preside at Nayakar’s revived Vedaga Mokta Saiva Siddhanta Sabai on the 23rd of December 1900. See MMAD.
Mudaliar played a significant role in Adigal’s appointment as a Tamil pundit at MCC, continuing with this kind of help in Madras he would even advise Adigal on how to procure a salary raise at the College. "It was also at Mudaliar’s house that Adigal first stayed till he moved into his own home in Madras. During his early days in Madras, Adigal would often borrow money from Mudaliar." Adigal also kept his wife’s jewellery for safe keeping at Mudaliar’s house." Mudaliar also often came to Adigal’s assistance when Adigal’s wife was ill. Adigal noted on the 8th of May 1899: “This noon my wife was dangerously feverish...An Aachee was sent by Mr. T.B. Mudaliar avargal to cook." The relationship however, was not all one sided as Adigal in turn often attempted to help Mudaliar.

68 Adigal noted on the 22nd of January 1899: "...In the evening went to T.B. Mudaliar’s house where he advised me to write a petition and give it to Mr. Rangiah Chettiar avargal in order to increase my pay." See MMAD.

69 Adigal noted on the 9th of June 1898: "This morning Mr. T. Balasundara Mudaliar avargal lent me Rs.5 of which I gave Rs.4 as advance to a new house in the No.11 Senu Mudaliar St." See MMAD.

70 Adigal would seek Mudaliar’s help and advice on a variety of things. They included even medical advice as he had noted on the 21st January 1899: "I went to visit Mr. Balasundara Mudaliar avargal I told him about the sore in my penis. At once he directed me with a letter to Dr. Ramasamy Mudaliar avargal." See MMAD.

71 For example, Adigal attempted to use his influence at MCC to get admission to the College for Mudaliar’s son. He note on the 24th January 1899: “This afternoon I spoke to Reverend Russell to admit the eldest son of Mr. T. Balasundara Mudaliar avargal, but he said it was a trust matter." He also attempted to use his contacts in Nagapattinam to obtain Mudaliar the post of municipal secretary in Nagapattinam. See MMAD, 5-06-1899.
Another figure who played a significant role in Adigal’s early life in the city was the important Tamil revivalist, V. K. Suryanarayana Sastri (1870-1903). As with Nayakar and Mudaliar, Adigal knew Sastri before he moved to Madras. Affectionately crowned “Dravidian Sastri” by the Tamil revivalist Tamotaram Pillai, Sastri was a pioneer Tamil poet, writer, playwright, translator, scholar and above all a great Tamil enthusiast and his work had a tremendous impact on the Tamil renaissance. He is however, best known as one of the earliest Tamils to initiate the practice of writing in pure Tamil, having changed his own name to the “pure” Tamil name of Paritimar Kalaijnan. Son of a Sanskrit teacher from the vicinity of Madurai, Sastri learned Tamil from Sabapathy Mudaliar of Madurai. After completing his B.A degree, Sastri joined MCC five years earlier than Adigal in 1893. He was a great friend of Reverend William Miller, Principal of the College, and dedicated his pioneering work on the history of the Tamil language to Reverend Miller. Many of Sastri’s

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72 He wrote over three Tamil plays, a few novels, various collections of poetry in addition to his pioneering work on the history of the Tamil language.

73 Scholars such as K. Sivathamby and K. Appathurai consider Suryanarayana Sastri as one of the earliest pioneers of the ‘pure Tamil’ movement. See Sivathamby, Tanittamil Iyakkathin.

74 The dedication itself is interesting as it includes a full page picture of Miller, a Tamil poem written by Sastri praising Miller followed by the words: "To my beloved and Revered Master Rev. William Miller... This work is dedicated as a humble token of love and gratitude by
works appeared in the Madras Christian College Magazine. As noted earlier, it was Sundaram Pillai’s and Sastri’s work that Pope had selected for special adulation as works which “which show the new dress of the Tamil mother.” Sastri also edited the Tamil monthly journal Jnana Bodhini with his close friend Purnalingam Pillai.

Chief Tamil pundit at MCC at the time of Adigal’s appointment, Sastri was the closest Brahmin patron, mentor and friend in Adigal’s life. He was also one of Adigal’s earliest companions and friends in the city and they began associating from the day of his arrival. During his early days in the city Adigal would often go with Sastri to the beach “to inhale sea breeze” in the evenings. Despite his Brahmin genealogy, Sastri shared Adigal’s passion for Tamil language especially the “pure” Tamil works of the ancient period. His numerous works in Tamil and above all his enthusiasm for “pure” Tamil


“75He also published a Drama in Tamil and a Tamil work on Drama.

76 The above quote is from the biography of Adigal by Iracamanickam. See Iracamanikam, Maraimalai Adigal, p.42. (My translation)

77 On the 8th of April 1898, Adigal noted in his diary: "...This evening I went to visit Mr. Suryanarayana Sastri avargal who took me at once to sea shore in order to inhale sea breeze." See MMAD.
was no doubt a great inspiration and influence on Adigal." Adigal may have also been influenced in his style of Tamil prose writing by Sastri’s reputed archaic and difficult prose style." However, being only six years older than Adigal, the relationship between Sastri and Adigal was more like that of one between equals. Although the extant sources do not identify Sastri with the revival of Saiva Siddhanta it is clear that Sastri associated with Nayakar and Mudaliar and was present at some of the meetings in which Adigal attempted to form a Saiva Siddhanta organisation in Madras."

Sastri and Adigal derived inspiration from their mutual passion for the Tamil language and spent many hours discussing their ideas and works. They often read, critiqued and encouraged each others work. Sastri would often request Adigal to write articles for certain journals including the one he edited. For example he Adigal noted on the 5th of April

78 Iracamanikkam especially emphasizes Sastri’s profound influence on Adigal. See M. Iracamanikkam, Maraimalai Adigal, p.43.

79 Many of the background information on Sastri is derived from Zvelebil, Companion Studies. pp. 181-83.

80 Adigal noted on the 24th of April 1898: "I went this early morning to Mr. Suryanarayan Sastri avargal and took him with Anavaratha Vinayagam Pillai to Mr. Balasundara Mudaliar avargal’s house. We had a long conversation about to start a Tamil Saiva Siddhanta Sabha. This evening I went to Sri La Sri Nayakar’s lecture where I met Calicut ‘Thinagaran’ Mr. Rangasamy Nayar.” See MMAD.

81 On the 19th of July 1898 Adigal noted in his diary: "This evening Mr. Suryanarayana Sastri avargal asked me to write an article in Nana Bodhini and accordingly I accepted to write
1900: "Mr. Suryanarayana Sastri asked me to write my article on Nakkirar and lengthen it so far as to hold the inside of this month's Jnana Bodhini."

Sastri received a better education than Adigal and was a more accomplished and respected Tamil scholar at this time. Adigal's knowledge in certain areas of Tamil, however, may have been better than Sastri's as some of the playful sparring they engaged in reveals. Although, Sastri was Adigal's superior at the College, and Adigal always referred to him respectfully as avargal(respected) in his diaries their relationship clearly had elements of comradery as well as rivalry. Their interaction seem to have dwindled towards the end of Sastri's life and once Adigal had started finding his own feet in Madras around the year 1902. A few months before Sastri's death, Adigal wrote a stern letter to Sastri rebuking him for allegedly plagiarizing him:

I sent a registered letter to Mr. V.G. Suryanarayana Sastriar asking him to acknowledge his indebtedness to me for the passages extracted from my writings and intermingled in his own. Despite elements of rivalry towards the end of Sastri's life,

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82 Adigal noted an instance of this on the 27th of July 1898, when he wrote: "This day I wrote an essay on 'Aku Peyar' and 'Anmolit Tokai' telling strongly that they are identical and this Mr. Suryanarayana Sastri was not able to refute." See MMAD.

83 MMAD, 13-07-1903.
in Adigal’s mind Sastri remained a good friend. He observed on the death of Sastri on the 2nd of November 1903: "This evening Mr. Suryanarayana Sastriar B.A. expired, and I note this with a deep sorrow."

Another revivalist Adigal interacted with was Sastri’s close friend and co-editor of the journal Jnana Bodhini, Purnalingam Pillai (1866-1947). Purnalingam Pillai, a Velellar hailing form the Tirunelveli region, worked as an English teacher for most of his life. He was an ardent and fiery “Dravidianist” and authored a number of English works on the subject of Tamils and their civilization, no doubt influenced by the writings of missionaries and Sundaram Pillai. Being ten years senior to Adigal, he no doubt looked upon Adigal as a young man with a great deal of potential in Tamil, and like Sastri encouraged him.* He also sent some of his Tamil works to Adigal for correction.*

Adigal’s circle of prominent Saiva Siddhanta revivalists

* He is referred to as Muneerpallam-Purnalingam Pillai in Iracamanikkam’s biography of Adigal. Iracamanikkam suggests that Purnalingam Pillai and Sastri were very close and that they both conducted research on Tamil subjects together. Adigal came to know Purnalingam Pillai through Sastri. Purnalingam would often visit Adigal and Adigal was apparently very impressed by his tremendous English knowledge as well as his interest in Tamil. See Iracamanikkam, Maraimalai Adigal. p. 44-45. Purnalingam Pillai is also mentioned as a close friend of Adigal for many years by Thirunavukkarasu. See Thirunavukkarasu, Maraimalai Adigal. pp. 855-56. However, it is intriguing to note that Purnalingam Pillai fails to mention Adigal or his work in his best known work, an elaborate history of Tamil Literature.

* Adigal refers to correcting the manuscript of Purnalingam Pillai’s dramatical work, Nithilamani in his diary entry for 26th of June 1899. See MMAD.
in the city included J. M. Nallaswamy Pillai (1864-1920) who though living outside city at the time, would often visit. Adigal would often hear of Nallaswamy Pillai’s presence in the city through Balasundara Mudaliar. As a senior disciple of Nayakar, and a man of some influence, Nallaswamy treated Adigal much like a young protégée. On his visits Nallaswamy would occasionally request Adigal to write verses in Tamil for his journal. To mark the death of Queen Victoria, Nallaswamy asked Adigal to compose an elegy in Tamil:

We visited Mr. T. Balasundara Mudaliar avargal who then told me that Mr. Nallaswamy Pillai had requested me to compose an elegy (for Queen Victoria) in Tamil with an English translation and give it to his journal."

Nallaswamy Pillai was also a source through which Adigal came to know many of the English-educated scholars working on Tamil and Saiva Siddhanta. Adigal noted on the 24th of December 1899:

Mr. Nallaswamy Pillai avargal having arrived to Madras sent for me and I accordingly went to him. But he took me to some of his friends of whom Mr. Sesha Giri Sastri was very much pleased with my interview and gave me his works ‘Dravida Sabdhanandam’, ‘Essays on Tamil Literature’ and ‘Aryan and Dravidian Philology’.

Nallaswamy’s status as a district Munsiff and his editorship of one of the most influential religious journals in English

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86 Adigal noted this in his diary entry for the 27th of January 1901. See MMAD.
Siddhanta Deepika no doubt made him a well known and respected figure in Madras. Nallaswamy here, may have not only attempted to impress Adigal with his important connections but also may have sought to broaden Adigal’s intellectual horizons through such exposure. Nallaswamy Pillai who had many important and influential Brahmin friends, though a major Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil revivalist, was always reticent in advocating a strong “Dravidian” reading of Tamil history and civilization. As Adigal came into his own, their relationship often became rocky. However, during Adigal’s early years in Madras there is little indication of such tensions between them."

Although these figures were not the only people Adigal associated with in Madras they were some of the more prominent people and influences on Adigal’s early life in Madras. There were also many others connected with Nayakar, Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil that Adigal associated with during this period many of whom Adigal already knew by the time he came to Madras."

87 Adigal was also on friendly terms with Nallaswamy’s brother Nagaratinam Pillai. to whom he taught Tamil during this period. He noted on the 5th of February 1899: "Mr. Nagaratnam Pillai came with his friends to whom I gave some instructions which were very useful to create a good idea respecting the Tamil language and Saiva Siddhanta religion." See MMAD.

88 They included, Madurainayagam Pillai, Thiyagarajah Chettiar and Sadasivam Pillai editor of Nagai Neelalocanai. A student of Adigal at MCC, S. Anavaratha Vinayagam Pillai (1877-1940) was a constant companion to Adigal during his early life in Madras. Although only a year younger than Adigal he was a constant friend and companion during this period. Anavaratham later obtained his M.A. degree in Tamil and taught at MCC and Colombo University. See Thirunavukkarasu, Maraimalai Adigal, p. 110.
In addition, Adigal was very much aware of and often in contact with a larger circle of Tamil scholars and intellectuals who were responsible for the Tamil/Saivite renaissance that began roughly after mid-nineteenth century in Jaffna and Tamil Nadu. As the contemporary Tamil scholar Zvelebil confirms, this Tamil renaissance was fundamentally based on a Tamil classical "tradition that was lost and found". Zvelebil also confirms that this rediscovery of the lost "Tamil classics" took roughly between 1850 and 1925. There were many figures associated with this rediscovery, the most prominent being Arumuga Navalar, Tamotaram Pillai, U. V. Swaminatha Iyer and Raghava Iyengar. As the cultural heart of Tamil Nadu, many of the efforts of these figures were centred in the city of Madras. Adigal's early interest in ancient Tamil literature, education under Narayanasamy Pillai as well as his early contact with such figures as Sundaram Pillai, Nallaswamy Pillai and Suryanaryana Sastri no doubt made him a keen follower of this Tamil renaissance and the scholars associated with it. Adigal's move to Madras enabled him to meet and often maintain contact with many of the important figures associated with this renaissance.

Adigal's diary entries during this period reveal that he was not only familiar with the work of such renaissance

89 See Zvelebil, Companion Studies, p.144.
stalwarts as Sabapathy Navalar, Kathiravel Pillai, Kanakasabhi Pillai, Tamotaram Pillai and U.V. Swaminatha Aiyar but often maintained some contacts with them. Thus, though he was not personally involved in the recovery and publication of ancient Tamil literature, Adigal was very much part of the intellectual circle that closely followed and celebrated its recovery. For example after noting the launching of the ancient Tamil work *Manimekalai* by U.V. Swaminather Aiyer on 4th of August 1898, Adigal noted a few days later of receiving a letter from Swaminatha Aiyer with instructions on how to procure a copy of it from a mutual friend. Adigal received a personal copy of another ancient Tamil classic *Kalingathu Parani* that Suryanarayan Sastri brought out in the same year. In return, Adigal would often make available copies of his own works to such figures as Aiyer and Sastri. Adigal also noted conversing with such hallowed Jaffna revivalists such as Sabapathy Navalar and Tamotaram Pillai in the early 1900's. During his meeting with Tamotaram Pillai, Adigal humbly offered his assistance for the project of editing the ancient Tamil classic, *Aka Nanuru* that Tamotaram Pillai was

90 See MMAD entry for 8th August 1898.

91 See MMAD entry for 17th October 1898.

92 Adigal noted on the 18th of February 1901 of sending his work *Murukotrivur Mumanik Kovai* to Swaminatha Aiyar by book post. See MMAD.
then involved in bringing in print. Thus, Adigal’s move to Madras enabled him to be at the intellectual and cultural centre of Tamil renaissance activities. His sensitivity to developments in the Tamil literary scholarship during this period is also evident when he noted casually of lending his copy of one of the earliest celebrated prose novels in Tamil, Prathap Mudaliar Saritham to a friend and student.

Equally significant with his move to Madras, was his exposure to the substantial Orientalist literature on India that was being published at the time as well as English literary and scholarly works in general. Although he was reading such works as Sundaram Pillai’s “Age of Tirujnana Sambhandar” before he moved to Madras, it was after his move that Adigal became increasingly immersed in Orientalist scholarship and English literary works. In his first year in Madras there is little reference to works by European authors in his diary entries. He was largely reading Tamil literary and religious works. Interestingly and tellingly, one of the earliest reference he makes to an English author in his diaries was in connection with the work of (Reverend) Robert Caldwell: “This morning I went to the (Madras Christian)

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93 Adigal noted conversing with Tamotaram Pillai on the 18th of March 1900. He also noted meeting and conversing with Sabapathy Naavar on the 6th of January 1902. See MMAD.

94 See MMAD entry for 19th February 1899.
College and read there Dr. Caldwell’s Comparative Dravidian Grammar." By the end of his first year in Madras the impact of residing in a city with a high degree of English intellectual and cultural influences is evident in his diary entries. 

Adigal also attempted to develop some personal connections with prominent European scholars he was reading. As early as 1899, Adigal was corresponding with G.U. Pope who was at this time Professor of Tamil and Telugu at Balioli College, Oxford. He was also corresponding with Julien Vinson (1843-1926), a French Orientalist engaged in Tamil studies. By 1900, Adigal was reading the India works of such well known Orientalist scholars as Max Muller, Monier Williams and Rhys Davids. Quite ironically, by the end of 1900, Adigal was particularly interested and impressed by the philological works of Max Muller. He had for example bought the two volume

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95 See MMAD, 06-12-1898.

96 Although there is not much evidence of his reading many works by European authors during his first year in Madras, he noted at the end of his diary for 1898 a list of books by European authors and their cost. They included Aristotles Metaphysics, Dhammapada by Max Muller, Buddhist Sutras translated by Rhys Davids, Hegel’s Philosophy, Origin of Species and Thubers Webers History of India. See MMAD.

97 They were works such as Max Muller’s India: What it can teach us, Monier William’s Religious Thought and Life in India and Rhys David’s Buddhist Sutras. Other works included Six Systems of Hindu Philosophy and Life of Ramakrishna by Max Muller and Religious Thought and Life in India by Monier Williams. See MMAD.
work, *The Science of Language* and within a few months also bought and read *Comparative Philology* and *Biographies of Words* by Max Muller. He was so impressed with the works that he wrote a letter to Muller on the 17th of October 1900 only to find that Muller had died a few days later. He noted in his diary: "This morning to my vexation and wonder I heard the sad news that Professor Max Muller died yesterday." 98 Despite his failure to communicate with Muller, his action nevertheless reveals that he saw himself moving into an intellectual circle that potentially included Max Muller.

Adigal also became increasingly interested in English literary works with his move to Madras. He liked what were considered to be higher literary works as well as the more popular novels. His tastes ranged from Dryden’s poems and Goethe in translation to the sensational and erotic multi-volume work, *The Mysteries of the Court of London*, by G.W. M. Reynold. As early as the 22nd of January 1899 he noted: "...Read Macaulay’s essay on Milton..." A few months later on the 3rd of June 1899, he noted: "I went to Thompson and Company and bought for 11 annas two novels by George Reynold..." 99 On the 15th of July 1901: "I received the packet containing Macaulay’s England...Hume by Huxley, Burke by

98 See MMAD, 30-10-1900.

99 See MMAD, 03-06-1899.
Morley...I bought Plutarch Heroes, Burke’s Essays on the Sublime and Beautiful, Dryden’s Poems and Goethe of Cassels." One of his favourite English works was John Ruskin’s Modern Painters. His diaries reveal a steady increase in the number of works by European authors he was reading after his first year in Madras.

Although it will be difficult to discern precisely the impact of these works on Adigal, his taste for such Orientalist works on India combined with his taste for many of the English literary authors steeped in the Victorian, idealist and romantic tradition point strongly towards the nature of the impact. Many of Adigal’s later writings do indeed reveal his concern with high “religio-mystical” culture reminiscent of the concerns of the Orientalists, and almost a Victorian romantic and idealist sensibility regarding life, art, and literature reminiscent of the English literary impact.

The cosmopolitan cultural impact of MCC and Madras city is also evident from his diary entries during this period. He noted with much excitement on the 6th of January 1899 of finding an ideal opportunity to learn Telugu. The next day he noted of having a long conversation with a Hindustani munshi

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100 See MMAD.
101 See MMAD, 1899.
on the Islamic religious principle enunciated in the Koran. Adigal gradually became increasingly absorbed in the cosmopolitan middle class, anglicised urban culture of Madras city. One of the early signs of this change is revealed by his increasing taste for acquiring paintings both by contemporary European and Indian painters. By 1901 he had become an avid fan of Ravi Varma’s paintings. Ravi Varma, whose paintings appealed especially to the early Indian nationalists, in many ways represented the vision and tastes of the emerging English-educated Hindu middle classes. It is hardly surprising then, that his paintings were quite popular among many of the English-educated middle classes of the time. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, the pioneer Hindu nationalist, particularly liked the paintings of Ravi Varma and as a result the paintings often appeared in his journal Modern Review. Ravi Varma captured in his painting a vision of the past of Hindu India, embellished and transformed by the English colonial impact.

Promoting Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil Associations in Madras

Adigal with his move to Madras entered a world of Tamil/Saivite revival whose foundation had been laid by the

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102 See MMAD, 06. 07-01-1899.

103 Adigal noted on the 5th of September 1901 in his diary: "Today evening I went with Annamalai to Kingilee and bought five pictures of Ravi Varma for Rs.1-4as." See MMAD.
closing decades of the nineteenth century. By the time of his arrival in the city in early 1898, there were a number of organizations and associations that promoted Saivism, Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil in the city. Their existence by the time of his arrival clearly indicates that Tamil/Saivite revival was emerging as a significant force in the city. However, not enough information is available of these various organizations, their leaders or the factional battles and rivalries between them. Although, Adigal may have attended many such organizations, it is clear that he clearly identified himself with Nayakar and his brand of Saiva Siddhanta revival. It is not clear where Nayakar’s brand of Saiva Siddhanta revival was specifically located within the wide range of Saiva Siddhanta revivalist attempts in the city. However, what is clear is that its main rival for power and influence was the Tamil/Saivite revival that had its origin in Jaffna, Sri Lanka. As mentioned earlier (Chapter Two) the Jaffna-led revival was much more conservative and did not embrace an anti-Brahminical Dravidian ideology. There were tensions between Nayakar and his followers’ brand of Saiva Siddhanta revival and those propagated by the disciples of Arumuga Navalar in city. The Jaffna-led Saivite/Tamil revival represented at this time by figures such as Sabapathy Navalar and N. Kathiraverpillai were a significant presence in Tamil
Nadu during the time of Nayakar as well as during the early part of Adigal’s life in the city. Adigal’s refutation of a section of the Jaffna revivalist, Sabapathy Navalar’s work, in early 1900 reveals that he was not only working for the revival of Saiva Siddhanta, but perhaps more importantly for an interpretation of it that was opposed to that advocated by many Jaffna revivalists such as Sabapathy Navalars.

Being a disciple of Nayakar did not prevent Adigal from taking his own initiative in organizing and participating in Saiva Siddhhanta and Tamil revivalist associations in the city. Just two months after his arrival in Madras, Adigal noted in his diary the long discussion he had with Suryanarayan Sastri, Anavarathavinayagam Pillai and Balasundara Mudaliar on starting a Tamil Saiva Siddhanta Sabha in Madras: “I went this early morning to Mr. Suryanarayana Sastri avargal and took him with Mr. Anavarathavinayagam Pillai to Mr. Balasundara Mudaliar avargal’s house. We had a long conversation about to start a Tamil Saiva Siddhanta Sabha.” Adigal’s emphasis here on “Tamil Saiva Siddhanta Sabha” may be read as “Dravidian Saiva Siddhanta Sabha.”

104 Adigal noted in his diary entry for the 31st January 1900, that the article he had written, "Munimoli Prakasikai", refuting Sabapathy Navalar’s, "Munimoli" was praised by Suryanarayana Sastri. See MMAD.

105 See MMAD entry for 24-4-1898.
his own youthful, dynamic organizational skills to further Nayakar's Saiva Siddhanta revivalist efforts. Adigal's efforts were only formally realized two years later on the 10th of December 1900, when a formal notice was read at the house of Nayakar, for the formation of an association called Vedaga Mokta Saiva Siddhanta Sabai with around thirty founding members. The inaugural management committee meeting was held at the Thondaimandalam High School on the 23rd of December 1900. Adigal noted of this meeting: "This evening I went to the Thondaimandala High School in order to arrange for the managing committee meeting. Then at 7.0 clock Mr. T. Balasundara Mudaliar presided and the members present were Mr. Kalyanasundara Nadar, Mr. Vedachalam Mudaliar, Mr. Somasundaram Mudaliar and Mr. Narayanasamy Naicker." Judging by the names of the members of the management committee, the committee included at least a member from the Nadar and Vanniar castes aside from Vellalar. In marked contrast to the Jaffna Saivite/Tamil revival, which was mostly led by Vellalar's with a sprinkling of Chettys and Brahmins, the caste composition of the leading members of the Vedagamotkta Saiva Siddhanta Sabai certainly reveals a more eclectic non-

106 Adigal noted in his diary: "This evening I went to Sri La Sri Nayakar avargal and there we read the notice to form Vedaga Mokta Saiva Siddhanta Sabai and some thirty persons became members." Adigal claimed later that this organisation had been established by Nayakar thirty years ago, it seems that it was revived again at this time. See MMAD entry for 10-12-1900.
Brahmin caste basis of Nayakar’s and Adigal’s revivalist efforts.

Adigal also actively participated in and promoted Tamil revivalist associations from the time of his arrival in Madras. He noted only six months after his arrival in the city, “This morning Mr. Anavaratha Vinayagam Pillai came to visit me for the purpose of receiving rules for the Tamil society they have newly formed...In the noon I went to the Christian College and presided in the meeting by some form five students by the name of "Dravida Kala Bodhini." There were other organizations with similar mandates that Adigal actively patronized as his note on the 12th February, 1900 reveals, “This evening I presided in the Dravida Basha Sangam of our College students and in the Thondaimandal Dravida Sangam.”

The existence of these various Tamil associations, associated with the many schools and Colleges in the city certainly confirms that the foundations for a Tamil linguistic revival was being laid by the closing decades of the nineteenth century.

Death of Nayakar

Roughly two months after the formation of the Vedaga

107 See MMAD entry for 15th October 1898.

108 See MMAD.
Mokta Saiya Siddhanta Sabhai, in February 1901, Nayakar was hopelessly ill. Adigal noted in his diary on the 19th of February 1901:

This early morning too, I went to Choolai, there Sri La Sri Somasundara Nayagar avargal was hopelessly ill. His holiness Shanmuga Yogin according to my request came and saw him and expressed his view that he would live only for three or four days...This evening with my family I went to Choolai and stayed the whole night there only.

Although Adigal did not express much anxiety or sorrow at Nayakar's imminent death in his diaries, the fact that he along with his family spent the entire night at Nayakar's house confirms their close relationship. He noted the death of Nayakar two days later on the 22nd of February 1901:

In this evening...I started for Purasavakam and on my way I went to Choolai and saw Sri La Sri Somasundara Nayagar avargal, was covered with cold and in the last moments. In my way home I went to Nayagar who lay dead then.

He also noted of attending the final rites of Nayakar:

In the morning with my wife I went to Choolai and attended the ceremony to the end of burning the corpse; at the eve of removing the corpse I delivered a speech, which was very touching and myself weeping.

These observations suggest that at least towards the end of

109 See MMAD entry for 19-02-1901.

110 See MMAD entry for 22-02-1901.

111 See MMAD entry for the 23-02-1901.
Nayakar’s life, Adigal was perhaps his closest and most intimate of disciples. This is also suggested by the fact that many of the letters of condolence from Saiva Siddhanta revivalists and Tamil scholars were addressed to Adigal. Letters and at times financial contributions, came from such prominent revivalist figures as Veerappa Chettiar, U.V. Swaminatha Iyer, and Singaravelu Mudaliar. Nallaswami Pillai too, came down to Madras at the news of Nayakar’s death and Adigal who was attempting to verify some biographical information on Nayakar, noted on the 25th February 1901: “Sri La Sri Nayakar avargal resigned his post in the municipal office in the year 1872; Kanga 1862. This morning too, I had an interview with Mr. J.M. Nallaswamy Pillai avargal, the great patron of S.L.S Nayakar avargal. The years referred to above may be incorrect...” The word Kanga may be a shortened form of the Tamil word Kangani meaning supervisor. In Adigal’s biography of Nayakar, Adigal claimed that Nayakar worked as an account keeper at a leather factory before he was employed as a clerk in the municipal government.

Adigal also observed in his diaries that thousands of people gathered to commemorate his passing away, a month later on the 10th of March 1901, including many prominent figures

112 In addition, Adigal’s Tamil teacher Narayanasamy Pillai and Nallaswmy Pillai requested Adigal to compose some verses based on the lines they had sent expressing their grief. See MMAD.
who recited poems they had composed in honour of Nayakar. The ceremony was closed with a short speech by Adigal and a recital of the poems he had composed in honour of Nayakar. Adigal in his short speech in honour of Nayakar appealed for the construction of a monument for Nayakar. The poems he composed in honour of Nayakar were published under the title Somasundara Kanchi.  

Although Thirunavukkarasu’s biography of Adigal describes the loss of Nayakar as a tremendous blow for Adigal, a blow from which he needed a year to recover, Adigal’s diary entries reveal little of its debilitating impact. There is little reference to any sense of despair or sadness at the loss of his guru. Aside from attending to Nayakar’s death by organising a fund for Nayakar’s family debts and a memorial for Nayakar, Adigal carried on his usual busy schedule of social engagements with Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil revivalists as well as with his own writings. The loss of Nayakar also did not stop him from being embroiled soon after in the

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113 See MMAD.

114 According to Tirunavukkarasu, Adigal was depressed for at least a year after Nayakar’s death. He also added that Adigal’s life in Madras lost its sweetness after the loss of Nayakar.

115 Adigal also noted that a meeting was held at Tondaimandala High School where it was decided that a general meeting should be held to select an organizing committee for a memorial for Nayakar. See MMAD entry for 15th April 1901.
debates that followed criticisms by Tamil pandits of his "Somasundara Kanchi" on the basis of its alleged grammatical errors, many of whom had Jaffna revivalist, leanings. Adigal published most of his rebuttals in Suryanarayana Sastri's journal Jnana Bodhini.  

Claiming Nayakar's Mantle

Nayakar's death provided a great impetus for Adigal to identify himself and emerge as a major spokesman and propagandise for Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil in his own right. The death of his guru bestowed upon Adigal at least some of Nayakar's reputation and legitimacy as a major spokesman for Saiva Siddhanta in Tamil Nadu. Adigal, by launching his own journal devoted primarily to Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil, soon after the death of Nayakar, sought to utilize this legacy of Nayakar to emerge as an important spokesman for Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil.  

Scarcely eight months after the death of Nayakar, Adigal began posting copies of his own works as well as announcing the imminent launching of his Tamil monthly

116 Critiques of Adigal's work had titles such as Somasundara Kanchiabasa. See MMAD entry for 09-05-1901.

117 As if taking the place of Nayakar, Adigal began teaching Saivite works soon after the death of Nayakar to some members of the circle of Saiva Siddhantists associated with Nayakar. See MMAD.
journal, Jnanacagaram (Ocean of Wisdom) to people and institutions connected with Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil. They included institutions such as Sivainanaprakasa Sabha, Tuticorin and individuals such as Rangasamy Naicker, J. M. Nallaswamy Pillai, Madurainayakam Pillai and Kalyanasundara Mudaliar. He also visited various individuals and institutions in order to gather subscribers for his forthcoming journal.

Adigal by this time had come to know many of the prominent patrons of Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil and he utilized their patronage to begin his journal. He also enlisted subscribers from his students at MCC. By undertaking such a campaign soon after the death of Nayakar, Adigal was clearly aiming to claim the mantle of Nayakar.

Adigal launched Jnanacagaram as the official organ of the Vedaga Mokta Saiva Siddhanta Sabha, an organization which bore the stamp of Somasundara Nayakar. The launching of the journal, the organization that it represented and the nature of its patrons are significant, since both Adigal and the revival that he led played a significant role in the revival

\footnote{For example he noted in his diary on the 5th of October 1901: "I sent 10 books of Sivabhasa Vaibavam to the secretary of Sivagnanaprakasa sabha Tuticorin, 3 books to Mr. Madurai Nayakam Pillai, 1+Mummanikovai to Mr. Arumuka Nainar with accompanying letters." See MMAD.}

\footnote{He refers to visiting such places in his diaries. See MMAD entries from mid October 1901.}
of Saiva Siddhanta in South India. Adigal was particularly careful to obtain the support of Rangasamy Nayakar, a person most likely close to or related to Nayakar. It was to Rangasamy Nayakar that Adigal wrote to suggest rules for the patrons of the journal. Prominent patrons of the journal included, J.M. Nallaswamy Pillai, S. Singaravelu Mudaliar, Siva Arunagiri Mudaliar, Madurai Nayagam Pillai, Munusami Pillai, Kalyanasundara Nadar and Gnababhadara Mudaliar. Letters announcing the launch of the journal were sent to many prominent Tamil pundits in both India and Sri Lanka. The first issue of the journal was launched in January 1902 and copies of the journal aside from being distributed at Madras Christian College were sent to wealthy and powerful patrons of Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil such as Pandithurai Thevar (1867-1911), zamindar of Palavannattam.

Adigal’s introduction to the first issue of the journal reveals not only the figures and associations that came forward to help establish the journal but also reveals the

120 These were only some of the patrons. Others included Arunachalam Chettiar a contractor from Dinndivanam and P.V. Sabapathy Mudaliar. See MMAD.

121 On the 25th of January 1902 Adigal recorded in his diary:"I was busily engaged in sending my magazines to the patrons and the subscribers..."See MMAD.

122 On March 31st 1902 Adigal noted in his diaries that the first issue of the journal was sent to Pandithurai Thevar and J. M. Nallaswami Pillai. Adigal noted on the 23rd of April 1902, "twenty three copies have been distributed in the College." See MMAD.
role that he envisaged both for himself and the journal in the revival of Saiva Siddhanta. Revealing the kind of figures who provided the crucial early support for the journal, Adigal in the introduction, especially thanked, "Dindivanam, supervisor, K. Singaravelu Mudaliar, Nagai-Velipalayam, Saiva Siddhanta Sabai, member, Madurai Nayagam Pillai and St. Joseph College Tamil Pundit, Sri. Savariraya Pillai, not only for offering their services but also aiding by enlisting others who would support the journal." Revealing that he was able to rely on the support base he had in his home town of Nagapattinam, Adigal especially emphasised Madurai Nayagam Pillai’s help, “through whose efforts the journal was able to get the backing and financial support of Nagai-Velipalayam Saiva Siddhanta Sabai.” The appeal he made to his readers for greater support also reveals the kind of figures who were supporting his venture as well as his grand design for himself, the journal and the revival of Saiva Siddhanta:

If we get such help as we did from these Pillais and Mudaliar from all the other wealthy patrons of Saiva Siddhanta is there any doubt that this

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123 See Jnanacagaram, Vol.1, No.1, Jan, 1902, pp.3-4. (My translation)

124 In addition in the twelfth issue of the journal published at the end of 1902 he listed nine individuals whom he specifically thanked for providing all kinds of help with the journal. They were A. Kumaraswamy Pillai, T. Savariraya Pillai, Thiru Mylai Sanmugam Pillai, Makaral Karthigeya Mudaliyar, Mu. Ragava Iyengar, A. Sanmugam Pillai, T. Nallathambi Pillai, Supramania Pillai and A. Sathasiva Desikar. These names are important in tracing the support base for Adigal’s venture. Jnanacagaram, December, 1902, p. 2. (My translation)
journal will flourish. Like the way the Nagai-Velipalayam Saiva Siddhanta Sabai patronised and claimed this journal, if all the other Saiva Siddhanta Sabais in such places as Thirisirapuram, Uraiyoor, Salem, Coimbattor and Thuthukudi did, there will be little difficulty in publishing this organ of Saivism. Won’t this also enable the various Saiva Siddhanta organisations to come together as one and serve the world. I pray to the divine that all members of the various Saiva Siddhanta organisations will realize this and support this venture and through it obtain grace and fame.  

Strongly presenting the journal as the organ of Vedasa Moktha Saiva Siddhanta Sabai (VMSS), and as the most sincere legacy of Nayakar, Adigal proceeded: “The VMSS was founded by Nayakar thirty years ago for prolongating Saiva Siddhanta in South India.” Since the death of Nayakar, however, Adigal lamented, “the followers have become discouraged and lazy. Even during Nayakar’s life time many became gradually discouraged.” The reasons were plain for Adigal, the followers were largely motivated by personal aggrandisement and selfishness. He continued: “Even after the death of Nayakar these Saivites did not reform and work cooperatively for the greater cause of Saiva Siddhanta, but instead are intent on becoming sole

125 ibid., p.4.

126 Adigal wrote: “Some who in Nayakar’s presence spoke sweetly with him and promised to do important works, when away were mainly concerned with their own wealth. Others who served Nayakar gaining some knowledge in the process, were driven by their egoistic desire to emulate Nayakar and went around giving lectures in which they would even criticize Nayakar, indulging in traitorous activities against their guru.” ibid.
spokesmen for Saiva Siddhanta." By thus presenting a vision of disarray and disorganization, Adigal sought to build sympathy for his own efforts to resurrect the tradition of Nayakar. In his words, it was to prevent this decline that the journal was started by "some real followers of Nayakar who are only concerned with the work of prolonging Saivism and thus decided on some firm steps to revitalize the organisation." These steps were then outlined as objectives and rules for the journal. They are worth citing at length since they reveal Adigal's bold attempt, utilizing the legacy of Nayakar, to centralize under the sole leadership of the journal and the Vedaga Moktha Saiva Siddhanta Sabha the various Saiva Siddhanta Associations in Tamil Nadu. He wrote:

Our journal Jnanacagaram will be considered the organ of the Vedakamoktha Saiva Siddhanta Sabha; Since it is wrong to induct new members to this organisation the subscribers to this journal will be considered the members of this organisation; The honorary patrons of this journals would be considered the organisational committee members of this organisation and the editor of this journal will be considered the secretary of the organisation; Since the Saiva organisations in places such as Nagapattinam were formed and are functioning due to the good work of Nayakar, and since the members of these organisations are as a result obligated to Nayakar, these organisations should give their permission to be considered the branches of the Vedakamoktha Saiva Siddhanta Sabha.

Emphasising his grand plans for both the journal's and VMSS's

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127 ibid., pp. 4-5.
128 ibid., pp.4-5. (My translation)
role in the revival of Saiva Siddhanta in South Indian, he continued:

Thus, the Vedakarnoktha Saiva Siddhanta Sabai will be considered the central body for all these societies and will be respected as being united in the service of propagating Saivism. This would help the spread of Saivam in the world; If members of these organisations and others could help according to their own capacities financially, the money could be used to build a fine building in the city of Madras. In it will be housed the pictures of religious teachers and the picture of Sri La Sri Nayakar as well as the establishment of a printing press for the publication of this journal as well as other Saivite works; On behalf of this organisation there will be a monthly lecture given in the city of Madras; There will also be an annual meeting and celebration which would take place in a major city where all the organisations will gather under the common name of Vedakarnoktha Saiva Siddhanta Sabai; Those who wish to make their organisations a branch of the Vedantamoktha Saiva Siddhanta Sabai should honour and esteem this journal.

It was through such a strategy that Adigal sought to position the journal and himself at the centre of Saiva Siddhanta revival in Tamil Nadu.¹²⁹

Through the rules and conditions he outlined, Adigal clearly sought not only to gain the mantle of Nayakar but also to become the leader of a revitalized Vedakarnoktha Saiva Siddhanta Sabai that would serve as the sole voice for all Saiva Siddhanta organisations in Tamil Nadu. Through centring

¹²⁹ Adigal ended his list of rules by observing, "If you need more detailed information or you wish to join this organisation please contact me." The introduction ended by not only reminding the readers of Nayakar's great service for the cause of Saiva Siddhanta but also by declaring the journal's intention to publish a biography of Nayakar as a series of articles in the journal. ibid., pp.5-6.(My translation)
Nayakar as the sole voice of Saiva Siddhanta revival in Tamil Nadu, the journal also sought to marginalise the voices of other prominent Saiva Siddhantists in Tamil Nadu, most particularly the more conservative Jaffna-centred, Navalar wing. One cannot help admiring the skill and logic with which Adigal attempted to take over the reins of power from the ashes of Nayakar’s disintegrated empire.

The nature of the articles that Adigal wrote for the journal reveal that he was not merely attempting to propagate Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil but was conscientiously attempting to disseminate a “Dravidian” reading of both Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil. The titles of the articles that he wrote for the early issues of journal themselves reveal this concern and mandate. They reveal more clearly the kind of scholarly arsenal that Adigal brought to Nayakar’s revivalist campaign. They included, *Thamil Vadamoolivininru Piranthathama?* (Was Tamil born from Sanscrit?), *Saivarum Saivanilaiyum* (Saivites and the status of Saivism) *Manickavacakar Kalanirnavam* (The determination of the period of Saint Manikavacagar), *Sakalopasanai* (Image Worship), *Kenopadatha Molipeyarpur* (Translation of Keno Upanishad), *Thamil Mikappalaivamoli* (Tamil is a very ancient language) *Tolkappiya Pariselalanam* (An Examination of Tolkappiam) and *Parimelalakar Uraiaraichi* (Research on the commentary of Parimel alagar).
Thus, in propagating a Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil revival through his journal, Adigal sought to re-interpret and present a "Dravidian" reading of this Saivite/Tamil tradition. Much in the fashion of his predecessor, Sundaram Pillai, Adigal utilized European scholarly disciplines and methods such as philology, history, archeology, literary studies and Orientalist scholarship to buttress his arguments. It is in this regard that Adigal's articles and his journal, as he himself argued, deserved to be regarded as rare and path-breaking in the Tamil intellectual milieu.

The indelible and early impact of philological science and particularly Caldwell's work on Adigal can be seen in one of the earliest articles he wrote for Jnanacagaram, "Thamil Vadamolivenilinru Piranthathama?" (Was Tamil Born of Sanscrit?). The article is both a fine introduction to the basic principles of philology and a tightly argued piece of work that asserts systematically and logically the case for looking at Tamil and Sanskrit as languages having independent origins which only later came into contact. Although, Adigal cited a few European philologists such as Max Muller to buttress his arguments he presented his findings as if they were anything but logical deductions based on common sense and a sound knowledge of Tamil. The archaic Tamil prose style Adigal deployed masked the fact that he was incorporating
methodologies and conclusions derived from European scholarship. As a result the reader is left with an impression that he or she is reading the writing of a “traditional” and “authentic” Tamil pundit having access to esoteric yet definitive local Tamil knowledge, rather than reading the findings derived from a process of intellectual hybridization. What is perhaps most important to note here is that Adigal by the year 1902 was utilizing Caldwell’s scholarship on South Indian languages for his own revivalist efforts. His selective utilization of Caldwell’s ideas clearly provided him with an ideological weapon with which to both appeal for a “Dravidian” reading of Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil revival at the same time as question the ascendancy of Brahminical culture, including neo-Vedanta and Sanskrit in South India. This in fact is the key to understanding Adigal’s writing and explains the unusual power and popularity that his work came to receive.

Adigal clearly felt that what he was offering through his journal was unique and innovative. In his short review of the first twelve issues of Jnanacagaram at the end of 1902, Adigal underlined his commitment to providing what he felt to be the only learned journal in the Tamil world which addressed important subjects at a high intellectual level. Replying to some of the criticisms levelled against the difficult and archaic Tamil prose style of the journal, Adigal replied that
the Tamil prose style used was both necessary and appropriate since only such a "high style" would do justice to the calibre of the articles contained within its covers. Jnanacagaram played a central role in Adigal's career and was the central vehicle for his creative and intellectual output throughout most of his life. Many of the books he later published as well as his speeches first appeared as articles in Jnanacagaram.

Like Adigal's earlier writings, Jnanacagaram attracted controversy. There was significant opposition from more "traditional" Tamil pundits to Adigal's "Dravidian" reading of the Tamil/Saivite tradition. The more "traditional" Tamil pundits who were not as opposed to the influence of Brahminical culture as Adigal, found his "Dravidian" reading of the Tamil/Saivite tradition questionable and perhaps even a little threatening to the traditional socio-cultural order and consensus they helped maintain. Perhaps the most formidable critic of Adigal at this time was N. Kathiraverpillai, the contemporary representative of Navalar's brand of

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130 Adigal wrote:"If you want to buy ordinary journals you can buy them by the hundreds; You should not approach rare journals this way. The editors of the ordinary magazines with a view to making a profit publish articles that contain simple items that are already known by the masses. We are however unconcerned with such selfish motives as profit making and are motivated solely by the desire to disseminate and cultivate greater knowledge among the Tamil people in publishing our journal." He followed it up by lamenting "that in this great and pure Tamil land of ours, there are so few Tamils who are well educated in Tamil" and reminding his readers that "all those who are well educated know full well that there are no other journals which contain such fine articles in such good Tamil in this country." ibid.
Saivite/Tamil revival in Tamil Nadu. The ensuing battle between figures such as Kathiraverpillai and Adigal not only reveals the pioneer nature of Adigal’s intervention, but also more importantly heralded the slow ascendancy of Nayakar’s brand of Saiva Siddhanta revival over the brand of revival introduced by the Jaffna Saivites in Tamil Nadu.

Adigal’s battle with Kathiravel Pillai is evident from the early issues of Jnanacagaram. Adigal often attempted to counter Kathiravel Pillai’s criticisms by publishing other Jaffna pundits’ praise of his work. In the twelfth issue of Jnanacagaram the inside cover carried a short article in the form of a notice by Innuvil Indu Kumara Sabai (Innuvil Hindu young men’s association) of Jaffna, which praised Adigal and provided almost a hagiographical account of Adigal and his works to date. The notice also expressed shock and surprise at some of the criticisms that Adigal’s work, Somasundara Kanchi, particularly of the verses Thapatha Nilai and Kaiyaru Nilai had received.

This short notice was followed by a brief article in which Adigal countered the criticisms directed against him by Kathiraverpillai which had appeared in the journal Boooga Nanban. Dismissing Kathiraverpillai’s criticisms as the jealous ravings of a man with little ability or knowledge, Adigal asserted that he only felt pity for such a man. With
the same patronizing tone, Adigal dealt with some of the more personal aspects of the criticism. Citing Kathiraverepillai’s criticism of his “spectacled appearance”, “wearing of vest and underwear” and his “wearing of sandals and his confident and erect gait,” Adigal questioned how it was relevant or fruitful to their literary and grammatical debates and differences, and warned him that if he persisted with such personal attacks, he would hear from government authorities. The very personal nature of the attack itself reveals an important dimension of the conflict. These “western” trappings of Adigal were for Kathiraverepillai a symbol and metaphor of Adigal’s “illegitimate” utilization of western ideas and methods.

Continuing his rebuttal to Kathiraverepillai, Adigal condemned Kathiraverepillai’s approach of debating only in the presence of his own supporters. He invited Kathiraverepillai, instead, to a debate in the presence of learned Tamil pundits, particularly those well versed in ancient Tamil works from both Jaffna and Tamil Nadu. He argued that it was only in the presence of such learned men that the debate could be conducted in a fair manner. Adigal’s emphasis here on Tamil pundits well versed in ancient Tamil works as the only suitable judges reveals not only his own emphasis on the ancient Tamil works as the “authentic” Tamil tradition but also his belief that only those well versed in such works
could give a fair hearing to his vision and arguments.

The final part of Adigal’s rebuttal however is the most revealing. It reveals the major source of difference between Kathirverpillai’s approach and Adigal’s—it is devoted to rebutting Kathiraverpillai’s critical if not cynical reference to Adigal’s utilization of English scholarship in his writings. Adigal’s rebuttal again was cool and patronizing. He wrote:

> It is only natural that those who have not seen or experienced the rare erudition or the broad and marvellous research of the English scholars would curse both me and the English scholars. Like the fox who, try as it may, not being able to reach the grapes, ends up going away cursing the grapes, he (Kathiraverpillai) due to his lack of proficiency in English is cursing the English scholars without realizing their rare greatness. This, despite him enjoying the great facilities and benefits that India has gained from the contributions of these European scholars. It is both ignorant and ungrateful of him to criticise and condemn these English scholars.”

Adigal ended his argument by citing a couplet from the ancient Tamil classic *Thirukkural* which reads: “What-ever, from whom-ever you hear it. To find the truth in it is wisdom.” These exchanges between Adigal and Kathiraverpillai reveal the underlying differences in their vision of the Tamil/Saivite past and Tamil/Saivite revival. The conservative wing of the Saiva Siddhanta revivalists represented by Kathiravel Pillai clearly was not comfortable with Adigal’s utilization of

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131 See back cover, Janacagaram, 1902, Vol.1.(November-December)(My translation)
European scholarship to legitimize his arguments and assertions. Kathiraverpillai's criticism of Adigal's "western" or "fancy" deportment combined with his criticism of Adigal's utilization of English scholarship clearly reveals how Kathiraverpillai saw himself in relation to Adigal and his works. It reveals that Kathiraverpillai saw himself as a "traditional" Tamil\Saiva pundit and Adigal as a new and fancy brand of Tamil\Saiva pundits whose "modern research" methods were inimical to that "real" tradition. The persistence of this fundamental divide between the two wings of Saiva Siddhanta revival is indeed surprising. The assessment of Adigal by Kathiraverpillai's student Tiru, Vi. Kalyanasundara Mudaliar confirms the stubborn persistence of this divide—that despite his admiration for Adigal he could not agree with Adigal's "modern" researches into Hinduism or the Tamil past.¹³² Consistent with this fundamental ideological divide, Tiru. Vi. Ka despite being a prominent Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil revivalist was one of the greatest non-Brahmin champions of Indian nationalism.

Arutpa/Marutpa Debate

The underlying socio-cultural roots and basis of the differences between the two revivalist streams came to the

¹³² See Kalyanasundara Mudaliar, Tiru Vi Ka Valkaik Kuripukal.
fore in the Arutpa/Marutpa (Sacred hymns/Dark hymns) conflict that erupted again in the beginning of the century. The Arutpa/Marutpa conflict was a continuation of a conflict that had first taken place between Ramalinga (1823-1874) and Arumuga Navalar (1823-1879). The original controversy arose over whether the hymns composed by Ramalinga should be called Tiruvarutpa (sacred hymns) comparable to the hymns of the canonised medieval Saivite saints. Navalar was the chief spokesman against calling Ramalinga’s hymns Tiruvarutpa. He argued that it would be wrong to place Ramalinga’s hymns on the same level as the hymns of the four canonised Saivite saints (nayanmars) whose hymns alone were up until then considered as Tiruvarutpa and whose divine inspiration was regarded beyond question. Navalar and his followers argued that Ramalinga’s hymns should simply be called Ramalinga’s hymns like those of many other ordinary Saivite religious figures. These debates took place in the latter part of 1860's.\(^{133}\)

They re-surfaced in the early 1900's, and this time the main contenders were N. Kathiravel Pillai (1871-1907), representing the Navalar view, and Maraimalai Adigal, representing the

\(^{133}\) The Sri Lankan Tamil scholar, Poolokasingam, argues that it was a false debate drummed up by opponents of Navalar in Tamil Nadu, especially the Dikshitar Brahmins at Chidambaram. See P. Poolokasingam, \textit{Eelam Thantha Navalar}, (Navalar, Eelam’s Gift), Madras:Kanthalagam, 1993, pp. 186-214.
views of Ramalinga. The Arutpa/Marutpa debate, both at the time of Navalar and Kathiravel Pillai in many ways reflected the tensions and contradictions between the Jaffna-centred Saivite/Tamil revival and Tamil Nadu Saivite/Tamil revival. However, these debates and controversies continue to be treated in contemporary scholarship as reflecting anything but the personal differences and idiosyncrasies between its main protagonists. Such a view obscures the fact that these debates in many ways reflect the process through which Tamil Nadu Saivite/Tamil revival both differentiated itself and eclipsed the earlier dominance of Jaffna revivalists in Tamil Nadu.¹³⁴¹³⁵

Consonant with the approaches of the extant scholarship, there is also much controversy over the actual events that led to the Arutpa/Marutpa conflict during the time of Ramalinga as well as during Adigal’s time. Recent revisionist scholarship from Jaffna argues that this entire Arutpa/Marutpa controversy was invented to disempower and decry the services and significance of Jaffna Tamil revivalist contributions in Tamil Nadu.¹³⁵ Although this thesis certainly contains some element

¹³⁴ Poolokasingam’s work unwittingly suggests this despite the fact that he prefers to see these conflicts as being precipitated by Tamil Nadu revivalist’s jealousy over the power and prestige of Jaffna revivalists in Tamil Nadu. See Poolokasingam, Eelam Thantha, pp. 220-46.

¹³⁵ Poolokasingam argues that the episode was instigated by the jealousy of Dikshitar Brahmins at Chidambaram over Navalar’s criticism of their negligence and disregard for Agama centric temple rituals and practices. See Pulokasingam, Eelam Thantha.
of truth, it neglects to consider the tremendous ideological differences that prevailed between the two camps and its role in the conflict. What is clear however, is that there was significant wrangling over the increasing use of Ramalinga’s verses in Temples in Tamil Nadu beginning in the 1860’s. The conventional account of the conflict reads something like this: The conflict began when supporters of Ramalinga, incensed by Navalar’s criticism of *Arutpa*, posted notices in public places condemning Navalar and his views. Navalar’s supporters in turn condemned Ramalinga’s *Arutpa* and described it facetiously as *Marutpa* (Dark hymns). The tensions reached such a high pitch that the matter was taken to court at Kadaloor where Navalar and Ramalinga faced each other.  

According to Thiru V. Kalyanasundara Mudaliar, Ramalinga’s supporters were found guilty on the matter of posting notices in public condemning Navalar.  

Poolokasingam, who presents the episode as having been instigated by Dikshitar Brahmins’, anger at Navalar’s criticism of their negligence of Agama-centred temple rituals and practices, asserts that the court case was over an incident that took place at a meeting at

136 This whole episode is described in Thirunavukkarasu, *Maraimalai Adigal*, pp.40-49.


138 Dikshitar Brahmin priests at Chidambaram, although they claim to be Saivite priests, privilege a Vedic interpretation of ritual and worship rather than an agamic centered one privileged by the Tamil Saivites.
Chidambaram Siva temple on June 17th 1869. In the meeting Navalar spoke of the need for Dikshitar priests at this important Saivite temple to be suitably qualified in Agamic temple rituals. Incensed by Navalar’s criticisms and recommendations, some of the priests not only publicly insulted him but threatened assault. Ramalinga, who was also present during the meeting, was charged by Navalar of publicly disgracing him.¹³³

A similar narrative is offered by Poolokasingam regarding the revived Arutpa/Marutpa conflict beginning in the early 1900's between Kathiravarpillai and Adigal. Here again he argued that this “false Arutpa/Marutpa” conflict was instigated by a segment of Tamil Nadu Saivite scholars’ jealousy over Kathiravarpillai’s popularity and service to Saivite/Tamil revival in Tamil Nadu. He also argued after listing many of the services to Saivism in Tamil Nadu by Kathiravarpillai, that the conflict between Kathiravel Pillai and Adigal was preceded by conflicts between Kathiravel Pillai and Saivite/Tamil scholars in Tamil Nadu. Revealing also the important social dimension of the conflict, he argued that the conflict took on a “narrow provincial” dimension when Kathiravarpillai began defending Navalar’s view that Vellalars were Sudras. A segment of Tamil Nadu Saivite/Tamil scholars

¹³³ Poolokasingam, Eelam Thantha. p. 203.
who argued that Vellalars were Vaishyas were incensed by Kathiraverpillai’s defence of Navalar’s views and began attacking not only Kathiraverpillai but the contributions of Jaffna Saivite scholars including Navalar and Tamotaram Pillai. He also makes an important observation when he notes that it was only in the latter stage of the conflict around 1903 that Adigal began participating in the conflict and became the leader of a party that was opposed to Kathiraverpillai.\footnote{Poolokasingam, \textit{Eelam Thantha}, pp. 238-39.}

From a close reading of Poolokasingam’s narrative, it is evident that the conflict between Navalar and Ramalinga swamigal as well as that between Kathiraverpillai and Adigal,\footnote{According to Thirunavukkarasu’s account the renewed debate was instigated by Kathiraverpillai’s publication of a book entitled Marutpa and his lectures throughout the Tamil areas condemning both Ramalinga swamigal and his collection of verses. Thirunavukkarasu, \textit{Maraimalai Adigal}, p.43.} reflected a much deeper ideological divide between the two camps. His assertion that it was the debate over the Varna status of the Vellalar that finally triggered the attack against the Jaffna Saivites itself, confirms the social basis of these conflicts. It also confirm the more conservative and orthodox position of the Jaffna Saivites relative to the Ramalinga faction, on matters such as caste and ritual practices. It is hardly surprising that Ramalinga’s reformist
vision appealed to Adigal whose own Tamil and Saiva Siddhanta gurus were not from the “purer” (Sat) Sudra Vellalar castes. Even the conventional accounts concede that the conservatism of Navalar extended well beyond his views regarding Tiruvarutpa. Navalar was also deeply conservative over matters such as Agamic temple rituals, caste rules and rules of personal hygiene etc. when compared with Ramalinga. These are also supported by rumours extant in Jaffna over Ramalinga’s life style, and especially that of his wife.

The first public debate on Arutpa/Marutpa between Adigal and Kathiraverpillai took place at Sintharipettai in Madras on the 20th of September 1903. According to Thirunavukkarasu’s account it was a huge gathering including both the learned and their numerous supporters, and was presided over by a government judge. Adigal according to this account gave a fine

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Thirunavukkarasu’s account of the conflict is different from Poolokasingam’s account. He asserts that the renewed Arutpa/Marutpa agitation began in 1901, when Kathiraverpillai was residing in Madras, employed as the chief Tamil pandit at the Rayapetta Wesleyan Mission College. Kathiraverpillai’s publications as well as his lectures criticizing Ramalinga’s works had caused a lot of tension among the numerous followers of Ramalinga in Tamil Nadu. Many Ramalinga supporters had in turn lectured and posted notices against Kathiraverpillai and his works. According to Thirunavukkarasu’s account Adigal who had earlier refused to enter the fray as the chief spokesman against Kathiraverpillai had finally acceded to a public debate with Kathiraverpillai on the 20th of September 1903. Adigal had also published some notices against Kathiraverpillai’s Marutpa prior to this event. What should be kept in mind is that Adigal and Kathiraverpillai were already engaged in disputes over Adigal’s writings specifically over Adigal’s Somasundara Kanchi and his journal Jnanacagaram. There is no mention in the extant biographies of this earlier conflict.
lecture arguing logically and systematically that Ramalinga's verses should in fact be called *Thiruvarutpa* and even sang some beautiful verses from Ramalinga's verses to illustrate it. Kathiraverpillai's remarks, however, were short and unimpressive and he left the hall suddenly with some of his students promising to speak at greater length on another occasion. The victory for Adigal and Ramalinga's *Thiruvarutpa* was all but plain from this, concludes Thirunavukkarasu's account. Adigal's own terse observation of this event in his diaries however was brief: "I went with Appavoo Chettiar and others to Sintharipettai meeting. The usual debate over Arutpa did not take place; Only Kathiraverpillai alone was complaining about some thing or other." 13 There was another debate that was scheduled for the 27th of September 1903. This time Kathirverpillai failed to turn up. Adigal however spoke.14 The third and final public debate between the two was scheduled at the Venu Gopal Central Hall on the 18th of October 1903. The crowd this time was enormous and extended well beyond the hall. Again Kathiraverpillai failed to come and Adigal gave an "excellent" lecture. This time however, according to Tirunavukkarasu, the crowd as well as Madras...

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13 See Venkatachalapathy, *Maraimalaiadigalar*, (entry for 20-9-1903, my translation)).

14 Adigal noted in his diary: "...I went with Arangasamy Nayakar and Anavarathavinayagam Pillai to the meeting at Sintharipetta; Kathiraverpillai did not come for the debate so I gave a lecture." See MMAD, 27-09-1903.
city decided that Arutpa had won and Marutpa had lost. As usual Adigal’s own observation in his diaries fails to convey this excitement. It simply reads: "There was a big crowd at the Venu Gopal Hall; I gave an excellent talk on Arutpa. Out of fear of defeat Kathiraverpillai did not come."¹⁴⁵ However, Adigal did note on the 23rd of October 1903, that the news of this event was sent to the papers: "The news about Sunday the 18th meeting was sent to the Sudesamithran."¹⁴⁶

The discrepancy between Adigal’s son’s account and Adigal’s own account is striking and suggests that Poolokasingam’s thesis, that the events of the conflict were exaggerated may have elements of truth. Adigal’s own account certainly suggests that it was neither seen nor celebrated as such a decisive event by him or others close to him at the time. Nevertheless, as Tirunavukkarasu suggests, it may have been a decisive moment in the history of Saiva Siddhanata revivalism in Tamil Nadu, since it heralded the ascendancy of Nayakar’s brand of Saiva Siddhanta revival over the Jaffna-inspired revival in Tamil Nadu. The fact that Adigal played such an important role in these debates—as the leader of the Ramalinga faction—certainly suggests that by 1903, Adigal was emerging as a major figure in the revival of Saiva Siddhanta

¹⁴⁵ Venkatachalapathy, Maraimalaiadigalar, (entry for 18-10-1903, my translation).

¹⁴⁶ See MMAD, 26-10-1903.
and Tamil in Tamil Nadu.\footnote{147}

Thirunavukkarasu’s assertions that these debates did not stop with the three public debates between Adigal and Kathiraverpillai in Madras but had continued at least for a while also suggests the continuing conflict between the two factions.\footnote{148} His suggestion that these events helped both vindicate and popularise Ramalinga’s works as well as Adigal in Tamil Nadu also support the view that these events heralded the ascendancy of Adigal and the legacy of Nayakar’s brand of Saiva Siddhanta revival he represented in Tamil Nadu.

Thus, Adigal’s move to Madras and his proximity to Nayakar and others associated with Nayakar’s brand of Saiva Siddhanta revival was crucial in moulding Adigal as a prominent Saiva Siddhanta revivalist in his own right. As the closest disciple of Nayakar, Adigal utilized the leadership vacuum created by Nayakar’s death to emerge as a prominent Saiva Siddhanta revivalist in his own right. Adigal brought to Nayakar’s brand of Saiva Siddhanta revival the ideas and scholarly methods he

\footnote{147} These debates however did not prevent Kathiraverpillai and Adigal from being civil to each other. Adigal noted in his diary on the 1st of August 1903 just one month before his first public debate with Kathiraverpillai: "My opponent Mr. N. Kathiraverpillai came to me and asked me to help him in securing a footing in our College. I received him kindly and assured him that I entertain no bad feelings against him and that I would do my utmost to him." See MMAD.

\footnote{148} According to Tirunavukkarasu, Kathiraverpillai had started similar agitations in Kanchipuram and Tiruchi to which Adigal had also responded by speaking at these places on 27th February 1905 and the 1st of July 1905 to the great delight of Ramalinga swamigal’s supporters. See Tirunavukkarasu, *Maraimalai Adigal*.}
gained from his exposure to the writings of pioneer Dravidian ideologues such as Caldwell and Sundaram Pillai. They provided an important arsenal for Nayakar’s brand of Saiva Siddhanta revival in its campaign against neo-Vedanta and Brahminical culture in Tamil Nadu. This close examination of the revivalist figures associated with Nayakar as well as the figures behind Adigal’s efforts to launch his journal Jnacagaram reveal that the primary constituency of each were Tamils from the higher non-Brahmin castes. However, unlike the Jaffna-led revivalism, some of the significant protagonists associated with Nayakar’s brand of Saivite revival, including Nayakar himself, came from the lower non-Brahmin castes such as the Vanniar and Nadar castes. It was the combination of all these factors that made the Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil revival that both Nayakar and Adigal propagated closer in spirit to the writings and work of Ramalinga and explains Adigal’s support for Ramalinga over Arumuga Navalar. The next chapter will explore how Adigal further consolidated his position as a leading Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil revivalist in the city of Madras.
Chapter Five

Madras Christian College Days: (1903-1911)

It (Hindu revivalism) seems to me to be a upasa tree capable of sufficiently blighting the fair work of western civilization and education. English education created a fellow feeling among mankind, a desire for concentrated action. It taught us how to value individual liberty...But revivalism has undone the work. It has taught that life is a dream and not a reality and that all material comforts are bosh... They are a mischievous lot who trumpet their own glory, who will not render unto Caesar, the things that are Caesars...

Sri Krishna Sarma, Madras Christian College Magazine, 1901.:

Except the Hindu, all others are progressive...if the Hindu people really wish to maintain a honourable place...The mental eyes of everyone must be opened not only to see that the present miserable condition of their life has been due to the spell cast on them by Brahmin witchcraft, but also to realise the great truth common to all great religions, that is: all are the children of one Heavenly Father.

Maraimalai Adigal, Cinthanaik Katturaikal. (1908):

Through his efforts to centralize the various Saiva Siddhanta associations in Tamil Nadu under his leadership as well as through the prominent role he played in the Arutpa/Marutpa controversy Adigal was clearly emerging as a


2Maraimalai Adigal, Cinthanaik Katturaikal, pp. 20-21.
prominent spokesman for Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil by the year 1903. As significant in this period was the impact of living and working in the intellectual and cultural heart of the Presidency with its more cosmopolitan English intellectual and cultural influences. In this regard his appointment at Madras Christian College was of great significance. Teaching Tamil at the College provided him with the necessary stimulus as well as an appropriate ideological environment in which to develop his Dravidian reading of Tamil literature and culture. His two major early works which provided a "Dravidian" literary and historical commentary to two classical Tamil works reflect this bold English intellectual and cultural impact.

From the year 1903 to his retirement from the College in 1911 Adigal continued to build on his role as an important figure in the Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil revivalist movement. He achieved this largely through his bold advocacy of a "Dravidian" reading of Tamil culture and Saiva Siddhanta and through his numerous publications and lectures. From the year 1904 to 1908, Adigal sought to play a prominent role in Madurai Tamil Sangam (Tamil Association of Madurai), an organization central to the Tamil renaissance. In 1905 he finally realised his ambition to centralise the various Saiva Siddhanta associations in Tamil Nadu. He established and ran the Saiva Siddhanta Maha Samasam, (The Great Association of
Saiva Siddhanta) as the umbrella organization for the various Saiva Siddhanta associations in Tamil Nadu. This was perhaps Adigal’s and the Saiva Siddhanta revival movement’s greatest organisational achievement. It established Adigal’s reputation as a major figure in the Saiva Siddhanta revival movement.

These years were also characterised by Adigal’s increasing immersion in and exposure to European scholarly works, especially Orientalist scholarship, English literary and philosophical works and self-help works. In fact, it was to this European scholarly literature that Adigal turned primarily for inspiration for his re-interpretation of Tamil life, culture, literature and religion. He also developed a great interest in works that dealt with Eastern religio-mystical, spiritualist and occult subjects by both Europeans and Indians. He was particularly engaged with the writings of figures such as Blavatsky, Olcott, Annie Besant, William James and Vivekananda. His initiation into Siva Raja Yoga and the launching of his English journal The Oriental Mystic Myna reflected these interests and engagement. This was also a period when Adigal began to write prolifically. He published over seven books during this period alone, aside from writing and editing for the journals, Jnanacagaram, Vivekamitran, and The Oriental Mystic Myna.
Madras Christian College

The College had its origins in the Scottish Free Church School founded in 1837, by John Anderson of the Free Church Society of Scotland. Anderson, a child of the Scottish enlightenment and Evangelicalism was a disciple of Alexander Duff of Calcutta, and came to Madras after a brief stay in Calcutta bringing with him not only the missionary spirit of Duff but his educational curriculum. Anderson was a contemporary and friend of Caldwell who described Anderson as, "one of the ablest, the most zealous and devoted missionaries I have ever met and certainly the most enthusiastic." and of the school he established as, "the first systematic effort made to use English education as a means of spreading Christianity among the higher classes and castes." From its inception the school sought to provide a higher standard of education in order to attract the higher castes and classes.

It was largely through the efforts of another remarkable Scottish missionary, Reverend William Miller (1838-1922) that the school was transformed into a first grade College in

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3 Wyatt, Reminiscences. p. 69.

4 ibid.

5 Ibid., p. 66.
1867.\(^6\) It was also through Miller's efforts that what was formerly called the Scottish General Assembly's school became the Madras Christian College in 1877--a result of Miller's efforts to form a United Christian College in Madras with the support of all Protestant denominations in the Presidency.\(^7\) To deal with the increasing number of students from the mofussils unable to find suitable accommodations in the city, student residences were also built under the initiative of Miller beginning in the 1880's. The first student home or boarding school was established in 1884 for Brahmin students only. The second student home for Indian Christian students was founded in 1888. A residence for the non-Brahmin caste Hindu students was only built in 1895 with financial contributions from such figures as the Raja of Ramnad, an old boy of the College.\(^8\)

Miller was also intimately involved with the founding of the Christian College Magazine as the organ of the College in 1883 and it soon became one of the most respected scholarly journals in South India. Despite its liberal and inclusive

\(^6\) It was with the establishment of a Bachelor of Arts program in 1867 that it was transformed into a College. See O. Kandasamy Chetty, Dr. William Miller. Madras : Christian Literature Society for India, 1924, p. 12.

\(^7\) Miller obtained the support of Church Missionary Society and the Wesleyan Missionary Society to join the Free Church of Scotland in helping to maintain the College. See Chetty, Dr. William Miller, p. 15.

\(^8\) See Chetty, Dr. William Miller, p. 26.
mandate, the magazine reflected the ideological orientation of
the College. It particularly emphasised the benefits of
English education, government and European enlightenment
culture. It also countered the rising tide of neo-Hindu
revivalism and promoted in its stead voices of more regional
and reformist interests. The magazine was also one of the
first to launch a sustained attack against the Theosophists.'
Reflecting this critical stance towards the revivalism
inspired by the Theosophists, a contributor to the magazine
wrote:

It (Hindu revivalism) seems to me to be a upasa tree
capable of sufficiently blighting the fair work of
western civilization and education. English
education created a fellow feeling among mankind, a
desire for concentrated action. It taught us how to
value individual liberty... But revivalism has undone
the work. It has taught that life is a dream and not
a reality and that all material comforts are bosh...
They are a mischievous lot who trumpet their own
glory, who will not render unto Caesar, the things
that are Caesars..."

The writer also provided what he felt was the dramatic nature
of the changes wrought by the revivalist movement: “Suddenly
at the dawn of a new century, things turned topsy turvy. The
Indian world seems to have gone into relapse. The missionary
finds himself an object of bitter dislike--educated India is

9 Ibid., p. 39.

10 Sri Krishna Sarma, “Christian Missionaries in India”, Madras Christian College
out of conceits with him." Many of the pioneer scholarly works in English on the subject of Tamil literature and Saiva Siddhanta also first appeared in the journal. As noted earlier, the writings of "Dravidian" scholars such as G.U. Pope, P. Sundaram Pillai and Suryanarayana Sastri made their earliest appearance in the pages of the Christian College Magazine.

In keeping with Miller's liberal spirit, various associations and debating societies were also encouraged at the College from the 1880's. One such association was the Dravida Basha Abhivirthi Sangam (Association for the promotion of Dravidian languages) which was established in 1887\(^\text{12}\). Its mandate according to the College calendar was "for the purpose of encouraging the study of Tamil literature among the students of the College."\(^\text{13}\). The society also had a special library attached to it called the Miller Tamil Sangam Library which by 1909, contained nearly two hundred volumes of select Tamil classics -- which were for the most part gifts from the

\(^{11}\) \textit{ibid.}, p. 329.

\(^{12}\) The above information was obtained from the \textit{Madras Christian College Calendar} (1909) in the section titled Societies. See \textit{Madras Christian College Calendar}, Madras: Asylum Press, 1909, p.127.

\(^{13}\) \textit{ibid.}
late Raja Setupadi of Ramnad. There were also Telugu, Malayalam and Sanskrit language and literature societies at the College. The Sanskrit society was founded in 1892, five years after the Dravida Basha Abivirthi Sangam.\(^{15}\)

Miller was a great educationist as well as a prominent public figure in Madras of his time. Much in the spirit of G.U. Pope who was a regular contributor to the Christian College Magazine, Miller's approach to Christian education in India was both broad and liberal. He proposed a much more sympathetic mission education policy toward Indian religions, a position clearly articulated in the lecture he delivered in Madras in 1895 entitled "The Place of Hinduism in the Story of the World."\(^{16}\) In the lecture, he proposed that each race and nation had a particular purpose or role to play in God's education of mankind and spoke of the role of Hinduism respectfully, giving it both legitimacy and purpose in the wider scheme of things. In the spirit of Pope, Miller presented Christianity as the fulfilment of religions such as

\(^{14}\) The College Calendar for the year 1909 confirms that the president of the society was K.L. Gopalachariar and the vice president R.S. Vedachalam Pillai. ibid.

\(^{15}\) ibid.

\(^{16}\) Chetty, Dr. William Miller, p. 50.

\(^{17}\) ibid., p. 11.
Hinduism, rather than as their destroyer." Through such an approach Miller was able to press for more reforms within Hinduism while at same time avoid antagonizing Hindu sentiments and public opinion. His approach gained for him the respect of many of his Hindu students including some prominent nationalist figures. In keeping with this wider mandate Miller preferred to have the College engaged in the larger goal of gradually disseminating Christian truths to the community rather than as a places that sought the more immediate gain of student conversion.

Given Miller’s keen perception of Hindu society and consciousness and his active engagement in matters relating to government in the Presidency, it would indeed be surprising if he were not aware of the many socio-cultural developments in the presidency. The Christian College Magazine in fact gave voice to a great variety of issues. The College and the magazine also encouraged the emergence of “Dravidian” consciousness among non-Brahman Tamils. Miller also often presided at the Madras Hindu Social Reform Association and made the College premises available for their gatherings, so much so that in later years, the Madras Hindu Social Reform Association and Anderson Hall often went together in the

18 [ibid., p. 44.]
public mind.\textsuperscript{19}

Miller’s time at the College lasted until 1907, although towards the end of his life in Madras he left the day to day running of the College to his great ally and friend Reverend Skinner. Miller also inducted two of his cousins, Macphail and Reverend J.M. Russell, to work in the College, both of whom served during the time of Adigal. Miller was still a great presence at the College when Adigal joined in 1898, although Skinner was officially the principal. Professor of Mathematics and Superintendent of Vernacular studies, S. Rungiah Chetty, was a long-time employee and favourite of Miller. It was Rungiah Chetty who offered the position of assistant Tamil pundit to Adigal in 1898 and was Adigal’s immediate superior at the College.

Adigal and Madras Christian College

Adigal’s tenure at Madras Christian College (1898-1911), coincided with one of the most hectic periods of his life. It was during this time that Adigal built his reputation as a prominent figure in the Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil revival movement. His duties and role in the College, as well as his exposure to the intellectual, ideological and cultural environment at the College, clearly aided his emergence as a

\textsuperscript{19} Chetty, Dr. William Miller, p. 57.
prominent Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil revivalist. However, this very engagement with his role as a prominent revivalist of Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil left him little time to immerse himself deeply in College affairs.

As the extant biographies suggest, Adigal may have been a fine and charismatic teacher when not otherwise distracted by his hectic extra-curricular activities. According to these accounts, Adigal began his teaching career at MCC by teaching Tamil first at the high school level and then later at the F.A and B.A levels. Thirunavukarasu’s account especially presents an unusually flattering portrait of Adigal’s teaching abilities and claims that he was the very embodiment of a good teacher. These accounts may have many elements of truth since Adigal was not only an experienced public speaker but his passionate absorption in the revival of Tamil and Saiva Siddhanta must have made him an especially enthusiastic teacher. In addition, his views on the Tamil past, his celebration of the “pure” Tamil literary culture,

20 The extant biographies of Adigal present Adigal as a model teacher, whose great knowledge of Tamil, fine personality, physical appearance and style of teaching captivated his students and held them spell bound. See especially Tirunavukarasu, Maraimalai Adigal, pp.23-27.

21 Adigal’s diaries indicate that he was teaching the junior B.A classes by Jan 1899. According to Tirunavukarasu Adigal began teaching the B.A. classes only after Reverend Miller found out about his great aptitude in Tamil. ibid., p.22.

22ibid., p.24.
his dismissal of much of the later Tamil works as Sanskritized, must have made him quite popular among many of his non-Brahmin students. Among Adigal's former students from MCC were some who later became prominent Tamil scholars. They included, Dr. Somasundara Barathy, V.S. Senkalvaraya Pillai, T.M. Krishnasamy Iyer, Dr. P. Supparayan, V. Krishnaiyer, T.K. Sithambaranather Mudaliar, S. Vyapuri Pillai and C.N. Muthururanga Mudaliar.\textsuperscript{13}

Adigal's diaries however, suggest that his teaching career at MCC, came second to his central preoccupation with Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil revival. He would often find his teaching duties at MCC in the way of his engagement with this larger project.\textsuperscript{24} The editing and publication of the journal Jnanacagaram, his numerous lecture engagements as well as the prominent role he played in attempting to centralise the various Saiva Siddhanta revivallist organizations increasingly interfered with his teaching duties and eventually made him look upon them as an irritating burden.

His constant preoccupation with such activities, since the time of his arrival in Madras soon gave rise to

\textsuperscript{13}ibid., p.27.

\textsuperscript{24} The few stray references to the College in his diaries are mostly concerned with certain urgent duties or official transactions at the College. They leave one with an impression that Adigal barely managed to accommodate his teaching duties with his rather busy itenary as a propagandist for Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil. See MMAD.
difficulties with the College authorities. He would often arrive late for classes or miss days altogether. As early as the end of September 1898, scarcely six months after starting his job at MCC the school authorities developed an impatience toward what seemed his habitual lateness: "This morning I went late to the College due to some domestic difficulties; for this Mr. Rungiah Chettiar was very much angry at me." As time went on this problem with punctuality and absence at school seem to have only gotten worse. He noted on the 16th of August 1905: "Mr. Skinner told me that if I should become absent on any account in the future that he would compel me to resign." His note on the 27th April 1906 clearly reveals his increasing impatience with his school duties: "I had to work six hours in the school. My great intellectual powers are being wasted in the turgid school and College work." \\

Despite these problems with habitual lateness and his lack of participation in the wider activities of the College, there is little doubt that the College provided an important environment and forum for the development of his ideas as a "Dravidian" ideologue. Adigal's love for the "purer" ancient Tamil works combined with his "Dravidian" orientation was consonant with MCC's own ideological leanings. It enabled him

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25 See MMAD.

26 See MMAD.
to build a constituency for his ideas among the students through his role as a Tamil teacher as well as through the active role he played in the various "Dravida" associations at the College which promoted a Tamil literary and cultural revival. These "Dravidian" associations provided Adigal with an important platform as well as a constituency to develop his skills and ideas and establish a reputation as a "Dravidian" Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil revivalist. As early as the 15th of October 1898, he noted, "In the noon I went to the Christian College and presided in the meeting by some fifth form students by the name of Dravida Kala Bodhini (Dravidian Arts Association)." On the 18th of March 1901 he noted:"...I presided in the Dravida Basha Sangam (Dravidian Language Association) of our College and in the end delivered a brilliant lecture on the independence of the Tamil language..." Adigal had noted earlier of going to the College "M.A. library" to refer to Caldwell’s philological work. On the 12th of October 1906, Adigal noted:"I delivered a brilliant lecture on the "Pandian Tamil Academy" in our Tamil Sangam which was held this evening in the Anderson Hall. Mr.

27 See MMAD.

28 See MMAD.

29 For example on the 17th of March 1902 Adigal noted in his diary: "I returned Dr. Calwell’s Dravidian Grammar to the M.A. Library." See MMAD.
Pandithruai Thevar and the large audience was well pleased with my lecture."

On another occasion he noted, "A preliminary meeting of the Dravida Tamilian Archeological Society was held. I was elected as a director." Aside from revealing that Adigal was utilizing Caldwell’s ideas on the independence of the Tamil language as early as the year 1901, these observations reveal that the College provided a legitimate environment and platform for Adigal’s "Dravidian" revivalist efforts, particularly for his "Dravidian" reading of Tamil literature, culture and history.

Thus, Adigal was able to build a significant following for his ideas from among his students through his role as a Tamil teacher as well as through the role he played in these Dravidian associations at the College. Thus it is hardly surprising that he was able to gather a large number of subscribers for his journal Jnanacagaram from among his students. He was also able to rely on his students for advance payment for his early works of literary criticisms, Mullaippattu Araichiurai and Pattinapalai Araichiurai. Adigal claimed that he had been urged by his students to write these works since the two poems Mullaippattu and Pattinapalai were prescribed works at the College. Adigal also obtained the help

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30 See MMAD entry for 12th October 1906.

31 See MMAD.
of many of his students in his organizational work for Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil revivalist efforts. Adigal was in his early twenties when he began teaching and many of his students were close to his age and some were even older than he as a result of which some of his students became his companions and helpers in his revivalist efforts. He noted on the 20th February 1901, just two days before Nayakar's death: "Mr, Kathirmathinatha Pillai one of my last year students in the 3rd class, took me to his halting place and lent me his Wilmot and Vanity Fair after entertaining me very hospitably". Some students such as Anavarathavinayagam Pillai were engaged along with him in the revivalism of Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil and helped Adigal by subscribing to his literary and religious works. In addition some of his students took private tuition in Tamil from him.

Adigal largely focussed on teaching the newly "recovered", ancient Tamil classics at the College. They included such ancient Tamil classics as Thirukkural, Mullaippattu and Patinapalai. The method he followed in explicating these ancient Tamil classics was largely influenced by English scholarship and literary criticism.

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32 See MMAD.

33 During the period in early 1901 when Adigal was attempting to gain subscribers, he had noted: "I got 19 subscribers from the 11th class of which two paid." See MMAD.
Thirunavukkarasu's account of Adigal's pedagogical methods confirms this. According to Thirunavukkarasu, Adigal would introduce a Tamil poem to his class by asking the question, "What is poetry?" and answer the question by what he claimed were the findings of Adigal's own researchers into Tamil literature as well as English poetry and criticism.\(^\text{34}\)

How indeed should ancient Tamil poetry be presented, interpreted and taught to students at a premier Christian College in the modern period? Adigal, following the tradition of Dravidian ideologues such as Pope and Sundaram Pillai, preferred to explicate them from the vantage point of European literary traditions and criticism rather than from the perspective of the medieval and early modern Tamil commentators. His approach stemmed from his view that much of ancient Tamil poetry was composed in the same aesthetic and "rational" spirit as that of the modern European poetic tradition and thus it would be only natural to use these methods to explicate them. Like his predecessors, he posed this ancient Tamil literary sensibility in contrast to what he considered as the obfuscating and mystifying Aryan/Sanskrit literary tradition.

Teaching Tamil at the College, thus forced him to confront many of the issues facing the modern teacher of

\(^{34}\)Thirunavukkarasu, *Maraimalai Adigal*, p.25.
Tamil. These ancient works had a host of commentaries by medieval and early modern commentators. The important question was whose commentary or which guidelines should one follow in explicating a particular poem? The traditional methods of teaching such works followed the guidelines of the later well known medieval and early modern commentators. Adigal’s familiarity with English scholarship and English literary criticism enabled him to turn away from such approaches. His first major attempt at literary criticism of an ancient Tamil work came out of the imperatives of teaching it to his students. The approach that he undertook reveals not only how he addressed this challenge of “modernity” but also in many ways reflects the “Dravidian” response to “modernity.”

Mullaippattu Araichiurai

Adigal chose the ancient Tamil classic Mullaippattu for his first major endeavour in literary criticism. Entitled, Mullaippattu Araichiurai (Critical Commentary of Mullaippattu) it was published in the latter part of 1903. Like many of the books published at the time it contained an English preface, suggesting the bi-cultural nature of the project of recovering and re-interpreting ancient Tamil poetry for the

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modern period. Adigal set the tone for the work by beginning his preface with an almost utilitarian definition of poetry by the great doyen of Victorian literary criticism, Matthew Arnold: "Poetry is simply the most beautiful, impressive, and widely effective mode of saying things, and hence its importance." Given the fact that he sought to re-interpret the poem in light of the modern English tradition of literary criticism and that he sought to point out the errors of the "mystifying and obscurantist commentary of the traditional commentator of the poem, Nachinarkinniyar," the quote is hardly surprising. However, Adigal also included a view of poetry that is closer to the aesthetic ideals of such eminent Victorian figures as John Ruskin and Walter Pater, ideals steeped in the romantic and idealist tradition of the Victorian period. He wrote:

To a mind brooding on the silent beauty exhibited in the varied phenomenon of nature, to an intellect diving deep into the mysteries that lie in the inmost corners of life, to a soul soaring high into the ethereal regions of religion and philosophy, to a spirit seeking serene rest in moral sanctity and Divine grace, nothing appears so permanently beautiful, so certainly impressive and effective as the study of a fine piece of poetry. 37

Similarly, like Ruskin and Pater, he elevated poetry and art almost to the status of a religion with all its associated

36 Maraimalai Adigal, Mullaippattu, p.7.

37 ibid., p.7.
curative and soothing properties:

To hearts eaten away by sorrow and worldly cares the reading of poetry comes as a healing balm; to hearts chilled by the icy hands of cruelty it appears like the warning rays of the morning sun; and to hearts stained with the blackest crime and the basest vice it comes as the washing water of a crystal rill. Ah! How lovely are the changes wrought by poetry in the mind of man; and how profound and permanent are the moral effects it brings into his inward nature.!

Such an understanding of poetry, as well as the language he used to express it, clearly reveals the impact of his own mission education. They convey almost a Christian moral justification for poetry.

Adigal also underlined the value of studying ancient Tamil poetry in his English preface, highlighting its ability to express the beauties of nature—fully aware of contemporary English tastes for such aesthetic sensibilities.

For years together I have been devoting my time to a close, careful and diligent study of the ancient classical poems of the Tamil language and have been drinking deep the ineffable sweetness that was there stored in. The pure simplicity of thought, the close and minute observation of nature, the vivid and sublime portraits presented of the social, moral, religious and intellectual conditions of the hoary Tamilian life, the energy and artistic beauty beaming with a sterling freshness, and last, but not least the great historic value which it possess—all combine to invest Tamil Poetry with peculiar charm and splendour that can hardly be surpassed by the poetry of any great language in the world. These characteristics of Tamil Poetry accord to Tamil quite a unique place in the history of cultivated

38 ibid., pp. 7-8.
languages in the civilised world.³⁵

They reveal not only the impact of Victorian literature on Adigal but also of his "Dravidianist" predecessors such as Pope and Sundaram Pillai:

Adigal next shifted to criticizing what he felt was the "sad" state of Tamil studies, explaining in the process what he considered led to such a sad state of affairs:

Sad to relate that the Tamil poems prescribed as text books for the B.A and F.A. examinations in the University of Madras, have attracted little or no attention of the students, and that a study of them has even been looked upon as useless and tiresome by some who had been led to revel in stories of a religious and mythological character and who had thereby lost all seriousness and all appreciation of nature's charm. This has been due partly to the teaching of the Pandits and their bulky volumes of notes which mainly consist in giving word for word meanings and turgid and trivial grammatical notes and partly to prescribed texts in prose and poetry which, for the most part, contain silly and crude religious myths translated from Sanskrit Puranas and which by no means represent the true character of original Tamil classics.⁴²

Adigal here boldly challenged the existing Tamil curriculum at the Colleges and Universities, and made clear his own position regarding what he considered as the extant practice of teaching Tamil works utilizing "crude religious myths translated from Sanskrit Puranas." Much like his predecessors

³⁵ibid., p.8.

⁴²ibid., pp. 8-9.
he suggested that the "true character of the original Tamil classics" is altogether different from these 'silly and crude religious myths." What is of interest to observe here is that Adigal's critique of the existing curricula reads much like that of a standard "Anglicist" or missionary critique of Sanskrit or Indian literary works in general.

The solution he proposed for this sad neglect of "pure" Tamil literature was to teach Tamil literary works not according to the approach taken by the medieval and early modern Sanskritized commentaries but in light of modern European literary criticisms. He wrote:

In spite of this disadvantage I had an earnest desire to direct the attention of students to a sound critical study of at least the few prescribed texts of classical poems and see what effect would be produced on them when they are taught in the light of modern poetry-criticism. Although I felt incompetent for the task, yet I ventured to make the attempt which, as I afterwards found to my great satisfaction, proved highly successful not only among the students of my College but also among those who stand outside the pale of university learning and study Tamil in private out of pure love. The benefits that had accrued to students from a critical and comparative study of poetry became patent...41

As to the style of commentary Adigal adopted, he noted:

In commenting on this excellent poem I have followed the main lines of literary criticism inculcated by the able and profound critic Professor William Minto; for his critical methods are authentic and help much towards true and clear understanding of

41: ibid., pp. 9-10.
the work taken to be scrutinised. From this critical point of view, I have given a historical account of the age that gave birth to such a splendid poem as Mullaippattu and of the influence which that age had exerted on this poem. It must be remembered that the true nature of a work of art cannot be comprehended unless the nature and conditions of the time in which it had sprung are distinctly understood. I have availed myself of the grand views expressed on poetry by such great masters as Milton and Ruskin and have even translated freely into Tamil one or two passages of their writings."

Adigal here plainly declared his preference for emulating and adopting the methods of English literary criticism over the Sanskritised traditions that had developed in the medieval and early modern periods. He also underlined his intention to utilize a "literary history" approach that figures such as Sundaram Pillai and Pope had utilized so well to depict the glories of the ancient "Dravidians."

His criticism of the traditional Brahmin commentator of the poem under consideration, Mullaipattu, was particularly bold and scathing:

In my analysis of the poem I have adhered closely to the original idea conceived and expressed by the Poet, rather than follow the mangled and distorted meanings given by the old commentator Nachinarkkiniar. The old commentator, discarding the simple and natural order and setting in which the subject-matter or idyll is disposed, has torn the excellently woven fabric of the Poet to pieces and glues them again together with his own vapid thought in such a fantastic manner as to make the poem seem most unnatural and its structure highly

\[42\text{ibid.}, \text{p.11.}\]
Adigal’s scathing attack on such a hallowed and revered traditional commentator in his twenty-seventh year is particularly striking.

In his brief review of contemporary scholarship on *Mullaippattu*, Adigal took on his contemporary and highly esteemed Tamil Brahmin scholar, U.V. Swaminatha Iyer— a ‘recoverer’ of many ancient Tamil works:

Pandit V. Swaminatha Iyer of Govt. College at Kumbakonam and Pandit C. Thiruchitrambalam Pillai of Coimbatore, having been greatly misled by Nachchinarkkinier, marred the flow and natural arrangement of the poetic thoughts in the highest degree. But of the two I recommend that Mr. Thiruchitrambalam’s notes and critical introduction are much more valuable for a clear understanding... than those of Mr. Swaminatha Iyer’s annotated edition.

This kind of passionate bravado was very characteristic of Adigal from a young age.

*Mullaippattu* depicts the Pandian King Nedunchelian’s sweet and sorrowful separation from his wife to battle in a distant land after promising to return during the rainy season. Adigal’s own description of the poem in his preface again powerfully suggests the impact of Victorian literary style, conventions and scholarship in his writings:

*Mullaippattu* is an ancient classical ode of 103 lines

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43 *ibid.*, p.12.
sung in honour of the Pandian king Nedunchelian by his court bard Napputhanar. How Nedunchelian, once having gone on an expedition to meet the combined forces of seven powerful kings...returns with great splendour and magnificence and with trophies of victory to kiss his loveliest wife and how this beautiful maiden that had been left alone in a country villa with a deep sorrow at the separation of her beloved husband, is lying down on her couch her chaste bosom heaving up with a sigh of consolation at his shortly expected return, are all related most vividly and very picturesquely in this poem."

He also determined that the poem was composed around the first century C.E. basing his assessment on the fact that “it only contained 2% of Sanskrit words.”

The main body of the work, which is in Tamil, largely followed the assertions that he set out in the preface. The chapters and sub-chapter titles however are in English. The first chapter on “Poetry and its Function” is almost didactic in nature and elaborates the claims he made on behalf of poetry in his preface. For example he defined a poem as that which can absorb all of nature’s beauties and charms and can then can express them without dissonance to the objects being

44 Mullaippattu Araichiurai, p. v.
45 ibid., p.11. (in English preface)

46 It is interesting to note that in later editions of the work AdigaI changed these English titles to Tamil. The first two chapters titles were changed to Pattiniyalbu (Nature of Poetry) and PalanthThamilpattin Sirapiyalbu (The Excellent Nature of Ancient Tamil Poetry) respectively. They reveal the gradual indigenisation of this "hybrid" Tamil renaissance.
described in a sweet and melodic way. 47

In the chapter on "Characteristics of Old Tamil poetry" Adigal highlighted as ancient Tamil poetry's essential character, its fine depiction of nature. He however emphasized--utilizing John Ruskin's observation of Walter Scott's poetry--that this was not the opportunistic utilization of nature simply to depict the poets' rambling thoughts but a fine depiction of nature through which the poets subtly depicted their inner feelings. 48 Throughout the work, Adigal constantly referred to European poets or scholars to substantiate his claims citing such literary figures as Milton, John Ruskin, William Minto and Alexander Bain.

Adigal and Literary History

The next chapter is entitled "The Nature of the Literary Works Produced in the Classic Period from 400B.C to 100 A.D and their relation to Mullaippattu with a short Historic Account of the Age." It is here that Adigal launched his first major attempt at literary history. Highly reminiscent of the "literary history" efforts of figures such as Pope and

47 The example he gave to illustrate the power of poetry to reveal the beautiful is striking by its blatantly erotic allusion. He depicted in a very elegant and poetic language the scene of the beautiful queen described in the poem, waking from slumber, slowly removing her blue silk garments to reveal her glorious beauty. ibid., p.2.

48 ibid., pp.6-7
Sundaram Pillai, Adigal utilized this ancient Tamil work to present an account of the ancient history of India reversing in the process, the positions of the Aryans and Dravidians as carriers of higher culture. It would be instructive to look at some of the main points he elaborated in the chapter.

Adigal asserted that the period 400 B.C to 100 A.D. was the high point of Tamil language and literature. Linking this achievement to the prevalence of Buddhism, Adigal argued that the Buddhists, and "Sakyar" were essentially Tamils. They were not a strong or rambunctious race as the Aryans since they lived in the warmer climate of India and were by nature disposed to look deeply at the world, prone to inner reflection and lived in unity and amity. While the Aryans, emerging from colder climes, were strong and due to their strength and restlessness were not disposed towards inner reflection nor contentment, they were always on the move, subduing by their sheer strength others and ruling over them.

Since Aryans were not by nature a deeply reflective people, their worship too, tended to be of such shallow worldly phenomena as the sun, the moon and Indra. Their physical strength also predisposed them to kill animals and offer them as sacrifices to their gods through a great many rituals. Citing excerpts from the Rig Veda, Adigal further underlined the war-like qualities of the Aryans. He argued
that when the Aryans came to India they fought and subdued some of the Tamils and made some of the other Tamils and their kings practice Aryan rituals and ways of life. However there were many areas where both communities lived and shared their own ways of life. However, some of the Tamils managed eventually to convince their Aryan friends of the folly and cruelty of their sacrificial forms of worship. It was during this time when some Aryans began following and absorbing the Tamil people’s philosophies that the Upanishads were composed. For Adigal the Upanishads offered convincing evidence that they contain practices well beyond the reach of Aryans at the time—practices such as non-killing of animals which the ancient Tamils first practised. The Upanishads, however, failed to curb the cruel practices of the Aryans nor did it prevent them from pressuring the Tamils to follow their cruel practices.

It is at this time that a young prince belonging to a Tamil princely lineage called “Gautama Saakiar” arose and began teaching and explaining the Tamil philosophies and practices including the non-killing of animals. It was an event, he insisted, which began a tremendous revolution, “similar to that of the French revolution.” The words of the Aryan priests began to be doubted, and people with a variety of ideas began propagating their views. Similarly in southern
India, the Tamils utilized this opportunity afforded by the Buddhist challenge, to revive the ancient greatness of their language and composed many great works in Tamil. Adigal thus not only reversed the conventional account Indian history but also clearly linked the high point of Indian cultural achievements to the Tamils and the Buddhists. He justified this large historical digression, by insisting that it was done to illustrate the relationship between a historical period and its literature—as demonstrated so ably he asserted by such European scholars as William Minto in his work on the "Literature of the Georgian Era." 

Adigal's excursion into history, albeit to show the connection between the literature and history of a period, was certainly a transparent excuse for him to advance his "Dravidianist" re-interpretation of the history of India. Thus, by 1903, Adigal was boldly articulating a "Dravidianist" interpretation of Tamil civilization. What was novel about Adigal's venture was that it was one of the earliest attempts to indigenise "Dravidian" ideology in a Tamil medium and through the utilization of an extensive literary commentary of an ancient Tamil work. The linking of Tamil culture and civilisation with passivity, vegetarianism and the monistic

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49The above is a brief summary of Adigal's views in the chapter devoted to sketching the history of the period the poem was composed. ibid., pp. 11-17. (my translation)
philosophy of Upanishads and Buddhism was certainly a bold and refreshing reversal of the extant views of the time. Although Adigal's reformulations of Indian history was to a large extent inspired by the works of Dravidian ideologues before him such as Caldwell, Pope and Sundaram Pillai, there is no doubt that some of the ideas were also derived from his own readings of ancient Tamil works in light of European scholarship.

The remaining chapters are devoted to such topics as "Nachinarkinniyar's Commentary of Mullaipattu" and "Customs and Civilization of the Tamilians as shown by the poem." Adigal's criticism of the commentary of the famed medieval Brahmin commentator, Nachinarkinniyar, is particularly interesting as he argued that Nachinarkinniyar was attempting to emulate the northern Sanskritic style of commentary made popular around the time by Sankaracharya, and that through his popularization of this northern Sanskrit tradition he helped destroy the original Tamil commentarial tradition. Adigal here was clearly attempting to link the Sanskrit style of commentary to neo-Vedanta and its originator Sankaracharya himself. Developing this line of thinking he asserted that even the commentary of Vedanta Sutra composed by Sankaracharya was dissonant, as is evident, he argued by a comparison with

the later commentaries of Ramanuja and its English translation by professor Thibault. In the chapter on "Customs and Civilization of the Tamilians as shown by the Poem" Adigal attempted to highlight the grand life-style of Tamil royalty during this period. It was largely an exercise intended to glorify the life-style of the ancient Tamil Kings rather than to analyse the social relations or dynamics of ancient Tamil society.

Adigal’s work Mullaippattu Araichiurai was then a bold application of a “Dravidianist” reading of ancient Tamil literature. Teaching ancient Tamil works at the College had provided both the environment and stimulus for writing the work. Mullaippattu Araichiurai laid the foundations for much of his later works, which were for the most part developments and refinements of the ideas he first outlined here. Adigal’s contribution then, to Dravidian ideology was largely inspired by these “purer” ancient Tamil literary works. Thus, as the missionary Orientalists and pioneer Dravidian ideologues pointed out earlier, it was ancient Tamil literature that began to be utilized as the well-spring of Dravidian

\[51\text{ibid.}, p.26.\]
\[52\text{ibid.}, pp.58-59.\]
\[53\text{Three years later Adigal published a similar work based on another ancient Tamil poem Pattinapalai. See Maraimalai Adigal, Pattinapalai Araichiurai. Madras: SISSW. 1957.(first edition 1906)}\]
nationalism.

Adigal continued to build on his role as an important Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil revivalist during the years that followed through his writings, lectures and through his engagement with the various Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil revivalist organizations. His writings in the journal *Jnanacagaram* and the publication of works such as *Mullaippattu Araichurai* left little doubt as to the cause he was championing. Although it was only after he retired from MCC in the year 1911, that Adigal became a highly popular itinerant lecturer, his rising prominence meant that he was often invited to speak at various gatherings related to Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil. For example, he noted in his diary on the 21st of June 1904: “A very impressive lecture on the omnipresent nature of God was delivered by me in the midst of a large audience at *Bala Swami Madam* (Bala Swami Mutt)”. He spoke at gatherings of Saivite Associations in Madras such as *Tiruvarutprakasa Sabhai* (Tiruvarutprakasa Association) and *Sivanadiar Thiru Kootam* (Gathering of Devotees of Siva). He was even invited to speak at the Annie Besant Lodge as he noted on the 28th of March 1909: “This evening at Annie Besant Lodge delivered an impressive lecture on Sankhya and Siddhanta, which was much appreciated by the audience on account of its style, delivery and matter.”
Adigal also became increasingly interested and engaged with the neo-Hindu religio-spiritual revival inspired by the Theosophical movement in Madras. Although he was an avid reader of the kind of European Orientalist literature that laid much of the foundation for this revival at least since his move to Madras, it was during this period that he had the leisure to pursue it in any depth. Aside from reading many of the works by leading Theosophists, mystics, psychologists and spiritualists, Adigal also often attended lectures by some of the leading Theosophists in Madras. On the 29th of April 1905, Adigal noted attending Colonel Olcott’s lecture at the Young Mens Hindu Association (YMHA) in Madras and on a number of occasions he also went to hear Annie Besant. He would also often visit the Theosophical Society headquarters at Adayar in order to purchase books on Theosophy, mysticism and Eastern religions and the books on Theosophy he was reading included authors such as Blavatsky and Besant. Adigal also read Tilak’s famous work The Arctic Home of the Vedas in which Tilak traced the origin of the “glorious” Aryan race to the

54 After attending a lecture by Besant in the year 1909, Adigal noted: “Went to Adyar and attended the lecture on brotherhood by Mrs. A. Besant the latter part of which was impressive and appealing, the lecture was not delivered as eloquently as I expected.” See MMAD entry for 21st February 1909 and 01-12-1907.

55 Books that he read on such subjects included Blavatsky’s Secret Doctrines and Besant’s Theosophy and New Psychology. See MMAD entry for 12th July 1908 and 25th January 1906.
Arctic. 56 Vivekananda’s writings too, appealed a great deal to Adigal and he often noted their similarity to the teachings of Saiva Siddhanta. 57

Adigal also displayed an ambivalent regard for the emerging Indian nationalism during this period. As early as the year 1905, he composed stanzas in Tamil on the Swadeshi movement for the local activists of the movement. 57 He was especially moved by the Bengalee nationalists. On the opposition to the partition of Bengal, Adigal noted: “Composed a sonnet in English on Mr. Surendranath Banerjee, the protector of India to be printed and distributed in the meeting which will be held to protest what the Bengal Government has done unjustly in the case of Mr. Surendranath. The English government grows in arbitrary power.” 58 He also went to listen to the “most impressive lecture” by Bipin Chandra Pal in Madras and observed that Pal “fought with the waves with his silvery voice.” 59 Inspired by the speech, Adigal bought a book the next day on the proceedings and speeches of the Congress meeting at Calcutta. In the next

56 See MMAD entry for 3rd of May 1905.
57 See MMAD entry for the 6th of December 1910.
58 See MMAD entry for the 17th October 1905.
59 See MMAD entry for the 19th of April 1906.
60 See MMAD entry for the 1st, 3rd May 1907.
year, lamenting the deportation of Tilak, Adigal noted: "I heard the very sad news that the great champion of India, Mr. Bala Ganga Dhara Tilak was transported to Andaman on the pretended charge of Sedition; we all felt a deep sorrow at the separation of this great patriot. Oh mother India! Are thy sons to suffer thus!" In the same year, Adigal translated into Tamil the nationalistic Bengalee poem Vande Mataram. Adigal's interest in Indian nationalism as with neo-Hindu revivalism at this time did not appear contradictory or hypocritical to him. Like his nationalist counter-parts he believed in the intrinsic spiritual nature of the East, his point of contention being it was the Tamils and their religion Saiva Siddhanta that was responsible for this spiritually realised civilization.

Adigal's reaction to neo-Hindu revival and Indian nationalism took at least two different forms. He utilized the arguments put forward for the greatness of the ancient Aryan civilization to argue that it was essentially the Dravidians and their civilization that was responsible for the grandeur and depth of Indian or Hindu civilization. Exposure to such Orientalist scholarship also enabled him to argue effectively against them from a "Dravidian" perspective. His work,

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61 See MMAD entry for the 23rd July 1908.

62 See MMAD entry for the 25th June 1908.
Pandaikalat Tamilarum Ariyarum (Ancient Tamils and Aryans), which he wrote the same year as he was reading Tilak’s work, The Arctic Home of the Vedas, is an example of this. In his own work, Adigal turned the conventional argument of the superiority of Aryans on its head while keeping the rest of the account—regarding the grandeur of ancient Indian civilization intact. Another reaction to his exposure Orientalist scholarship on India and to neo-Hindu revivalism was that Adigal imbibed much of its emphasis on spirituality, mysticism, the occult sciences and its general non-materialist perspective. Adigal’s launching of his English journal devoted to such subjects, The Oriental Mystic Myna, reflected such an engagement.

Adigal and English Scholarship

Adigal also began to acquire and read a large number of English scholarly works, especially, religio-philosophical works, English literature and criticism, in addition to Orientalist works on India. Adigal himself observed this preoccupation on a number of occasions. He reflected on the 31st April 1906:"I have an unsatiable thirst for buying high class books. By high class I mean critical works on poetry and philosophy and also poems written by such poets as Milton, Shelly, M. Arnold and Keats. I greatly dislike Byron..." The
numerous bookstores, libraries and mail order companies available in the city of Madras provided Adigal an ample selection. Noting a typical purchase, he wrote: "Bought from Mrs. Kalyana Rama Aiyar and Co. E. Caird’s Social and Religious Philosophy of Comte, Bagehot’s Physics and; from Mrs. Rama Aiyar and Co. Adam Smith’s Wealth of Nations and Maine’s Ancient Law." In many ways Adigal’s book-buying can be seen as an important auxiliary to his work as a Dravidian ideologue and propagandist for Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil. It was to this European scholarly literature that Adigal turned principally for inspiration for his writings and work. When he was writing his work Pandaiikkalat Thamilarum Arivarum, in May 1905, he noted in his diary of having "studied many English books which deal with the history of Aryans and Tamils" The relationship between his passion for European scholarship and his writing is more evident when he observed, "Bought from K. R. Aiyar and Co. Mc Taggart two volumes of Hegel’s Philosophy, Schiller’s Humanism. These books as recommended for study by Professor William James’s teachings which resemble those of Saiva Siddhanta. I would pay anything for books which approach Saiva Siddhanta." On another occasion Adigal was much more

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63 See MMAD entry for 23rd September, 1908.

64 See MMAD entry for 13th May 1905.

65 See MMAD entry for 2nd November 1908.
forthright. He noted: "Bought Herbert Spencer’s Principles of Psychology and W. Morris, Earthly Paradise... I buy Philosophic books in order to write an elaborate commentary in Tamil on Siva Jnana Bodham. Poetry books and Criticism in order to write a great Epic poem in Tamil."

Adigal and Madurai Tamil Sangam

Founded around 1900, the Madurai Tamil Sangam (Madurai Tamil Association) was one of the earliest and most significant institutions devoted to Tamil renaissance and research in the modern period. It was founded by Pandithurai Thevar (1867-1911) a wealthy zamindar with the support of the Raja of Ramnad, Paskara Setupati. Claiming lineage from the three ancient Tamil Academies that were held in Madurai, the Sangam’s first inaugural gathering was called the “fourth Tamil Academy”. In subsequent years there were annual conventions of the Sangam held each year where prominent Tamil scholars were invited to speak on various issues related to Tamil language and literature. The Sangam, beginning in the year 1903, also brought out as its organ a Tamil monthly journal called Centamil (Classical/Pure Tamil) which was not only highly influential but set much of the intellectual standards for Tamil scholarship during this period. Most of

66 See MMAD entry for 27th November 1907.
the great Tamil scholars of the period were closely associated with the journal. They included scholars such as U.V. Swaminatha Aiyar (1855-1942), R. Raghava Iyengar (1870-1946), V. Kanakhasabai Pillai, V.K. Suryanarayana Sastri and J.M. Nallasamy Pillai. Many of them were pioneer Tamil scholars whose work was intimately involved with the recovery and renaissance of Tamil literary culture. Its first editor was R. Raghava Iyengar, court poet to the Setupati court. In 1904 the editorship passed to M. Raghava Iyengar, cousin of R. Raghava Iyengar. They were both Vaishnavite Brahmins.

In keeping with the views of the scholars associated with the journal and editorial staff, the journal took what Zvelebil described as a "well balanced" view. In other words the journal adopted a middle path instead of a Dravidian perspective towards Tamil civilization and culture. The article in the first issue of Centamil by Adigal's opponent N. Kathiraver Pillai set much of the tone for the journal when it asserted that both Sanskrit and Tamil were divine languages.

As a Tamil scholar, Adigal no doubt keenly followed the activities of the Madurai Tamil Sangam and its journal Centamil. As an ambitious young Tamil scholar there is little doubt that he wished to play a prominent role in the Sangam. It is important to recall here that Adigal sent the first

67 Zvelebil, Companion Studies. p. 201.
issue of his own journal Jnanacagaram to Pandithurai Thevar, the architect of the Sangam. Beginning around 1904, Adigal began to take a greater interest in the activities of the Madurai Tamil Sangam. An article of his entitled "Tirukkural Pevarkaranam" (Reason for the name Tirukkural) appeared in Centamil in September 1904."He also began speaking at the annual Sangam conventions from the year 1904. His role at the conventions in keeping with his work Mullaippattu Araichiurai was to introduce boldly a distinctive Dravidian perspective on Tamil culture, literature and history.

Adigal's attempt to introduce a Dravidian perspective at the Sangam convention is more evident from his reference to the 1905 Sangam convention in his diaries. It was the speech that he gave at the 1905 convention that formed the basis of the work he published in 1906 entitled Pandaikkalat Tamilarum Arivarum (Ancient Tamils and Aryans). He noted in his diary two weeks before the lecture: "Studied many English books which deal with the history of Aryans and Tamils." and on the next day noted: "...continued my task of writing the essay on ancient Tamilians and Aryans." The mood on the first day of the convention is also revealed in his diary entry: "This afternoon we went to the Sangam meeting held at 4.0

68 See MMAD entry for 17th September 1904.
69 See MMAD entry for the 13,14th May 1905.
clock...The chairman spoke that Tolkappiar was a Brahmin and that the Tamils are indebted to the Aryans." On the second day of the convention, Adigal observed:"Second meeting held with Kanagasabhai Pillai presiding. Mr. Raghava Iyengar read an essay on Velir. And at the request of non-Brahmin friends I delivered a brilliant lecture on the ancient Tamils and Aryans." "Although Adigal does not provide much detail in his diaries, the events must have stirred some excitement and controversy.

Thirunavukkarasu’s account of Adigal’s role at the 1905 Sangam convention provides more details..."In a chapter entitled "Madurai Thamilsanga Nangam Vilavum, Thamilar Nagariga Poratta Koti Erramum" (‘Madurai Tamil Sangam’s Fourth Convention And The Raising Of The Flag Of Tamil Cultural-nationalism), he described Adigal’s role at the convention as a decisive moment in Tamil culture’s struggle for recognition in the modern period. He confirms Adigal’s own observation that the presidential speech by V. Kanagasabhai Pillai claimed that since the ancient Tamil grammarian, Tolkappiar was a

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70 See MMAD entry for 25th May 1905.

71 In Thirunavukkarasu’s account, Adigal began his involvement with the Madurai Tamil Sangam through the efforts of its sponsor and organiser, Pandithurai Thevar. Pandithurai Thevar is described as a member of the Pandyan princely lineage. His brother was the king of Ramnad, Muthuramalinga Sethupathi. Thirunavukkarasu, Maraimalai Adigal, p. 91.

72 ibid., p. 97.
Brahmin, that the Tamils were indebted to the Aryans."

Explaining that what Kanagasabhai asserted was hardly surprising given the general consensus at the time, he noted that "these false stories were hardly questioned by later Tamil pandits and were spread by them in turn." Continuing his explanation, Thirunavukkarasu asserted that the principal Tamil pandits at Madurai Tamil Sangam such as Narayana Iyengar, M. Raghava Iyengar, R. Raghava Iyengar, U. V. Swaminatha Iyer (all Brahmins) were all advocates of these views. After thus setting the stage for Adigal’s intervention, he continued by describing it at the Sangam: "For one who was a great researcher, truth seeker, one who had a sense of Tamil dignity, Tamil bravery and one who had a deep love for Tamil civilization and Tamil religion, could such a person tolerate or bear this? Adigal was boiling over and Kanagasabai’s speech just poured oil on this raging flame."

In Tirunavukkarasu’s dramatic narrative it was at this point that Adigal made his speech regarding the ancient history and grandeur of Tamil civilisation. "He had roared that the Tamils need not feel indebted to the Brahmins or the Aryan civilisation." and asserted, "that the great Tamil language

73 Tolkappiar was the author of the earliest known ancient Tamil grammatical work Tolkappiam.

74 ibid., pp.97-99.
had been demeaned and corrupted by Brahmins and the Tamil people ridiculed by them."\textsuperscript{5} This was Tirunavukkarasu's way of saying that Caldwell's \textit{Grammar} had found its way to the Madurai Tamil Sangam.

Thirunavukkarasu's account also claimed that Adigal's speech was prompted by the requests of Thevar and his non-Brahmin pandit friends. He also claimed that the audience was so captivated by Adigal's speech that even as he was delivering it they had begun composing poems on his greatness and by its end had begun reading them aloud and praising him.\textsuperscript{7}

Tirunavukkarasu's description of Adigal's clothes and appearance at the convention is also quite a revealing. In a section entitled "\textit{Nagariga Pulaver" (Civilized pandit), Thirunavukkarasu described Adigal's appearance and demeanour at the Sangam convention:

Golden countenance--radiant lotus like face-neatly

\textsuperscript{5} \textit{ibid.}, p. 99.

\textsuperscript{7} In Tirunavukkarasu's account Thevar had been extremely impressed and had praised Adigal much to the jealousy of the Brahmin pandits. He had invited Adigal to his residence after the convention for a friendly chat. Thevar's foremost Brahmin pandit Raghava Iyengar was also present during their conversation. At one point in the conversation Thevar had turned to Iyengar and asked in a casual and perhaps half mocking tone: What Raghava! Wasn't what Vedachalam spoke correct! Can his evidences be opposed? Iyengar had humbly replied, 'I cannot agree'. To this, Thevar had become extremely incensed and had scolded Iyengar in quite a demeaning way. Adigal then had pacified Thevar and after Iyengar had left had said to Thevar that it was quite wrong to demean a pundit in the presence of others even if it happens to be a pundit that was in one's employ. See Tirunavukkarasu, \textit{Maraimalai Adigal}, p.100.
parted and well groomed hair tied straight back in a knot, a silk turban on the head; On the forehead is sacred ash with Kumkum within the sandal paste.--The body clothed by Alpaka coat with a tie and stiff collar, trousers, socks, and boots on the feet, stylish gait, the veritable appearance of a prince. Is such an attractive, majestic civilised young man a Tamil Pandit? Adigal's appearance was completely in contradiction with the clothes and style of the great Tamil pandits of the time. Yes indeed; his deeds, researches, and qualities themselves were quite different from these pandits!.

This was Tirunvukkarasu's way of depicting the uniqueness and hybridity of Adigal's appearance and demeanour as a Tamil pundit, a style that distinguished Adigal from the orthodox pandits but which at the same time was fraught with the dangers that came with such a challenge to customs and conventions. The symbolic fusion of "tradition" and "modernity" in Thirunavukkarasu's description of Adigal's appearance is striking. The marks on the forehead traditionally symbolic of one's allegiance, is appropriately smeared with sacred ash and sandal paste. However, the rest of the apparel definitely reveals Adigal's desire to present himself as a contemporary upper-middle class Tamil man. As suggested by Thirunavukkarasu, Adigal's clothing was in marked contrast to many of the traditional Tamil pandits. The majority of them wore the traditional white cotton or silk

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77 ibid., p.93.
vetti (dhoti), a shirt and salvai (broad white scarf).

Thirunavukkarasu also devotes a section on the respect shown by Thevar to Adigal during and after the conference. He begins by explaining how many of the pandits at the time worked for Kings, and hence relied on their patronage for their livelihood. They would as a result, show great respect and humility in the presence of the King by removing and tying their upper garments around their waist and stand with their hands folded and address the King with the title Maharaja. Rhetorically asking the questions, "Could Thevar conduct Adigal with his new civilisation as he conducted these pandits? Would Adigal tolerate or bear such a thing?"

Thirunavukkarasu continued, "Thevar who knew decency and propriety gave Adigal a sofa and treated him like a friend and chatted with him; and praised him much to the jealousy of many of the other senior Tamil pandits."

Here again, Thirunavukkarasu is attempting to depict what is indeed a very subtle and ambiguous accommodation between Thevar and Adigal. An accommodation that attempted to reconcile both their traditional identities and relationships as well as those aspects of their identities that had arisen out of the colonial impact and imperatives. Thus Thirunavukkarasu’s description of Thevar’s relationship with

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78 ibid., p.94.
Adigal is indeed a perfect example of the transformatory impact of colonialism on tradition and traditional social relationships. The difficulty of this accommodation can not be over emphasised, since what Adigal was attempting to do was to transform and reconcile the very symbols of tradition, in his case a Saiva Siddhantist/Tamil pundit identity with one that drew authority and sustenance from his engagement with the scholarly, institutional infrastructures and trappings of the British colonial and missionary impact. It was a fusion that was fraught with contradictions and challenges and yet it was a fusion that continues to have a scope for tremendous creativity. Thirunavukkarasu concluded his section on this episode by narrating that Thevar was so impressed by Adigal that he invited him and his family to his home for three days during which time Adigal and his family were looked after by one of Thevar’s illustrious Tamil pandits Ra. Raghava Iyengar.

Both Pandithurai Thevar and the raja of Ramnad Paskara Setupati were important and generous patrons of Tamil and Saiva Siddhanta and played a significant role in the Tamil and Saiva Siddhanta renaissance. They maintained important connections with Saivite temples, Saiva Siddhanta mutts as

\[\textit{ibid.}, \text{pp. 94-95. Thirunavukkarasu does not however provide the dates for this event. I could not also trace any evidence of it in Adigal’s diaries. Thirunavukkarasu seems to be more certain of the events of the 1905 Madurai Tamil Sangam.}\]
well as with individual revivalists such as Arumuga Navalar. Despite their lower ritual status in comparison to the Velallars, their role as little Kings in the princely state of Ramnad enabled them to play a significant role in political and cultural developments in Tamil Nadu. Their contribution to the Tamil, Saiva Siddhanta revival has so far attracted little scholarly attention.

Pandaikkalath Tamilarum Ariyarum (Ancient Tamils and Aryans)

Adigal’s lecture on the Ancient Tamils and Aryans at the Madurai Tamil Sangam like most of his lectures first appeared in *Jnanacagaram* before being published in book form in the year 1906. The English preface to the work gives a clear summary of his central thesis. He wrote:

The indigenous races of India belonged to Tamils and even in the dim pre-historic times they were far advanced in mental culture. When the Aryans came into contact with the Tamils, the civilization of the latter was the primary element at work in effecting a thorough change in the social, moral and intellectual constitution of the former. The result produced by the commingling of the two race is, I believe, clearly shown in the lecture. Still the subject is such that it requires an elaborate

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81 He noted in the English preface to the book: "The matter which forms the subject in the subsequent pages is a lecture delivered by me in May 1905, at the annual meeting of the Madurai Tamil Sangam." See Vedachalam Pillai, *Pandaikkalat*, p. 1.
treatment...I hope to do it in my separate English work "Tamilic India."

Thus the work sought to demonstrate that the civilization of the Tamils was the primary element in both India's religio-cultural achievements as well as that of the Aryans.

Utilizing largely his knowledge of philology as well as his firm grounding in ancient Tamil literature, Adigal argued that most of what is considered as the great achievements of the ancient Aryans was in fact borrowed from the Tamil Dravidians. The logic and evidence with which he reversed the conventional account of the history of India is quite remarkable. He acknowledged in the preface that he was especially inspired by the recent work of pundit Saviriroyan, "The Admixture of Aryan with Tamilian" 32 and Rhys Davids, Buddhist India. Cleverly utilizing Rhys Davids work he even suggested that the Indian script was borrowed from the Dravidians by the Aryans. 33 The work also demonstrates that he was developing and refining the ideas that he had first articulated in Mullaippattu Araichurai.

This lecture and work on the Ancient Tamils and Aryans could in many ways be viewed as an extremely significant

32 ibid., pp. 7-8.

33 This article had appeared in the journal Siddhanta Deepika

34 Vedachalam Pillai, Pandaikkalat, p. 21.
watershed in the ideological trajectory of Tamil nationalism. It reads much like a Tamil cultural nationalist essay. Though many of the ideas Adigal expressed in the work had their seeds in earlier largely Orientalist works in English, what marked this work as significant was that it was done entirely in Tamil and was aimed at a Tamil cultural world. Although it was a "modern" message utilizing largely European scholarly methodology and historical approaches, it was conveyed in the form and guise of "traditional" Tamil scholarship.

In the opening pages of the work, it is clear that Adigal was both aware of and responsive to the extremely sensitive nature of the subject. Before embarking on his subject he made an important qualification or disclaimer, warning his readers that his reference to Aryans and Tamils (Dravidians) only referred to the ancient races and not to the present people living in India, or the Tamil region—"where there has been so much mixing that these divisions such as Aryan and Tamils, no longer can hold." This was an important qualification, which Adigal maintained publicly throughout his life. In this way, he was able to critique and subvert the pre-eminent role of Brahmins and Brahminism in South India while making it appear outwardly as if it was a purely academic exercise.

Adigal's observation in the preface to the "newness" of

85 ibid., pp. 1-2.
the subject to the Tamil speaking population is revealing. He wrote:

The subject is quite a new one to the main portion of the Tamil-speaking population. Even to the historians of the West it is a new theme. It is only of late that Pandit. D. Savirioyan and Prof. Rhys Davids have given a new turn to the historic studies of the Indian races and their literature. Pandit Savirioyan’s ‘Admixture of Aryan with Tamilian’ and Prof. Davids’ ‘Buddhist India’ have set up new lines of researches to be carried on in the study of Indian history and stimulated the interests of all impartial students whether Brahmin or Non-Brahmin to seek for their guide the old Tamil literature and the ancient Buddhist works in Pali."

What is surprising about his admission of its “newness’ is that there is little reference to important intellectual predecessors such as Caldwell, Sundaram Pillai and Pope. It clearly suggests that he wished to take the subject much beyond its early missionary origins and present it both as an established Orientalist scholarly endeavour as well as a valid Tamil concern.

The Madurai Tamil Sangam (1906)

Adigal also attended the Madurai Tamil Sangam convention the following year in 1906. His observations there reveal that his previous year’s lecture had little impact on the figures who dominated the Sangam. On the 29th of May 1906, Adigal

86 ibid.
noted: "Went and attended the Sangam Anniversary meeting which was presided by U.V. Swaminatha Aiyer who spoke very tediously for two hours. All the speakers were fools." It confirms Adigal's impatience with the celebration of such Brahmin scholars of Tamil as U.V. Swaminatha Aiyer by the Sangam. A few days later observing the response to his own lecture, Adigal noted: "During the course of my lecture on Sri Jnana Sambhandar, two envious Brahmins spoke in the end ill of me but I curbed them smoothly. Oh when the wretched Brahmins perish the country will be saved." These observations reveal that Adigal's espousal of a Dravidian reading of Tamil culture and history placed him in opposition to many "traditional" scholars of Tamil, especially those who belonged to the Brahmin caste.

The review of the above-mentioned "fifth" Sangam meeting of 1906 in the pages of the journal Siddhanta Deepika by J.M. Nallaswamy Pillai confirms this situation. Nallaswamy Pillai noted: "This anniversary celebration was unique in many respects. It was presided over by Pandit V. Swaminathaayyar Avergal who among Tamil scholars was the first to receive the title of Maha Mahapadhayaa....The president evoked considerable personal enthusiasm, and though the sittings were

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87 See diary entry for 29th May 1906.
88 See diary entry for 4th of June 1906.
inordinately long, the enthusiasm never at any moment flagged." Revealing that the ideological leanings of the Sangam were contrary to that of Adigal's, Swaminatha Aiyer bemoaned during his presidential address that no suitable memorial existed for the medieval Brahmin commentator, Nachinarkiniyar, in his home town of Madurai and promised, "that a suitable memorial would be put up when the (Madurai Tamil) Sangam Hall would be completed." It is important to recall here, Adigal's criticism of Nachinarkiniyar in his work Mullaippattu Araichiurai published in 1903. In his later reflections, Adigal asserted that he gave up his connections with Madurai Tamil Sangam finally in the year 1908, exasperated over the continuing dominance of what he considered as a Brahminical perspective at the Sangam.

Establishing the Saiva Siddhanta Maha Samasam

Adigal's most significant achievement during this period was the central role he played in establishing an umbrella organization, the Saiva Siddhanta Maha Samasam (SSMS) (Great Organisation of Saiva Siddhanta) to represent and unite the

89 Siddhanta Deepika, Vol.VII. June 1906, No.3, p.150.

90 Siddhanta Deepika, Vol.VII. June 1906, No.3, p.150.

91 See Adigal's criticism of Nachinarkiniyar in the preface to his work Mullaipattu Araichiurai.
various Saiva Siddhanta Associations scattered across the Tamil region in the year 1905. Also known as the Saiva Siddhanta Conference, it became a grand annual function that attracted most of the prominent Saiva Siddhanta revivalists and Tamil elites from South India and Sri Lanka. There is little information on its inspiration and foundation in Adigal’s diaries aside from a cryptic and cursory entry on the 7th of July 1905: “This evening I delivered an able lecture on Tiruchitrambala Vilakkam (Explanation of Tiruchitrambalam) which was highly imbued with deep speculation and smooth eloquence... Then at my request the Saiva Siddhanta Conference was formed and Mr. C. Singaravelu Mudalier was appointed as the grand secretary of the Conference.” Adigal was certainly aware of the significance of the achievement from the start. At the end of 1905 he noted: “This year events of varied descriptions was passed calmly. The great thing I did this year is the establishment of the Saiva Siddhanta Conference...”

Tirunavukkarasu sheds more light on the founding of the Samasam. According to him Adigal founded the organisation at Thirupathiripuliyyur in the presence and with the blessings of the head of the Saiva Siddhanta Mutt there, Sivachariar

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92 See MMAD entry for 12th April 1905.
Desikar commonly known as Jnaniar Adigal. According to Thirunavukkarasu, Adigal often visited Janiar, lectured at the Mutt, and discussed his plans for establishing the Samasam with Janiar and some friends around this time. On the 7th of July 1905, after delivering a lecture at the Mutt, Adigal founded the Saiva Siddhanta Maha Samasam in the presence of Janiar as well as the following persons, Tashildar Ponnusamy Pillai, overseer, Singaravel Mudaliar and the Vandipalayam Tamil teacher Kandasami Mudaliar. Thirunavukkarasu makes a point of underlining the presence of only these four in the founding of the SSMS since there were often bitter contestations later over the identities of the founding fathers of the Samasam.

Although this was a momentous moment in the revival of Saiva Siddhanta in Tamil Nadu, the initial response to it, as gauged by the views of Nallaswamy Pillai and Siddhanta Deepika, seemed to have been rather unengaged and sceptical. A brief notice at the very end of the journal read: "Pandit R. S. Vedachalam Pillai has organized a Siddhantam conference to be

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93 Jnaniar, the head of the Tirupathirippuliyur Saiva Siddhanta mutt, has so far received little scholarly attention. Jnaniar Adigal is described by Tiru. Vi. Ka. as a well educated, extremely bright man and also a great orator in Tamil in his own right. He suggests that Jnanaiar played an important role in Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil revivalism. See Kalyanasundara Mudaliar, Tiru. Vi. Ka Valkaik Kurippukal.

94 See Thirunavukkarasu, Maraimalai Adigal, p. 56.
held in different districts from time to time and his Tamil magazine Gnana Sagaram is to be the organ of the conference. Saiva Siddhanta Sabhas should cooperate with him in his commendable work. When there are no Sabhas, people interested in the spread of Siddhanta should lose no time in forming societies and inviting the conference to their midst. They should communicate with the Pandit to his address, Madras Manager, The Siddhanta Conference, Mannady, Madras.

This attitude toward’s Adigal’s venture is hardly surprising given the fact that Adigal was attempting to carve out for himself the mantle of a major spokesman for Saiva Siddhanta right under the nose of the doyen of Saiva Siddhanta revival in Tamil Nadu, J.M. Nallaswamy Pillai.

However, Adigal’s sheer tenacity and determination soon ensured that his organizational initiative could not be ignored. The very next issue of Siddhanta Deepika, carried a notice sent by the general secretary of the Saiva Siddhanta Conference, Ponnusamy Mudaliar, under the title “Saiva Siddhanta Conference Summer lectures by Pandit R.S. Vedachalam Pillai.” Detailing Adigal’s lectures at eight different Saiva Siddhanta Associations, the secretary noted how Adigal as “manager” checked and approved the accounts of local societies. Thus in Tanjore, “the account of the Tanjore Local

society were read for the approval of the lecturer and manager Pandit Vedachalam. It was proposed by him that a school of Siddhanta must be conducted by the local society for the benefit of the members and others, (and) cheerfully approved by all...” In Mannargudi on the 14th of June 1906, “Many respectable men requested the manager to go over there and form a branch to the conference. In complying with their request, he went over there and delivered a lecture... Then under the Presidentship of Mr. Kalpakavinayakam Pillai. B.A., Police Inspector he formed a branch to the conference.” The secretary ended his notice by noting: “The unselfish and beneficent motive that stimulated Pandit Vedachalam to work for the conference... has deeply laid us under great obligation. We thank him in the name of the conference for undertaking the difficult task...” 36 One cannot help observing the similarity between the organizational structure established by Adigal for the **Saiva Siddhanta Maha Samasam** and the one established by the Theosophical society and the Madras Mahajana Sabha a little earlier. It suggests that the Samasam was attempting to emulate the successful organizational method utilized by the Theosophists and the Madras Mahajana Sabha—the precursor to the Madras Congress organization.

In many ways, the SSMS was the realization of the goal

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Adigal had articulated in the first issue of *Jnanacagaram* in 1902. The new organization was intent to become the coordinating and regulatory body for all Saiva Siddhantists and their associations in Tamil Nadu. As the closest of Nayakar’s disciples during the final years of Nayakar, Adigal no doubt saw himself as the legitimate heir to the role played by his teacher in Tamil Nadu. The first SSMS conference was held in the city of Chidambaram towards the end of December 1906. Revealing the kind of status and prestige the organization wanted to display, Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan, a prominent and highly esteemed Tamil Vellalar statesman and Saiva Siddhantist from Sri Lanka presided over the first conference. The conference was organised very elaborately and in a grand fashion. It included, according to Tirunavukkarasu’s account, receptions arranged for Ramanathan at most of the major stops along Ramanathan’s journey to Chidambaram and a grand reception at Chidambaram.  

After this first grand conference even the *Siddhanta Deepika* carried a favourable review of the conference. Nallaswamy Pillai without crediting Adigal’s role, wrote: “The Saiva Siddhanta Samaja Conference, the first of its kind held on the 26th, 27th and 28th of December last under the Presidency of Hon’ble P. Ramanathan must be pronounced a great success.

97See Tirunavukkarasu, *Maraimalai Adigal*. 
The utmost capacity of the Hall chosen for its sittings was about a thousand, and it was crowded from beginning to end...admission being by tickets. There were representatives and delegates from every Tamil district, and some had come even from Secunderbad."

The annual conferences that followed attracted many of the most prestigious figures in the Tamil region. Aside from making Adigal highly visible, these conferences enabled Adigal to establish contacts and make himself known to a broad spectrum of people associated with Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil in India and Sri Lanka. More importantly, he made personal connections with many of the powerful and monied elites of the Tamil region. For example after the first conference, Adigal noted having “a long conversation with Honourable Ramanathan,” and “going with Honourable Ramanathan to many firms to buy articles.” Adigal's great respect for Ramanathan is evident from his observation on the eve of Ramanathan’s departure, “as a mark of his love for me, he gave his umbrella to me.” It was also during this time that Adigal developed a friendship with the great Orientalist and Indian nationalist, A.K. Coomaraswamy. The second SSMS conference was presided by

99 See MMAD entries, 30th December 1906 and 4th January 1907.
100 See MMAD entry for 8th January 1907.
Pandithurai Thevar and the third by J.M. Nallaswamy Pillai.

The fourth annual conference held in 1909 at the Hall of the National High School, Trichinopoly was presided over by "Hon’ble Mr. A. Kanakasabhi, B.A., Member of Ceylon legislative Council." Of the event the Siddhanta Deepika reported, "The hall was full to overflowing, the attendance counting not less than 1200 to 1500 members, with a fair sprinkling of Europeans...". "Mr. T.S. Annamalai Pillai, retired Tashildar of Trichinopoly, welcomed as chairman of the reception committee, the President, lecturers, members and delegates returned from various branch Associations. He received the President the previous day...and conducted him in pompous and gorgeous procession to the place engaged for his sojourn...". The Deepika also referred to the lecture by "Pandit Vedachalam" (Adigal) on the "The Social Aspects of Saiva Siddhanta" in which "he brought grave charges against the ethics of Hindu Idealism, as being mischievous in practice, and inapplicable to social conditions." It reveals Adigal’s utilization of the forum to attack neo-Vedantic revivalism and the caste practices he associated with it. The Deepika also noted that the president in his remarks on pandit Vedachalam’s speech "went fully into the subject" asserting "even inter-dining between the various sections of Saivites

was not an accomplished fact.”

An interesting long review of the same conference by the missionary, H.W. Schomerus, a scholar of Saiva Siddhanta and member of the Leipzig Lutheran Mission, was also published in *Siddhanta Deepika* with much of its contents strongly contested by its editor, J.M. Nallaswamy Pillai, and appended in the form of footnotes to the main text. Schomerus’s interpretation of the conference is particularly instructive in providing not only a missionary perspective of the conference but of Saiva Siddhanta revival in general. While describing the Conference gathering, Schomerus noted: “the large hall was packed to its utmost capacity...Brahmins were scarcely to be seen, no wonder since the Saiva Siddhanta has been from the beginning chiefly the philosophy of the Sudras.” To this the editor of *Siddhanta Deepika* retorted in a footnote, “this is not true. There were as many Brahmins as possibly could be expected in such strictly religious functions.” However, Schomerus’s observation that Saiva Siddhanta was a “philosophy of the Sudras”, as in the case of G.U. Pope, perhaps reveals more his wish than his belief.

Equally, and perhaps to privilege Adigal’s interpretation

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102 *ibid.*, pp. 258-59.

of Saiva Siddhanta over Nallaswamy Pillai's, Schomerus elaborated at length on Adigal's contribution to Saiva Siddhanta. He wrote, "that the secretary of the conference, Mr. Vedachalam Pillai, alone, who is a pandit at Madras Christian College, has delivered during the last four years more than 75 lectures...that the Conference publishes since four years a Tamil periodical in aid of resuscitating Saiva Siddhanta, and since lately an English magazine also called The Oriental Mystic Myna.... The same object as that of these two papers is also pursued by the English periodical Siddhanta Deepika, edited since 1897 by Mr. Nallaswamy Pillai." This statement again brought a sharp retort by the editor who claimed:"It will be truer to say that the current Saiva Siddhanta activities are the direct outcome of the pioneer work turned out in the past by our journal. It is better always to state first the facts as they are, and then interpret them as suits ones fancy." Nallaswamy Pillai's retort, strongly suggests that he suspected Schomerus's motive for privileging Adigal's role in the revival of Saiva Siddhanta over his.

Schomerus also claimed that when the missionaries present at the conference thanked the President for the courtesy

104 ibid, p. 510.
105 ibid.
extended to them, the President had replied: “On the contrary, it is we that should offer thanks to you, for it is none other but you missionaries that have caused this revival.”

Reflecting on the events of the Conference, Schomerus wryly observed of the Saivites: “They endeavour to revive their religion in opposition to Christianity, but one sees they try to do it with the aid of thoughts and ideas derived from Christianity, which of course they will disclaim, but which is nevertheless a fact... Particularly the leaders are strongly influenced by Christian mysticism, as I had occasion to learn from talks with them, and from their writings.”

In the final section of his review of the conference, Schomerus explained the missionary stance towards the Saiva Siddhanta revival movement. He wrote, “we can only be glad of this revival” since, “it stirs up religious interest...” because it “combats the ever spreading atheism and the Vedantic monism and it strives to remove many an abuse; because this movement is a proof for the power of Christianity in the Tamil country; and chiefly because it will end in showing that Hinduism also in its best branches is not able to satisfy...” He repeated: “It is true, this movement sets its face against Christianity, but not less against the harmful


107 ibid.
monistic Vedantism. We can therefore, look at Saiva Siddhanta not only as an enemy, but also in a certain sense, as an ally." Ending his review he wrote:"I conclude with the statement that we can trust the Divine Providence that this movement although started to check the spreading of Christianity in India, will yet help to bring the Christian faith nearer to the Indian people. His Kingdom comes also in India! May it come soon!":

The conference in the year 1911 was presided over by Adigal himself. Adigal resigned from the position of secretary of the SSMS organising committee in 1911 although he continued to attend the SSMS conferences when invited to preside or lecture. During Adigal’s tenure, the SSMS venue and the selection of speakers were no doubt influenced by him. Interestingly all those who were chosen to preside during his tenure were non-Brahmin Tamils. The main reason for his resignation was the power struggle between him and Nallaswamy Pillai’s supporters that seemed to have come to a head as a result of Adigal’s attempt to by-pass Nallaswamy Pillai’s unquestioned leadership and seniority in the revival of Saiva Siddhanta in Tamil Nadu. The ideological differences between them, no doubt, played an important role in their conflict.

108 Siddhanta Deepika. Vol.XI, November 1910, No. 5, pp. 226-230. It is also important here to recall the reasons Pope hints at in his preface to Abbe Dubois’s work on the reasons for supporting Tamil literature and Saiva Siddhanta.
Nallaswamy Pillai, unlike Adigal, did not wish to alienate the Brahmins in his efforts at Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil revival.

As early as the fourth Conference in 1909 the relationship between them seemed to have become extremely strained. The coverage of that conference in the pages of *Siddhanta Deepika*, through its efforts at minimising Adigal’s role, also suggests such a view. Adigal’s diary entry during the same conference also confirms their increasing rivalry. He had noted: “My English lecture was interrupted in the middle by the drunkard Nallaswamy since he became envious of my accomplishments.” Despite these tussles for power, the central role Adigal played in establishing and running of the *Saiva Siddhanta Maha Samajam* in its early years helped consolidate his role as a major spokesman for Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil.

In the year Adigal established the SSMS, he also established a branch of it in Madras city. He noted on the 30th September 1905: “A private meeting was held in my house in order to form a Saiva Siddhanta Sabha at Madras as the branch association of the Saiva Siddhanta Conference; and the meeting was successful; including me six were present.”

Similarly a month after his famous speech at the Madurai Tamil

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109 See MMAD entry for 30th December, 1909. The reason Thirunavukkarasu offers for Adigal’s resignation from the organising committee was the jealousy and rivalry that Adigal had experienced from some of the members of the SSMS conference.
Sangam in 1905, Adigal organized a Tamil Sangam at Madras. Through such a variety of endeavours by his retirement from MCC in the year 1911 Adigal clearly emerged as one of the most important spokesman and propagandists for Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil in Tamil Nadu.

Adigal and the Western Impact

From around 1903, the impact of the city's cosmopolitan culture, including its powerful English intellectual and cultural influences is evident in almost every aspect of Adigal's personality and lifestyle. He was exposed to these influences largely through his connections with MCC, his associations with the English educated urban middle classes and perhaps most importantly through his increasing engagement with English scholarship and literary culture. What were considered later as eccentric habits by many who knew him—his preference for sofas, arm chairs, "English vegetables", cups and saucers and European landscape paintings—had their origins in such influences that the city afforded. Adigal's

110 Adigal noted in his diary: "This evening Mr. Ratnasabapathy and Mr. Janaratnam met me at home and we then went to the sea shore discussed about the to be started Tamil Sangam at Madras." A few days later he noted formulating the rules with his associates. See MMAD.

111 One of his daughters, Thiripurasundari, recounted these habits proudly during an interview in Madras in 1994. They are also described by Tirunavukkarasu in his biography of Adigal.
diaries reflect these influences quite clearly. Perhaps the most powerful source of English cultural influence came through his tremendous immersion in English scholarship, particularly English literature. Reflecting on his passion for English scholarship and literature, he noted on the 13th of November 1905: "This evening I bought two volumes of Burke's Impeachment of Mr. Warren Hastings. I grow very impassioned with classical English studies. I crave always for high, impassioned and sublime poetry pieces and ably wrought prose works like those of Swinburne and Ruskin." Adigal's engagement with such works is also reflected in the numerous translation projects he undertook. One of his earliest and most well known translations was of some essays by Joseph Addison and was entitled, Sinthanaik Katturaikal (Reflective Essays). In these and other translation projects he undertook, he made sure to "Tamilize" them.

Even during one of his most passionate and memorable love affairs he turned to such European writers as Emerson for inspiration, as he noted, "I studied Emerson's very thoughtful essay on Love." Adigal was also a great fan of G.W.M. Reynolds' sensational and erotic novels. Reading Reynolds' multi-volume work, Mysteries of the Court of London, he noted,

112 Maraimalai Adigal, Cinthanaik Katturaikal, Madras:SISSW. 1980.(first edition, 1908)

113 See MMAD, 04-01-1903.
“This evening I finished the 4th Volume of the Mysteries of the Court of London; the last portion dealing with the most lamentable death of Florence Eaton touched my heart to the quick and I wept over it many a time.” Adigal’s engagement with Reynolds led him to publish a Tamil translation of Reynolds’ novel Leila under the name Nananattarasi Kumuthavalli (The Naga Queen, Kumudavalli).”

Perhaps it was exposure to such racy and romantic English novels that also led him to have an unusual and powerful dream, on the 9th of September 1907: “This night a very pleasant and peculiar dream. A very beautiful European lady married me out of pure love. She was very yielding to my wishes; She was dressed in pure white; her enchanting manners made a strong impression even in my waking state.” Similarly, his exposure to English literature also cultivated in him a quite pronounced taste for and appreciation of nature. As Tiurnavukkarasu also confirms, Adigal often undertook trips to rural regions to enjoy nature. The very language he used to describe his appreciation of nature often revealed its origins. On one such visit to a rural region he noted: “...In the afternoon we went up the mountain and the excellent scenery rivetted my attention and inspired in me feelings of

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awe and sublimity. Communion with nature is truly very pleasant.”

A striking aspect of Adigal’s life during this period was also his constant efforts at "self improvement" through various English and American correspondence courses, reading English scholarship and English 'Self Help' books. As early as March 1903, Adigal sought to sit for the London Matriculation. Noting this in his diary he observed: "A packet from the secretary of the University of London. This evening I began my preparation for the London Matriculation." Adigal did not persist with many of these projects including the case of "London Matriculation." However, his interest and engagement with English literature, Philosophy, Psychology, Hypnotism, Occultism, Personal magnetism and alternative healing practices persisted throughout his life. By 1907 Adigal was spending large sums of money on acquiring such works.

Many of the correspondence courses that he was subscribing to promised psychological/spiritual achievement and proficiency in alternative healing practices. Of one such course by "Professor G.A. Mann of Central School of Psychology" he noted:“Finished the first part of the correspondence course by Professor G.A. Mann, the course is of

115 See MMAD, 07-03-1908.

116 See MMAD entry for the 9th of March 1903.
course a very effective one and unlike other courses in hypnotism it leads to true spiritual progress." Commenting on a work on the subject of alternative health practices he noted: "Finished Philosophy of Fasting by Purinton; much tedious matter except for the 20 rules for fasting; the author is a semicrack using long failed and strange words to express his vapid thoughts; in some places humorous." A favourite work of his was, "Louis Kubner's New Science of Healing" he noted that, "it was a wonderful method of treating deceases without drugs is put forth very plainly and strongly." It is clear from many of his own writings in Tamil on such subjects that he made great use of these works.

He also personally followed some of the practices suggested in these works. Of one such instance, he observed: "I felt quite feverish and also had nervous pain. But fortunately by the magnetic auto-treatment and breathing exercise I cured myself of the disease. I have good faith in the efficacy of Magnetic healing and Chromopathy." Adigal also treated his family members, friends and at times his students as he noted in his diary: "This evening in compliance with the request of

117 See MMAD entry for the 29th of June 1907.
118 See MMAD entry for the 1st of July 1907.
119 See MMAD entry for the 1st of August 1907.
120 See MMAD entry for the 2nd of July 1907.
my students I attended to an insane patient who was a very bright student. I tried to hypnotize him but he was raving." After trying again the next day he concluded: "Attended the insane patient and tried to hypnotize which was ineffectual as he was raving very much."

Although these interests were consistent with Adigal's interest in Saiva Siddhanta and his predisposition toward subjects religio-mystical, they nevertheless indicate that he derived equal inspiration for his religio-mystical quest from Western occult practices. Revealing his openness to such western occult practices, he noted on the 24th of February 1907:

Mr. S. Santhana Krishna, Kumariya, Srinivasalu, Jayaram and myself went by 9 O'clock train to Kunoor and tried some experiments on automatic writing and Telepathy which proved wonderfully successful. In the evening returned to people's park and played boat rowing which was very pleasant.

Adigal also ordered a Crystal Gazing kit from London as he noted: "... Sent by M.O. 4 Shillings to the New Thought Co., London to forward me a Crystal Gazing out fit."121

Thus, it is often difficult to separate his interest in Western occult and spiritual subjects from his interests in Eastern religio-mystical subjects; the impression one gets from his diaries is that they often fed on each other. It is then,

121 See MMAD entry for 17-10-1907.
hardly surprising that Adigal during this period sought out a Yogi of some repute, Yogi Rajananda of Kottaioor (near the city of Kumbakonam) to undergo initiation into the "mysteries of Nittai." He was at first a little sceptical as he noted on the 27th of January, 1907: "This forenoon I was initiated into the mysteries of Nittai (meditation) but I had my own doubts about it being the only true one." By the 7th of June 1908, however, Adigal had become an ardent disciple: "This morning I went to his holiness my Guru Sri La Sri Rajananda swamigal and prostrated at his feet placing a gift of Rs.10 and fruits etc. His holiness explained to me the many hidden secrets of Siva Raja Yoga for which my life is due to him." It was through Rajananda that Adigal learned many of the Yoga practices including pranayama (breathing techniques of Yoga) and meditation that he practised throughout his life.

Adigal's interests in both Western and Eastern mysticism, the supernatural and occult sciences along with his engagement with Saiva Siddhanta and Siva Raja Yoga culminated in the publication of his first English journal, The Oriental Mystic Myna in August 1908. The cover proclaimed it as "A monthly magazine devoted to the study of Comparative Religion, Philosophy, Psychology, Occult Sciences and Politics." Despite the grand proclamation, the journal mostly contained various accounts of supernatural events, past birth experiences,
alternative health practices, in addition to serving as the English organ for Adigal’s Saiva Siddhanta revivalist efforts. It lasted only a few years despite Adigal’s attempts to enrol a large number of overseas subscribers.

Adigal was also interested in various English self help books that dealt with more worldly interests, such as financial success and personal influence. For example he began to "cultivate Personal magnetism according to Dr. Sages methods" on 30th October 1906. One of his favourites was Leland's, "Have you a strong Will?" He noted of the work: "no doubt the work is very practical and scientific. I wish to follow the directions therein."\(^{122}\) On the next day he noted: "finished Mrs Haras excellent book Business Success." His concerns at this time with cultivating personal power and business success can be related to his emergence during this period as a major figure in the Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil revivalist world--and its imperative to cultivate a powerful and attractive public personality. Adigal also seemed to have profited from the readings on business success. He noted on the 27th of March 1907: "This evening I invested Rs.2700 in the bank of a worthy Nattukottai Chettiar. May Lord Siva help me with material prosperity also."

\(^{122}\)See MMAD.
Retirement from Madras Christian College

Adigal’s retirement from MCC and his move away from the city of Madras was largely fortuitous. His early retirement from MCC in 1911 was due in major part to the dramatic reduction in the demand for vernacular teachers that followed the institution of the new University regulations in Madras in 1909. As a result it was no longer compulsory for University students to be examined in one of the vernaculars for their B.A. A brief note under the section “Report of the College Council” in the MCC calendar for the year 1912-13 reads: “R.S. Vedachalam retired at the end of the first term after a service of thirteen years as Tamil Pandit. This last change was in consequence of that reduction in the staff of vernacular teachers, which has followed the new University regulations, and which has led to the retirement from service of the College of many whom the Council were sorry to lose.”

As the date of his retirement approached, he became increasingly concerned about finding another source of regular income. He noted on the 14th February 1910: “With my student Mr. Thirunavukkarasu, I proposed and arranged to open a book-

123 Arooran cites this prolonged controversy over the importance of the vernacular at the University level—an issue that dragged from around the year 1903 as a major catalyst for the Tamil nationalist movement. See Nambi Arooran, Tamil Renaissance and Dravidian Nationalism 1905-1944. Madurai:Koodal Publishers, 1980.

124 See Madras Christian College Calendar, 1912-13, p. 158.
selling business under the official name Messrs Pandit R.S. Vedachalam and Co. from this day." This project however never materialized. Even by the 31st January 1911 Adigal was still not entirely sure about his future source of income:

This afternoon received my pay; immediately after the startling intelligence came to me that my service will cease with march 1st; although I expected this as a natural result of the University regulations and wished to enter the order of ascetics subsequently, it yet troubled me a little. All unfavourable and troublesome things come to me on Tuesdays.

The very next day Adigal sent a "letter and a copy of my critical commentary on Mullai pattu Araichiurai with a copy of my English lecture on the social aspects of Saiva Siddhanta to Mr. J.A. Stone, Principal of the Presidency College." Adigal followed this up a week later: "Sent a letter to J. A. Stone about the Pandits place at Kumbakonam College." He also a "sent a card to Mr. J.M. Nallaswami Pillai proposing him that I would if he likes, become an editor to his "Light of Truth" (Siddhanta Deepika)." Adigal also considered the idea of moving to Pondicherry where housing was cheaper and living conditions better.

125 See MMAD.
126 See diary entry for 01-02-1911.
127 See diary entry for 08-02-1911.
128 See diary entry for 5th August 1911.
It was largely through the advice of friends that he purchased some land in a small town called Pallavaram around ten miles south of the city of Madras. Pallavaram during this time was regarded as a much healthier environment than Madras city. By the 1st of May 1911 Adigal and his family moved into a house on Chavady street, Pallavaram on the same street where he had bought land. It was here in Pallavaram on the outskirts of Madras that Adigal resided for the remainder of his life.
Chapter Six

The Construction of a Vellalar-Centred Tamil Saivite Nationalism (1911-1926)

I know nothing of Saiva Siddhanta beyond what I have learnt from Swami Vedachalam, but if it means, as he says, opposition to Vedantic Pantheism with its doctrine that all is one and all is illusion, it has my heartiest sympathy. For I have long thought monism as harmful socially as it is scientifically groundless, and the widespread acceptance it has won in India seems to be a clue to much of the political history of the country. If the people of India can be persuaded that the truth of speculation also must be tested by their bearing upon life, the progress of India will be much accelerated.


It was after his retirement from MCC in March 1911, that Adigal was able to devote himself entirely to the propagation of Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil. After moving to Pallavaram, he embraced Sanyasa (Hindu monasticism), founded his own Saiva Siddhanta order and undertook extensive lecture tours. Although Adigal had been attracted to the writings and philosophy of Ramalinga, at least from the time of the Arutpa/Marutpa controversy at the turn of the century, it was only after his retirement from MCC, that he began to identify himself strongly with Ramalinga’s work. Under the banner of the religio-cultural association, founded by Ramalinga, he

1 Foreword to Adigal’s English work on Saiva Siddhanta written during this period. See Maraimalai Adigal, Saiva Siddhanta as a Form of Practical Knowledge.
established his own Saiva Siddhanta order, the **Samarasa Sanmarga Nilayam** and it was under the name of this order that he constructed and propagated his own unique brand of Saivite-Tamil nationalist ideology for the remainder of his life.

The second major development during this period was the further development of his ideas regarding non-Brahmin Tamil identity and culture. His earlier, largely unfocused celebration of non-Brahmin Tamil identity and heritage began to give way to a more well defined construction and articulation of the social and cultural parameters of this non-Brahmin Tamil identity and culture. In the more socio-political works he wrote during this period such as **Kokilambal Katinkal** (Letters of Kokilambal), **Cativetrumaiyum Policaivarum** (Caste Discrimination and False Saivites) and **Vellalar Nakarikam** (Vellalar Civilization), one can trace the evolution of these ideas. An analysis of them reveals that by the end of this period Adigal constructed a non-Brahmin Tamil identity that though centred on the primacy of the dominant non-Brahmin Vellalar castes was at the same time quite inclusive and critical of the caste arrogance of segments of the Vellalars. The third major development during this period was the emergence of non-Brahmin political organization and articulation in the Presidency and Adigal’s role and response to them. Beginning around the middle of the second decade of
this century, these developments heralded a golden age for Adigal since in many ways they represented the political articulation and valorization of his ideas and vision. Adigal’s engagement and involvement with these developments can be gauged not only from the close ties he had to persons connected with these organizations but also from the numerous articles he wrote for their journals. It was also during this period that Adigal launched his “pure” Tamil movement, almost as a linguistic or cultural counter-part to the emergence of the non-Brahmin political movement.

Becoming a Modern “Dravidian” Swami

Adigal made the transition from his vocation as a teacher at MCC to that of a “Dravidian” swami quite rapidly. Although it is not clear how or when he first decided to become a “swami”, his diary entries during this period suggest that he began contemplating adopting Sanyasa towards the end of the year 1910, as the date for the termination of his position at MCC approached. Aware of his increasing stature and popularity in the Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil world, he probably came to this decision with the expectation that as a “Dravidian” swami propagating Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil he would be able to make a reasonable living. Still, as noted earlier, he did not feel entirely certain about his decision even at the beginning of
1911. He noted in his diary on the 1st of January 1911, that although he knew that his position at MCC would be terminated by the 1st of March, "and wished to enter the order of ascetics subsequently, yet it troubled me a little." He was most likely concerned for his financial security depended as he would be, solely on his income as a Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil propagandist. It is interesting and perhaps suggestive of his concerns at the time that the day before he embraced Sanyasa he consented to take up J.M. Nallaswamy Pillai's offer on behalf of the Saiva Siddhanta Maha Samajam, the position of Samaj lectureship for Rs. 30 a month.\(^2\)

Adigal's choice of Pallavaram as his future residence, as noted earlier, was also quite fortuitous. Although he had bought a piece of land at Pallavaram as the site for a future house by September 1910\(^4\), he was not entirely sure whether he would move there, until close to the time of his actual move. His friends had convinced him that the environment at Pallavaram would be more conducive to his and his family's

\(^2\)See MMAD entry for 31st January 1911.

\(^3\)See MMAD entry for 26th April 1911.

\(^4\)He noted on the 25th September 1910: "At 10.30 A.M. Annamalai, Jnanasambhandar, Tirunavukkarasu and myself went to Pallavaram and selected a spot of ground near the Railway line to build a house. Secured the friendship of the village Munsiff Mr. Daivaratnam Mudaliar of Pallavaram..." See MMAD.
health. 5 Pallavaram at the time was known for its more
agreeable living environment. 6 He secured the deed for the
land he bought in Pallavaram by the 24th of February, and by
the 1st of May 1911, he along with his family moved into an
adjacent house in Pallavaram. 7

Around a month after his retirement from MCC, on the 22nd
of April, 1911, Adigal founded his Saiva Siddhanta order, the
Samarasa Sanmarga Nilayam. He noted in his diary:”Swami
Rudrakoti and Swami Janaratnam messed in our house this night.
Mr. Annamalai arrived here this night. We had a long
conversation this afternoon and evening. I organized an
ascetic association named The Sacred Order of Love (Samarasa
Sanmarga Nilayam).” Annamalai along with Mani Tirunavukkarasu
and Jnanasambhandar were close friends of Adigal during this
time. They had learned Tamil under Adigal and shared his
interest in Tamil and Saiva Siddhanta. Adigal was also
associating with figures such Swami Rudrakoti whom he called
”my student” and swami Sivjnana Yogi of Virudupati, a great

5One of them was Mani Tirunavukkarasu. Adigal noted this in his short article dedicated to
Mani Tirunavukkarasu at his death. See, Maraimalaiyadigal, “Tamil Mani Tirunavukkarasu

6Adigal even considered moving to Pondicherry before he finally decided to move to
Pallavaram. He noted on the 19th November 1910:”My mother and my wife started this early
morning for Pondicherry to see whether it would suit us to settle there, since my employment is
set to cease the next year...”

7See Thirunavukkarasu, Maraimalai Adigal. p. 126.
deal during this time. It was a few months after his move to Pallavaram, on the 27th of August 1911 that Adigal “assumed the sacred garb of the Sanyasin.” There is only a brief entry in his diary: “Performed Vinayaka Puja this day being sacred to Ganapati. I assumed this middle of the day the sacred garb of the Sanyasin. A very holy day.” Adigal’s own bi-cultural perspective is reflected in his use of the word “garb” to describe the robes of a Sanyasi. Towards the end of the same year on the 1st of December 1911, Adigal noted, “By the grace of Lord Siva we placed the foundation for our mutt to be built in the ground we have bought between 12 and 1P.M.” Thus, Adigal made the transition from his vocation at the College to one of a “Dravidian” swami with his own order and mutt quite rapidly.

His wish to embrace Sanyasa was related to his interest in such subjects as Yoga, mysticism, spirituality, theosophy, hypnotism, mesmerism and alternative and “natural’ healing methods--many of these interests, he had cultivated through the numerous English works he had read on such subjects as well as through correspondence courses. Adigal’s search for a “guru” resulting in his initiation into the esoteric principles of Siva Raja Yoga by Rajananda swamigal as early as the year 1907 was symptomatic also of this quest for mystical

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8See MMAD.
and esoteric knowledge. The publication of his English journal, *The Oriental Mystic Myna*, a few years earlier also reflected Adigal’s leanings toward the mystical and the esoteric. Embracing Sanyasa then, was the culmination of a desire long held to identify himself as a religious, spiritual and mystical figure.

Even before he formally embraced Sanyasa, Adigal was engaged in both initiating “disciples” and students into Yogic practices as well as attempting to cure their ailments using “natural” methods of treatment. As mentioned earlier, his diary entries from around the year 1905 are full of references to his experimentation with such alternative healing practices and Yoga. He had for example noted in his diaries on the 10th of March 1911: “This evening initiated Mr. Kolunduvelu Pillai of Nagapattinam in the practice of Pranayama (Yogic breathing technique).” A few months later on the 22nd June 1911, he noted: “I treated the house owner Mr. Munnusamy Mudaliyar with enema and vapour bath for his syphilitic disease, the treatment proved very effective.” Adigal’s adoption of Sanyasa then, has also to be seen in the wider context of many English-educated Indians, emerging as self-styled swamis from around the nineteenth century, seeking to cater to the more daunting spiritual, psychological and somatic needs of the
emerging English-educated middle classes in South Asia.  

Tirunavukkarasu’s account of Adigal’s adoption of Sanyasa gives a similar explanation, albeit in a rather hagiographical manner. He begins his account by recalling that Adigal was thirty-five years old at the time and responsible for seven children as well as his wife and mother. He then posed the question, “Why would Adigal adopt Sanyasa when he shouldered so much responsibility?” For Tirunavukkarasu, Adigal’s renunciation simply followed from his devotion to educate and spread spiritual knowledge among the people. He argued, since such a vocation, necessitated the adoption of the life style and robes of a Sanyasi, Adigal simply adopted Sanyasa. He further asserted that had Adigal abandoned his responsibility to his family it would not have been “true” Sanyasa. What Adigal did instead was to devote himself to the betterment of humanity even while engaged with his responsibilities to his family. For Tirunavukkarasu, this was indeed “true” Sanyasa “as revealed in the ancient Tamil work Tolkappiam as well as in the Puranic legends about the lives of sages such as Visvamithira and Vasistara”.

Thirunavukkarasu also attempts to deflect criticism over

9Although I am not aware of much literature on the subject, there has been little critical biographies of such “modern” English educated self styled Yogis as swami Sivananda and neo-Vedantist “gurus” such as swami Chinmayananda and their host of close disciples.

10Tirunavukkarasu, Maraimalai Adigal, pp.128-29.
the unconventional way that Adigal adopted Sanyasa. He argued that Adigal did not follow the regular channel of obtaining Sanyasa through a suitably qualified Sanyasi along with the required rituals, mantras and robes since he simply did not care to follow such conventional practices. He argued instead that since Adigal had already received the necessary mantras etc. from “Rajananda swamigal”--whom Thirunavukkarasu cleverly linked with the hallowed Saiva Siddhanta saintly lineage of Tirumoolar-- he simply got his seven year old son Thirunavukkarasu named after Adigal’s favorite Saivite saint (also the author of Adigal’s biography) to hand over the ochre robes to him.

Despite Thirunavukkarasu’s attempt to present Adigal’s way of adopting Sanyasa as consonant with tradition, it is clear that the method was unconventional. This is especially made clear given the fact that Adigal far from being celibate was extremely sexually active both before and after his adoption of Sanyasa. Perhaps it is to allay his feeling of guilt over these that Adigal noted in his diary on the 25th of July 1911, a month before adopting Sanyasa: “In the early morning sexual congress with my wife and in the afternoon with Dhanam. Instinct for sexual enjoyment is very strong with me although

11Adigal was engaged with extramarital sexual affairs with at least six different women during the first half of 1911 alone. See MMAD, 1911.
it does not interfere with my study, intelligence, benevolent action, philanthropic work and piety."

The Saiva Siddhanta Order that Adigal established, the **Samarasa Sanmarga Nilayam**, reflected his deep sympathy for the philosophy and ideals of Ramalinga. Ramalinga (1823-1872) was an unorthodox, radical figure in the Saivite world of his time. Well known for his broad, almost universalist, anti-caste, reformist interpretation of Saivite spirituality and deeply moving and compassionate devotional poetry, Ramalinga founded in 1865 his own order **Samarasa Veda Sanmarga Sangam** (Society for Religious Harmony and Universal Selfhood). In 1872, the name was changed to **Samarasa Suddha Sanmarga Satya Sangam** (Society for Pure Truth and Universal Selfhood). Some of Ramalinga’s writings are also suffused with a nascent form of Tamil nationalism and anti-Aryanism. Despite the fact that his poetry and writings exerted an extremely powerful influence on later Saivite/Tamil revivalists as well as among the general Tamil population, his work has so far received little scholarly attention. Recent work indicate that

12The names of Ramalinga’s order and their English translation is from Zvelebil. See Zvelebil, *Lexicon of Tamil Literature*, p. 262. The reading of Ramalinga’s order itself has been open to interpretation and has reflected the interests of the writers rather than Ramalinga’s own vision. There has been a tendency to present him as similar to the all India mystical figures of the modern period such as Ramakrishna who are presented as proponents of neo-Vedanta.

13One of the few detailed studies of Ramalinga is by M. P. Sivajnanam, *Vallalar Kanda Orumaippadu* (The Universal Vision of Ramalinga) Madras, 1964. However, as the title itself
Ramalinga did not belong to the Saiva Vellalar caste as claimed by many of the older hagiographical works, but in fact hailed from a caste ranked well below the Vellalars called Karunilan, a fact which goes a long way towards explaining his passionate reformist vision regarding caste.¹¹

Something of the nature and objectives of the order Adigal founded in the fashion of Ramalinga can be discerned from his announcement of it in his Tamil journal Jnanacagaram:

The philosophy and practices acceptable to all castes and all religions, "Sivakarunyam" (Saivite compassion) and Samarasa Sanmargam (universal brotherhood)" was emphasized and preached in later years by Ramalinga swamigal. It is to spread everywhere these two philosophies emphasized by Ramalinga swami and to gather its followers that this order has been founded in the very name given by Ramalinga swami, Samarasa Sanmarga Nilayam. This order's founding guru is saint Tiruvalluvar and its latter day guru is Ramalinga swami.¹²

Adigal here had constructed a genealogy for his order that emphasized as its founding guru Tiruvalluvar, the same figure that missionaries such as Pope had celebrated as

¹¹See M. P. Sivajnanam, Valalar Kanda.

¹²Cited in Arasu, Maraimaliyadikal Valvum Paniyum, Madras: Appar Achakam, 1974, pp. 45-47. (Originally from Jnanacagaram Vol. 6, no. 1&2.) (my translation)
quintessentially Tamil. The order's present gurus and leaders however, were as Adigal wrote, "swami Vedachalam," and "brother disciple swami Rudrakotiswara, swami Jnanarthanam, Seenivasamoorthy" and Adigal's friend and companion "Annamalai."¹⁶

Adigal then outlined the main aims of the order. The first among these was to illustrate the principal of Sivakarunyam (love and compassion towards all creatures) through non-killing and vegetarianism. Included here as part of the order's mission, the dispatching of members to lecture and publish pamphlets against the practice of animal sacrifices that were taking place at many of the temples dedicated to "smaller" deities in Tamil Nadu; to disseminate the notion of one God and to demonstrate that it is only through love alone that one can attain God; to feed and nourish the needy and helpless; to collect money to establish and run charitable homes at such places as Pallavaram for the needy; to attempt to heal the sick without medicines. Adigal here added, that practices and arts of Yoga and Mantras would be disseminated to foster the above. Finally, Adigal noted that in order to disseminate and encourage all the above mentioned goals, a Tamil University would be established where the various arts that are found in Tamil, English, Hindi and

¹⁶ibid.
Sanskrit will be taught systematically to students." In addition, the announcement declared that the students and disciples of the order would be taught monthly through letters, such arts as Mantra, Yoga and Mesmerism which he warned should be kept secret by the students. For membership of the Order, the disciples were expected to pay an annual fee of Rs. 12 and students were expected to pay a sum of Rs. 6.17

Thus it is clear that Adigal had not only fashioned his own vision of Sanyasa but his own vision and mandate for his order—which although reflecting the spirit of Ramalinga, integrated like Ramalinga, a variety of religio-cultural influences. Like Ramalinga's own project Adigal's mandate for the order reflected influences that were quite at variance with the objectives and mandate of orthodox Saiva Sidhanta mutts. His objective of encouraging the notion of one God as well as establishing a Tamil university clearly reflect these differences.

Kokilambal Katitankal

A reflection of Adigal's increasing boldness in publicly confronting issues of caste discrimination is reflected in a

17ibid.
18ibid., p. 47.
novel he began writing in May 1911, entitled, *Kokilambal Katinkal* (Letters of Kokilambal). The work appeared as a series in his Tamil journal *Jnanacagaram* during the course of the next decade and was published in book form in the year 1921. Considered to be the first Tamil novel in the form of letters, it is considered to have been inspired by a similar English novel *Pamela* by S. Richardson. The entire novel is in the form of letters between two lovers belonging to two different castes. Of the two main protagonists, the female lover, Kokilambal is a young widow from a conservative Brahmin family and the male character Theivanayakam is their neighbor from a Vellalar family. The story in essence is very much like the love story of the boy and girl next door but with a caste contradiction that enables the author to explore and critically comment on contemporary cultural practices and family values regarding caste differences, especially those that pertained to Brahmin/Sudra caste dynamics and relations in Tamil Nadu.

As Adigal stated in the preface, the novel addresses the issue of caste customs and constraints which in his view had a profound debilitating impact on the life and progress of


the Tamil people. More particularly, he asserted, the novel addresses the serious consequences that such practices impose on the natural tendency of men and women to be attracted to partners of their choice. The letter form of the novel gave Adigal a very suitable medium through which to expose contemporary caste consciousness and family practices in Tamil Nadu, especially those of the Brahmin castes. He utilized as the model for caste conservatism, the Brahmin family of Kokilambal. However, Kokilambal herself as Adigal asserted with an ironic twist in the preface, “despite being born into a Brahmin family has qualities such as cleanliness, wisdom, chastity and firmness of character.”: Kokilambal’s answers to her young sister’s “innocent” questions regarding caste and family practices, especially the conservative caste and family practices of Brahmins, provided Adigal a convenient medium through which to expose as well as offer, through the voice of Kokilambal, a trenchant critique of those practices.

Adigal particularly focused on highlighting the Brahmin caste’s perception and consciousness of “Sudras” as significantly lower than themselves. Reminiscent of Dubois’s critical descriptions of Brahmins, Adigal, through the voice of Kokilambal, provided a particularly negative portrait of conservative Brahmins in Tamil Nadu:

21See Maraimalaiyadigal, Kokilambal Katitankal, Pallavaram:T.M. Press, 1921, p. 3.
Even our toothless dirty old men (Brahmins) if they see a person belonging to any other caste attempting to take refuge from the burning sun under their pial, they would chase them away for fear of pollution! Or if they accidentally sit down before leaving, our people would wash the place they sat with cow dung. Man who has six senses has been reduced to a status lower than cow dung! Even a man dying of hunger, begging for food would be refused food for fear of pollution if he belonged to a different caste...How many people suffering from terrible thirst and asking for water have I seen chased away by our people! By considering ourselves high look at the evil that has afflicted our people!"

In response, Kokilambal’s “innocent” sister wondered:“Did you not say our people who are English-educated do not observe such caste practices?” In another lengthy lecture Kokilambal replied to her young sister that even though the English-educated Brahmins “drink tea served by Paraiyar castes in tea stalls” and boast of not observing these “by gone ways”, in reality they are more stringent observers of such distinctions, especially at their work place:

When confronted in the work place by well educated persons belonging to other castes such as Vellalar’s or Vadukan’s they (Brahmins) gather together and discuss among themselves and lament, “even these “Sudra boys” have become equal or superior to us!” They then wait for an opportunity to push these people down. In their work place they try to only hire Brahmins of their standing and not persons truly qualified for the job..."


23ibid., pp. 13-14.(my translation)
One can see here Adigal articulating issues—such as Brahmin hegemony in the work force—that were later articulated politically with the formation of Dravidian associations such as the Justice party. The subject then turned to Brahmin women, since the younger sister wonders whether at least the Brahmin women were more enlightened in dealing with other castes. Here again, Kokilambal disappointed her, pointing out that their lack of education merely made them cling to their sense of superiority even more. It is through such devices that Adigal explored what he considered were the caste consciousness and practices of the Brahmins of the time. What is striking about the work is Adigal’s boldness in examining and writing about such “private” practices and customs such as caste discrimination, child marriages, female education, widow-hood, family practices and sexuality that were as a rule little discussed in public.

With his retirement from MCC and adoption of *Sanyasa*, Adigal depended entirely on the income generated from his vocation as a Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil propagandist. The income from the subscriptions for his journals and the sale of his books were hardly adequate to support himself and his family. Thus, Adigal began this period of his life by undertaking extensive lecture tours to various parts of Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka as a spokesman for Saiva Siddhanta and
Tamil, including a tour of Northern India. These tours were not only a major source of income but were essential for obtaining support and funds for establishing and building in his place of residence his Saiva Siddhanta Mutt. These tours also played a significant role in increasing his popularity and prestige as a major orator and spokesman for Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil.

He began this phase of his career as a "Samaj lecturer", for the Saiva Siddhanta Maha Samasam. Being a Samaj lecturer did not constrain him from propagating his own unique vision of Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil, nor prevent him from building his own circle of followers and patrons. Beginning his career as a Samaj lecturer no doubt conferred a certain legitimacy to his role as a spokesman for Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil and also to his status as a Sanyasi. It was from this period that Adigal was often referred to either as a swami or his holiness and in Tamil Adigal.

Adigal began his lecturing career as a Samaj lecturer in October 1911, the Siddhanta Deepika which by now had become the official organ of the Samaj reported:"We are glad to announce that Swami Vedachalam(Adigal) has agreed to be the lecturer of the Maha Samajam for two weeks in every month and the committee has to be congratulated on securing his valuable services in the cause of the Saiva Siddhanta movement. He will
go out for two weeks in every month to the mofussil on a lecturing tour and for the rest of the month, he will work in Madras...' In the next issue the Deepika gave details of the "Swami's" first lecture tour as "Samaja lecturer". The first stop was Ramnad where the Raja of Ramnad Pandithurai Thevar, "introduced the svami to the audience." Adigal had observed of the same event: "Mr. Pandithurai introduced me by speaking very highly of me." In the Madurai mutt where Adigal spoke on "The Historical Value of St. Tirujnana Sambhanda," the "Sannidhanam presided and presented a pair of Silk Pitambar to the Swami." Other places Adigal lectured on his first tour included Paramakudi, Tiruchinapaly, Nagapatinam, Cuddalore and Chulai. At Chulai the Deepika noted, "His Holiness explained very clearly how Saivism instead of being a sectarian religion as other religions embraced the doctrines found in Sikhism, Vaishnavism, Buddhism and Mahomedanism." Thus, it is clear that Adigal had begun his career as a Sanyasi on a sound footing, receiving validation from such prominent figures as Pandithurai Thevar and the head of the Madurai Saiva Siddhanta Mutt.

In December 1911, the sixth annual conference of the

34 J.M. Nallaswamy Pillai, Siddhanta Deepika, Vol.XII, October, 1911, No.4. p.186.

35 See MMAD entry for 17th October, 1911.

36 J.M. Nallaswamy Pillai, Siddhanta Deepika, Vol.XII, November 1911, No.5., pp. 231-33.
Saiva Siddhanta Mahasamajam was held in Chulai, the birth place of Somasundara Nayakar. It is evident that the Samajam was put on a firmer constitutional and financial footing by the resolutions adopted during this conference. The resolutions included that the “Samaja be registered under the Indian Company’s act; that the funds be invested in the Madras Central Bank; that a deputation be sent to the Heads of Maths (Mutts), Princes, Zemindars and the Nobility etc., to secure their help and cooperation.” and of course, “Swami Vedachalam be continued as the paid lecturer on the old terms and be given an assistant on a pay of Rs. 5.” These resolutions indicate that the Saiva Siddhanta Maha Samajam was clearly emerging as a powerful and well organized force in Tamil Nadu by the first decade of this century.

Adigal was an exceptionally charismatic and powerful speaker. This may have been the main the reason that he was continued as a Samaj lecturer despite his rivalry with Nallaswamy Pillai. The manner in which Adigai’s lectures were reported in the Deepika, also aided his popularity. Reporting the activities of “swami Vedachalam, the chief lecturer of the Samaja” the January 1912 issue of Deepika reported:“...Again on the 28th January, the Swami delivered an inspiring lecture

27See J.M. Nallaswamy Pillai, Siddhanta Deepika, Vol.XII, December, 1911, No. 6, pp. 281-83.
on "Vegetarianism". The audience was so much touched by the pathos and eloquence of the lecture that many swore at the spot to abstain from animal food from that moment...The swami’s stay at Vellore for twelve days had been very beneficial to the people...many Saivites, Vaishnavites and others became members of the Samaj. In this way nearly a hundred persons have been enlisted as members and twenty six of them have already paid their subscriptions."

Cativetrumajium Polic Saivarum (Caste Discrimination and False Saivites)

Reflective of his identification with the unorthodox and radical ideals and philosophy of Ramalinga, as well as his increasing personal experience as a champion of non-Brahmins, Adigal was much more willing to go beyond anti-Brahmanism in his critique of Tamil society during this period. At the end of 1911, an incident took place during one of Adigal’s lecture engagements which provided the inspiration for his work Cativetrumajium Polic Caivarum (Caste Discrimination and False Saivites). The incident acted a catalyst for a realization and clearer articulation of his own complex socio-cultural heritage and intellectual genealogy. It reflected Adigal’s

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28J.M. Nallaswamy Pillai, Siddhanta Deepika, Vol.XII, Jan 1912, No. 7, pp.321-22. Adigal was very careful in building a high profile for his work through maintaining always an excellent presentation of himself. The writing above may have been his own writing.
increasing shift toward a more radical interpretation of Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil civilization.

The incident took place at the 1911 annual gathering of the Tuthukudy Saiva Siddhanta Sabha; an association to which Adigal was often invited to preside. Tirunavukkarasu describes the Tuthukudy Saiva Siddhanta Sabha in the Vellalar stronghold of Tirunevely region as the most important Saiva Siddhanta Sabha in Tamil Nadu.\(^2\)

In the English preface to the republication of this work, Adigal gave a detailed account of the events that had inspired him to write the work. It is worth quoting at length since it reveals both the socio-cultural dynamics that were prevalent at such gatherings of elite non-Brahmin Saivites at the time, as well as Adigal's perception and response to them:

This Tamil work on "Caste and its Evil" first appeared in the form of a somewhat long essay on the sixth volume of my Tamil magazine Jnanacagaram in October, 1911. The occasion which called it into existence was in this wise. In response to the invitation of the Saiva Siddhanta Sabha at Tuticorin, I had to go there in December, 1910, in order to preside at its grand annual gathering and so to conduct it. Everything went on smoothly and delightfully on the first day except in one important respect. Able lecturers filled with enthusiasm for introducing reforms into religious and social matters, came from distant parts of the country, but some of them were not treated with that respect...but were treated...rather badly, simply

\(^2\)He also asserts that it was originally founded in 1888. See, Tirunavukkarasu, Maraimalai Adigal, p. 105.
because they belonged to non-vegetarian castes.\footnote{Maraimalai Adigal, \textit{Sathivetrumaiyum Polich Saivarum}. Madras: SISSW. 1957. (Previous editions 1911, 1926). Adigal's diaries reveal that these events actually took place in the 1911 annual gathering and not 1910 as reported by Adigal. The article "Caste and its Evil" also appeared in 1912 and not 1911 as suggested above by Adigal.}

Having set the stage for a discussion of the problem, Adigal continued his narrative-- in the process, he challenged the contemporary practice of associating Saivites exclusively with the dominant non-Brahmin Vellalar castes:

Whether learned or unlearned, good or bad, religious or irreligious only those who were known to be Saivites, that is those, only whose lineage was known to have originated with the vegetarian Velala parents, were invited to sit in one hall and dine together, while others, whose adherence to Saiva religion and clean vegetarian mode of living could not be questioned but whose only fault was what was occasioned by the mere accident of birth, were made to sit aloof in a separate place and served meal rather late.

Adigal then proceeded to narrate how he responded to this situation, a response that revealed his own intellectual and moral genealogy:

This I observed on the first day and on the next, I questioned some of the prominent members of the society why they were treated thus. One amongst them replied me that they belonged to non-vegetarian castes, and, therefore, could not be admitted into the dining hall of the Saivites. But I said that though they were no born vegetarians, they too were Saivites, in so far as they followed the principles of Saiva religion and adopted the vegetarian mode of living...I added that, if their object of conducting such religious meetings were sincere, they should spread the beneficial teachings of the Saiva religion not in theory alone, but in practice also.
by breeding in all a brotherly love...as all are the children of a single heavenly father Lord Siva...such merciful service by drawing together the choice people from every class and community, would not only tend to increase the strength of the Saivite community but...to humanity at large. To this the man curtly replied that it was not the custom to do so...

Adigal's use of language such as "breeding in all a brotherly love...as all are the children of a single heavenly Father" is quite revealing of his educational mission. Continuing his narrative, Adigal observed:

Thereupon I made up my mind to dine rather with the excluded party than with such self conceited Saivites. And accordingly I did dine with the forbidden brethren. But so much did this action of mine enrage the Saivite brethren that, on the next day, they forbade me entering their dining hall during meal times.

He was by now extremely furious--insulted despite being the chief guest and speaker at the function. The action of the Vellalars must have also painfully reminded him of his own mixed caste heritage:

This put me on my mettle and I told them point blank that, as the way to my room lay through their dining hall. I could not go but through it as usual; and said also that I should not take the meals cooked by their men under their supervision, since I thought the meals prepared in the midst of such inhuman people get themselves contaminated.

He also resorted to a method of resistance he often used against his wife:

On that day, the sitting of the conference was to commence at 3 p.m. with me in the chair; it was
nearly 2 p.m., still I had not touched my meals; having seen me persevering in my determination, all the Saivite members, except one or two, had the kindness to come to me and apologize for what they had done and expressed their willingness to treat henceforth the lecturers and others with equality and without minding caste distinctions. Of course there were one or two dissenting elements but these were eliminated from our group. We then sat together, prayed to God for blessing us with that bond of unity, and partook of our meals with one joyous heart.

Adigal had also noted some of these events in his diaries. Of the first day of the conference on 17th December 1911, he had noted: "My presidential address on the universal religion Samarasa Sanmarga was uncommonly fine and the large audience which consisted nearly of 1500 persons both male and female listened with rapt attention." Two days later he noted:

People of Tuticorin love me most intensely. A certain Natarajah...of bigotry and great selfishness prevented me from entering into the dining hall; thereupon I got angry and checked him and others vehemently. But the good members of the Sabha requested me to excuse and sat down with me to dinner.\(^3\)

Although Adigal’s diary entry suggests that the insult was directed at him rather than to the other non-Vellalars, there is little doubt that Adigal was referring to the same incident. The conflict however, did not end with the conference. It further developed as Adigal continued to describe in his English preface:

\[^3\text{See MMAD entry for 19\textsuperscript{th} December 1911.}\]
Nevertheless, a few mischievous elements with whom caste was everything, while virtue, learning...count for nothing, could not be silenced either by reasoning or by any regard to social unity, but they bestirred themselves most actively and attacked me in a magazine article which, with much abusive matter, asserted the superiority of their caste on false and most erroneous grounds...I had therefore to take up the cudgels on behalf of the down trodden...and the result was the first edition of this treatise.

Adigal had noted this development too, in his diary entry for the 26th of March 1912:

This evening began to write a critique of caste difference as a reply to the arrogant and wicked man who wrote something indirectly against me in Vivekhabhanu. It is my humble and earnest desire to demolish the caste system and inculcate equality of human beings and kindness to all being. May the all grateful bless my humble efforts with success.  

The main body of the work itself is a fairly comprehensive and detailed analysis of caste along with elaborate and highly sophisticated arguments against it. Unlike many of his earlier works which focused on criticizing the caste arrogance of the Brahmins, the work focused on the caste arrogance of the Vellalars. For his arguments, Adigal drew from his easy familiarity with ancient Tamil religious and literary work and Orientalist scholarship as well his personal experiences with the major caste groups, their customs, practices and claims in Tamil Nadu. Much in the tradition of his missionary

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32 All the passages cited are from the English preface. See Maraimalai Adigal, Sathiverumaiyum, pp. 1-20.
predecessors, Adigal effectively utilized throughout the work many of the ancient Tamil religious poetry that spoke against caste. He even began his work with such a verse from a poem from the canonized Saivite saint Tirunavukkarasu.\textsuperscript{33}

In sub-chapters such as "Cuttirar Ennum Corkup Porul" (The Meaning of Sudra), "Porul Teriamai Caivar Tammai "CatCutirar' Enralin Punmai" (The Folly of Saivites calling themselves Sat(clean) Sudras), Caiva Veilalar Pira Catiyarai Taltinamaiyal Vanta Ketu" (The Evil that came of Saiva Vellalar suppressing other castes) and "Cativerumai Ilata Aangilarin Munnetram" (The Casteless English and their Progress), Adigal attempted to defuse the caste arrogance of the Vellalar caste, at the same time as he sought to unify all the non-Brahmin Tamils. Much like Caldwell and Sundaram Pillai before him, he dealt with and exploited to his advantage the peculiar legacy of Sudra caste status for the powerful non-Brahmin castes in Tamil Nadu. Also like his predecessors, he cited from the various insulting definitions of Sudras found in the ancient Sanskrit legal texts. However, unlike his predecessors, he utilized these definitions to mock the Vellalars' claim to caste superiority among the non-Brahmin Tamils.

Asserting that Vellalars were clamoring to call

\textsuperscript{33}ibid., p. 1.(from main body of the work)
themselves Sat (Clean) Sudras, little realizing the definition of a Sudra given in the classical Sanskrit texts, he rhetorically asked these “Sat Sudras” (Vellalars) to choose one out of the seven definitions of a “Sudra” given by the great classical law giver, Manu. The seven definitions he offered were “Captured slave; laborer; man born to a prostitute; bought man; man who was presented as a gift, and hereditary slave.”  Adigal was here, clearly targeting the more conservative wing of the Saivites who were mostly represented by the “higher” Vellalar castes.

It is important to recall here that Arumuga Navalar, the leader of the Jaffna Tamil/Saivite revival, was one of the earliest to argue for a Sat Sudra status for the Vellalars in the face of claims from some Vellalars in Tamil Nadu for Vaisya status. Adigal argued that though the word Sat Sudra and descriptions of the duties of a Sat Sudra are found in the Saivite Agamas, these he claimed were written by temple priests only about two or three centuries earlier for the sole purpose of describing temple construction, rituals, worship etc. He argued that since these temples and their priests were dependent solely on the Vellalars, out of fear of including the Vellalar under the general category of Sudras, these priests had slightly elevated the Vellalars’ status by naming

\[\text{ibid.}, \text{p. 38.}\]
them Sat Sudras. In addition Adigal claimed that even the Saivite Temple priests were "really" former Vellalars who had gradually begun calling themselves Brahmins. Adigal however, did not wish to alienate entirely the Vellalars. He simply blamed their caste arrogance on their emulation of Brahmins and Brahminical norms. Although Adigal’s polemics here may have clearly alarmed some of the heads of the powerful Vellalar-led Saiva Siddhanta mutts in Tamil Nadu, he was giving with one hand what he was taking away with the other.

Despite him questioning the caste arrogance of the Vellalars and their emulation of Brahmins, he was not fundamentally questioning the pre-eminent position of the Vellalars in Tamil society. Reworking Tamil history, Adigal continued, that the Vellalars who were really of a higher civilization and caste than the Aryan Brahmins, gave up their high culture, education, and "rational" investigative spirit as a result of being fooled by the false stories of the Brahmins who had come South in a desperate bid to make a living. The Vellalars gave away much of their wealth to these Brahmins and to the false practices they recommended. Not only this, but they also began considering and treating as lower the various occupational groups among the Tamils who had worked so faithfully for their prosperity. He argued that the

35ibid., pp. 30-31.
Vellalars began considering the Brahmins as higher and all the other Tamil occupational groups as lower only after the arrival of the Brahmins. Thus, it was only from the time that the Vellalars began behaving in complete contradiction to their earlier cultivated ways that they became such "disgraceful Sudras!" He added, "Was it not because the Vellalar treated those occupational groups who had all along helped them, so disgracefully and with such cruelty that they themselves are now being treated so disgracefully by the Aryan Brahmins!" 36

Although this work by Adigal is not as well known as others, it is by far one of his most passionate and creative. He utilized a range of techniques including humor in his treatment of certain groups of conservative Vellalars. Imitating the conversations of one such group, "We are thirty household people; We only eat and mix among these thirty households; We wont go beyond and even wet our hands in another household," 37 he questioned "how such practices benefit them or others." Asserting that such Saivites in fact behave much more disgracefully than others, he wrote "how many such Saivites are indulging themselves in brothels! How many such people secretly indulge in English whisky, fried mutton..." 38

36ibid., p. 37 (paraphrased and translated by me).

37ibid., p. 108.
and eggs! And how many are spending their time gambling...”

Continuing his scathing attack against caste practices, he wrote, “Are there any people in this planet as disunited as the Hindus... Is it not for that reason alone that God had made them suffer and learn under the yoke of foreign rule for the last seven hundred years.” He also asserted that any impartial person given a chance to witness the many changes that had taken place in India would be hard pressed to assert that any caste has been able to maintain its “purity” without admixtures from other castes. Revealing perhaps his own biases and imperatives he remarked, “since it is evident from every day observation that caste mixture produces intelligent and strong children,” Saivites should intermingle with those from any other castes who refrain from eating meat and thus, “should improve in strength, knowledge, population and spirituality.”

Not content with attacking the caste arrogance of the Vellalars, Adigal also sought to provide a comprehensive analysis of the various “demeaning” caste practices in Tamil Nadu. In a sub-chapter entitled, “Tennatut Tirukoilkalil Taltanta Vakkuppar Cilar Vidapadamaival Nikalum Tity” (The evil

38 Ibid., p. 109.
39 Ibid., p. 112.
40 Ibid., p. 116.
of denying certain segments of the depressed castes in temples in South India), he wrote, "Is there a greater evil than the evil of considering a major segment of God's created beings as "lower castes" and denying them entry into precisely the abode where God resides?" He also sought to link caste practices with the control of women and sexuality in a section entitled, "Cativerumaival Tamilmatar Patum Kotum Tunbankalum Avatrai Olikum Vakailum" (The Suffering of Tamil women due to Caste practices and the ways to remove it). In this section he carefully linked the oppression of Tamil women and their lack of freedom to the custom of arranged marriage on the basis of caste rather than on the basis of love. Going even further he asserted that it is little wonder that children born to such oppressed and unfree women are born with little intelligence and strength and are of little use to society. Although it is not clear how much of these ideas were in the original long essay published in 1912 and how much was later incorporated and published as a book in 1926, there is little doubt that the seeds of these ideas were in the original edition. With this work, however, Adigal clearly became identified with the more progressive wing of the Saiva Sidhanta and Tamil revival movement.

41 Ibid., p. 122.
42 Ibid., p. 128.
Adigal as Itenerant Lecturer

As mentioned earlier, Adigal began to undertake lecture tours on a regular basis from the year 1911. During these lecture tours he visited aside from important Saivite centers, many of the important towns and cities in Tamil Nadu, building up in the process a fairly substantial network of patrons, disciples, followers and friends all over Tamil Nadu. He especially gained the friendship, patronage and hospitality of many of the landed gentry and local elites, often staying at the palaces or mansions of local Zemindars, mirasidars or government officers during his lecture engagements, and looked after by them extremely well. He also would often receive gifts and donations during these tours. Revealing his newfound status and the manner he was being treated, he noted on the 8th of May 1912: "I am treated with great respect wherever I go. Everywhere people love me and show veneration to me; everywhere comfort and convenience come to me of their own account. I am by the Supreme being more than a prince."\(^{43}\)

Among the important sites and temples associated with Saivism and Saiva Siddhanta that he visited, he was especially enthralled by his visit to Vadaloor and Mettukuppam in south Arcot district where Ramalinga had resided, constructed a

\(^{43}\)See MMAD.
temple and a mutt. Visiting Vadaloor and Mettukuppam in early 1912, Adigal presided at the annual convention held at the mutt established by Ramalinga, the Satya Dharma Salai, and spoke on the “Ideals of Sanmarga” on the 2nd of February 1912. It clearly reveals that he wished to publicly identify with the work of Ramalinga. Visiting the site where Ramalinga was seen last in Mettukuppam, Adigal in his characteristic way challenged the commonly held belief that Ramalinga had simply disappeared. Adigal concluded from his own investigation that Ramalinga had died a natural death:

We went to Mettukuppam where swami Ramalinga left his gross material body. I gathered the secret information that the swami actually died and the remains of his body were taken in an earthen pot... and that he did no miracles but failed in his attempts to do so. This shows that no man however great he may be should of his own attempt to work miracles. He must depend on the will and grace of god.”

Despite his more empirical approach to Ramalinga’s reputed feats, there is little doubt that Adigal was deeply inspired by Ramalinga. On his visit to Mettukuppam again in 1913 he noted:

Went this forenoon with my disciple and friends to Mettukuppam, bathed in the sweet and fresh water spring. When I entered the sacred hall where Sri Ramalinga sat in former days I felt a sort of softening influence and wept a little but controlled

*See MMAD entry for 4th February 1912.*
These observations by Adigal reveal that by this time he had become genuinely engaged and inspired by the life and work of Ramalinga.

**Lecture Tour of Northern India**

By early 1913, Adigal was chosen by the *Tuthukudy Saiva Siddhanta Sabha* to represent Saiva Siddhanta at the All India Hindu Maha Sabha conference which was to be held at the Jaganath Puri, Orissa in March 1913. "Adigal utilized the opportunity to embark on a lecture tour to many parts of northern India. He began his northern journey by the "Calcutta Mail train" on the 21st of March 1913. Aside from the funds given for his expenses by the *Tuthukudy Sabha*, he received additional donations from various other Sabhas as well as from private individuals and patrons." Although he did not leave behind elaborate notes of his northern experience, the brief observations he made in his diary of his visits are quite

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45See MMAD entry for 24th January 1913.

46Adigal noted of receiving the request on the 7th of March 1913. He had noted: "Received a wire from Tuticorin Saiva Siddhanta Sabha that they had deputed me to represent Saiva Siddhanta in the All India convention of Religion to be held at Puri Jaganath on the 20th, they would pay for my expenses Rs. 150 to which I agreed." See MMAD.

47On the 8th of March Adigal noted in his diary:"Received form Mr. A.R.L.N. Narayanan Chettiar my disciple Rs 50 for my expenses to Benaras. Two days later he noted:Received from Kallada Kurichi Sabha Rs 20 for travel expenses in the north." See MMAD.
revealing of his attitudes and views at the time and also of his impressions of the places he visited.

Traveling north along the Eastern seaboard of India, his first stops were Nellore and Bezwada in the Telugu region of modern day Andhra Pradesh. He observed of Nellore: "The Brahminic influence is predominant in these parts. Oh for the day when the Brahmins would be extirpated once for all and leave no trace of theirs in India." At Bezwada, Adigal was again quite harsh in his observations: "The people of Nellore and Bezwada are very illiterate and rude and inhospitable; the wretched Brahmins taking advantage of the ignorance of these people have monopolized all comforts to their purpose alone. Komathis, a regular set of vain and foolish class trying to elevate themselves to the level of Brahmins have become very crude hearted." "What is striking about these observations is that they read much like those of a western traveler rather than that of a "native" of the place. They reflect and recall the spirit and tone of early missionary writers on India.

Arriving in the ancient city of Puri in Orissa on the 30th of March, Adigal found that the Hindu Maha Sabha conference had been postponed. Despite this he stayed a few days in Puri. He observed of the town: "Came to Puri Jaganath

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48 See MMAD entry for 22nd March 1913.

49 See MMAD entry for 23rd March 1913.
nearly at 4A.M. Though the town of Puri is large and the
houses are large, on account of the scarcity of water, the bad
gutter smell is everywhere and the mosquito bites
unbearable." Of the famed Jaganath Temple at Puri, Adigal
observed:"It is nothing but an ancient Buddhist temple. After
the fall of Buddhism the wretched Hindu Brahmins must have
placed a disfigured image of Krishna. I very much doubt
whether the worshipers are really rational beings. The people
of this place are very nasty and so is the worship."51: The
fact that the Jaganath temple was a major Vaishnavite temple
may have contributed to Adigal's invectives about the temple.
He was much more generous in his brief observation of the
Saivite temple at Bhuvanesvaram:"Pity the southern Saivites
have not visited this sacred and grand temple of Siva."52:

Arriving in Calcutta on the 4th of April, Adigal admired
the grand buildings there and observed,"That Calcutta is the
first city of India is a real fact."52: He stayed in Calcutta
for almost a month, and delivered a series of lectures.
Elaborate arrangements were made for Adigal to speak at the
local Madras Social club consisting "chiefly of Madrasis who
settled in Calcutta." On Adigal's suggestion to them an

50 See MMAD entry for 31st March 1913.
51 See MMAD entry for 1st April 1913.
52 See MMAD entry for the 4th and 5th April 1913.
association called Samarasa Sanmarga Sabha was formed at Calcutta. Adigal also spoke at the Theosophical Hall at Calcutta on "The Relation of Sankhya and Saiva Siddhanta under the Chair of Mr. Hirendra Nath Dutta." Reflecting on his lecture and the response to it he wrote, the lecture "was not only brilliant and also very fluent. The president although differed from some of my criticisms on Sankara system yet he spoke highly of my lecture and the audience also was very much delighted with the lecture."

He was also taken by "Mr. Duraisamy Mudaliar B.A. and other friends of this place" to "Ramakrishna Mutt at Belur and to the Dhakshineswara temple of Kali and Siva Linga where Sri Ramakrishna was blessed by Uma." While in Calcutta Adigal had a "strong desire to visit the Himalayas" so he started that "evening from Calcutta to Darjeeling taking a weekend ticket..." On his return from Darjeeling to Calcutta, Adigal reflected on the differences between northern and southern Brahmins: "Almost all the Brahmins of the north are awful eaters of fish. I have seen them taking fish. But they have no

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54 See MMAD entry for 16th April 1913.

55 See MMAD entry for 7th April 1913.

56 See MMAD entry for 17th April 1913.
scruples of caste as it is in the Madras Presidency. I freely mingled with them at mess times, although I strictly stuck to a vegetarian diet." Although Adigal’s generalization of northern Brahmins was based on his experience of the Brahmins of Bengal and Orissa, the comparison he makes is nevertheless revealing of his comparative experience of northern and southern Brahmins; a comparison many contemporary Dravidian ideologues still maintain.

While in Calcutta Adigal visited the famous shrine for Kali, at Kalighat. His response was again harsh: “This evening went with Pattamal and friends to Kalighat and worshiped the mother goddess. The image was very crudely carved having no symmetrical face and its important organs. The nude image worship is quite compatible with the rude and uncivilized temper of northern people.” Pattamal was a young female Brahmin disciple of Adigal who had expressed an interest in joining him on his northern tour. She joined him at Calcutta and accompanied him at least as far as Dehra Dun when she became seriously ill. Adigal’s comments above regarding the

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57 See MMAD entry for the 19th April 1913.
58 See MMAD entry for 25th April 1913.
59 Adigal had first noted of Pattamal on the 14th of March 1913 when he observed: “This evening the Brahmin lady Pattamal came to me; this girl loves me with pious devotion.” They seemed to have been quite close at Calcutta as he noted on the 3rd of May at Calcutta, “Took Kalpana bath myself and Pattamal.” At Benaras on the 14th of May he noted: “As the foolish Patta broke my
"rude and uncivilized temper" of northern Indians is again consistent with his ideas regarding Aryans and Dravidians which he had elaborated in many of his earlier works.

Adigal's next stop was Benaras where he visited the Ramakrishna hospital, the Theosophical hall and the central Hindu College. He also had the opportunity there to listen to Annie Besant's lecture on "National Education" which he remarked as "very ordinary." Other major stops were Haridwar, Dehra Dun, Muttra, Brindaban, Bombay, Secunderabad, and Bolarum. Although Adigal was slated to speak at a Arya Samaj temple of at Dehra Dun, "as there was no sufficient number of people to hear it," he tactfully noted that "it was postponed." Despite this Adigal noted that the preacher of the Arya Samaj was "a very good and learned man." Of Bombay Adigal observed it was more beautiful than Calcutta due to its ocean water front besides he noted,"the females are beautiful." "

Adigal was "most gratefully" received upon his arrival in Madras on the 11th of July from his northern lecture tour by

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60 See MMAD entry for 12th May 1913.
61 See MMAD entry for 4th June 1913.
62 See MMAD entry for 17th June 1913.
63 See MMAD entry for 23rd June 1913.
the "members of the Royapet Balasubramania Saiva Sabha." It was a Sabha that Adigal’s friend Tiru Vi. Ka was quite involved with at the time. A lecture was arranged by them at Ranade Hall, Mylapore when the "svami gave to the large audience in the form of a long impressive lecture the interesting details of his travels in Northern India." Accounts of Adigal’s Calcutta lectures was also sent to Indian newspapers such as the Indian Patriot, Hindu, Madras Standard, Swadeshimitran and Andhra Patrika.

Although Adigal may not have accomplished much from his three month lecture tour of the north, the fact that he was chosen to represent Saiva Siddhanta in northern India and at the Hindu Maha Sabha enhanced both his popularity and prestige at home. For Adigal personally the experience must have helped broaden his perspective of India as well as confirm many of the views he had already developed about India. His anti-Brahmin interpretation of many of the places he visited including his "Dravidian" reading of many of the Hindu temples he visited confirm this.

Gathering money for the mutt

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*4 Account of his lecture tours were published in Siddhanta Deepika, Vol. XIV, September 1913, No. 3, pp. 140-41.
Right from the establishment of his order in April 1911, Adigal was seeking money for the construction of his mutt. He embarked on this project with greater earnestness from around the beginning of the year 1913. His lecture tour to Sri Lanka in early 1914 was undertaken with the intention of collecting money for his mutt. The lecture tour was arranged by V. Tiruvarangam Pillai (1890-), a Tamil Vellalar from Tirunelveli, who had strong ties to both the Vellalar community in Tirunelveli as well as the Indian business community in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Tiruvarangam Pillai played a significant role in Adigal’s life from this period on as he not only became one of Adigal’s most fervent supporters but also an important financial resource for many of Adigal’s literary and religious endeavors. It was mostly through Tiruvarangam Pillai’s efforts that Adigal was able to procure the support of many Indian business men in Colombo and Tirunelveli. Tiruvarangam later married Adigal’s favorite daughter and protégée, Neelambigai, a marriage that was to have an important consequence for Adigal’s legacy in Tamil

65Tiruvarangam Pillai(b. 1890) originally from the district of Tirunelveli went to Colombo, Sri Lanka around the year 1907 to engage in business. An ardent fan of Adigal’s writing from a young age, it seems he was inspired to invite Adigal to Colombo after hearing of Adigal’s fame and popularity at the annual conferences of the Thuthukudy Saiva Siddhanta Sabha from around the year 1910. See Tirunavukkarasu, Maraimalai Adigal.
Lecture tour of Sri Lanka

Adigal began his lecture tour to Sri Lanka on the 6th of January 1914. This was the first of three lecture tours to Sri Lanka, the other two were in 1917 and 1921. On this trip he largely lectured at the capital city of Colombo and at a town called Matale, in the central highlands of Sri Lanka. He was well received in Sri Lanka and his lectures were particularly popular among the English educated Tamil Veilalar and Chetty elites there. As in Calcutta, Adigal laid the foundation for his brand of Saiva Siddhanta revival by establishing in the city of Colombo a Samarasa Sanmarga Sabhai.

One of Adigal’s greatest and most loyal admirers in Sri Lanka was Proctor Ariyanayagam from Matale. It was Ariyanayagam who donated a large sum for the publication of his work *Cativetrumaiyum Polic Caivarum* (Caste Discrimination and False Saivites) in 1921. During his lecture tour, Adigal took the opportunity of visiting him at Matale. He reached _[More text not visible]_

66 It was Tiruvarangam Pillai who founded what later became the South India Saiva Siddhanta Works Publishing Society. An organization which not only holds the rights and publishes most of Adigal’s work but also manages, his house and mutt at Pallavaram as well as a library called Maraimalai Adigal in the city of Madras. After Tiruvarangam Pillai, his brother took over the society.

67 He spoke at such places as the Tambiah mutt and Ramakrishna Mission in Colombo. See MMAD.
Matale on the 11th of March 1914. That night, Adigal noted: "Dr. Sabhapathy and Proctor Ariyanayagam are true lovers of religion and they subscribed each Rs. 100 for my mutt and many others also subscribed." The next day Adigal noted, "...Nattukottai Chetties of Matale came to me with a gift of Rs. 100 and requested me to clear their doubts about breaking coconuts and other rites at the temple, I explained them to their great satisfaction. This evening Proctor Ariyanayagam gave me two checks for Rs. 365". These observations indicate the nature and kind of support base Adigal had in Sri Lanka. On his way home, Adigal visited the ancient city of Anuradhapura and Mannar and was especially moved by the peaceful and quiet atmosphere of the Buddhist temples he visited and noted in his diary, that he wished Saivites too had such places of worship."

On this first lecture tour to Sri Lanka alone, Adigal collected a grand total of Rs. 1,435. for his mutt. The vast majority came from individual donors, some of whom were wealthy business men. Adigal’s writings and lectures especially appealed to the English educated Vellalar castes in

68See MMAD entry for 12th March 1914.
69See MMAD entry for 10th July 1917.
70See MMAD entry for 17th June 1913.
71See Tirunavukkarasu, Maraimalai Adigal.
Sri Lanka. They were in fact more supportive of his work than their counterparts in Tamil Nadu. Even much later in his life, Adigal had commented on this: “Almost all the English educated non-Brahmin Tamils are very unsympathetic towards my work and those in South India return the VPP heartlessly. Ceylon Tamils are far better in sympathy.” On another occasion he observed: “Ceylon subscribers of my English magazine Ocean of Wisdom, admire both my Tamil and English writings and encourage me; and they also readily subscribe. May they live long and forward the cause of Tamil.” Adigal’s writings often received greater recognition earlier in Sri Lanka than in India. Thus, it is hardly surprising that Adigal undertook two more lecture tours to Sri Lanka, one again to Colombo in May 1917 and another to Jaffna in December 1921. Despite his more liberal view towards caste and rituals, Adigal’s celebration of “pure” Tamil and non-Brahmin Tamil identity appealed to the Vellalar led Tamil society in Sri Lanka.

Even after his return from Sri Lanka in March 1914, Adigal continued to collect money for his mutt through his various lecture tours in Tamil Nadu. One of his greatest patrons was the zamindar of Puravipalayam and his wife. The heir to a lineage of “little” kings, the zamindars’ official title was Jegā Mandalathypathy Kopanna Manradiyar and his wife

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72 See MMAD entry for 11th and 17th March 1935.
was Rani Ammani Ammal. A month after his return from Sri Lanka in April 1914, Adigal noted of his stay as a guest of the zamindars: "Sri Ammani began to learn Sivajnana Botham from me this evening; and her husband the zamindar is also with us when she studies. Puravipalayam is a nice place and the palace is very comfortable."" After a fortnight's stay at the palace Adigal left with a gift of Rs. 500 with the zaminder promising to send more later. Adigal appealed to the zamindars largely through his wife Ammani Ammal. Even before his tour of North India and Sri Lanka, Adigal had sent "a touching appeal through Srimathi Ammani to her husband about the institution of the sacred order of love."" It was largely through Ammani's efforts that Adigal was able to obtain an additional Rs. 400 for his mutt from the relatives of the zamindars.""

Adigal also wrote to other zamindars requesting money

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73 See MMAD entry for 21st April 1914.

74 See MMAD entry for 12th March 1913. During his northern lecture tour her letters had been a great source of comfort and solace. At Dehra Dunn, he had noted: "Wrote a letter to Sri Ammani my beloved...I felt somewhat lonely and depressed but the letter of my Ammani cheered me up every now and then. And I took great joy in replying to her. The love that exists between my Ammani and myself is the purest, highest the most sublimest. May Lord Uma Sankara bless my union with Ammani with an everlasting and eternal sweet love." See MMAD entry for 11th June 1913.

75 Adigal and Ammani developed a romantic attraction toward each other. A few months after his visit to the zamindars, on the 11th of June 1914 Adigal observed: "Received a letter from my dearest Ammani in which she expressed after so many years her love for me. She told that she too had two dreams similar to those of mine and that her love for me had been inspired by Lord Uma Siva. Engaged in writing a reply to her in stanzas." See MMAD entry for 11th June 1914.
for his mutt. He noted on the 29th July 1915: "Letters to Zamindars Mr. Gopanna Manaradiar, Mr. Kondaloviraya Naidu and Mr. M. Velusami Thevar. May my Lord Uma Siva make these gentlemen send ample sums of money." He also obtained smaller donations and gifts of money from his more humble patrons and disciples. For example he noted on the 19th of June 1916: "My devotee Mr. C. Veeraraghava Pillai arrived here early this morning from Tirunelveli and placed me a gift of Rs.100 given by Sri Muthuammai, another Rs.40 given by Mr. S. N. Subramania Pillai of Aramboly and Rs.30 of his own." These observations again reveal that most of his patrons came from the higher non-Brahmin castes. The monies that he was able to collect from these various sources in addition to contributing to the expenses for his mutt made him a fairly a wealthy man by the year 1915. He noted on the 17th of September 1915: "By the grace of my Lord Uma Siva my want for money vanishes and I am becoming rich."

By May 1915, almost two thirds of the mutt had been constructed on the land Adigal had purchased at Pallavaram. On the 19th of May 1915 Adigal along with his family moved into the premises. It took around another two years before the rest of the construction work was completed, although the extension of certain sections of the building continued well into the 1930's. Tirunavukkarasu estimates the total expenditure for
the construction to have come to Rs. 12,000. 'Indicative of
the substantial help Adigal was getting for his mutt from Sri
Lanka, he received from Colombo, fifty coconut saplings
through the efforts of Tiruvangam Pillai.'

Money was again requested by Adigal beginning in the year
1915 for a printing press to be housed in the premises of the
mutt. Again much of the larger donations for the printing
press came from patrons in Sri Lanka through the efforts of
Tiruvarangam Pillai. 'The printing press was installed at
the mutt by the end of 1916, and a grand opening ceremony was
held on the 12th of December 1916 with Adigal’s friend and
prominent public figure Tiru Vi Kalyanasundara Mudaliar as
master of ceremonies. 'Adigal also requested and received
donations for the establishment of a library in his mutt. The
request was well received as he had acquired by this time a
large number of books, estimated to be worth around Rs. 20,


77He noted on the 12th of March 1916: "Received 50 coconut plants from Ceylon sent by my
devoted disciple Mr. Tiruvarangam Pillai." See MMAD.

78He noted on the 8th of September 1916: "...received today a check from Hong Kong and
Shanghai Banking Corporation to the Bank of Madras for RS.1250.00. This sum was given to me
in charity through the efforts of Mr. Tiruvarangam by Mr. Senthilarumugam and Mr.
Periyanayakam..." See MMAD.

79A detailed description of the establishment of a printing press at Adigal’s residence and mutt is
offered in a chapter entitled “Tirumurugan Achukootam” (Tirumurugan Printing press) in Arasu,
*Maraimalai Adigal*, pp. 57-63.
000, many of which were English works.

These financial successes by themselves, reveal that Adigal was emerging as one of the most prominent and widely known Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil revivalist in Tamil Nadu. Among intelligent Tamil laymen he was increasingly seen as a man devoted to uplifting non-Brahmin Tamils through his work for the revival of the two main pillars of modern Tamil identity, Saivism and Tamil. By boldly ascribing to the non-Brahmin Tamils, especially to the higher non-Brahmin castes the high culture of India, he was propagating a vision of Tamil religion and culture that was extremely attractive to the rising class of non-Brahmin Tamil elites. Of all the prominent Tamil and Saiva Siddhanta revivalist of the time, he was perhaps the most ardent and effective exponent in Tamil of a Dravidian perspective. Such a perspective coming from the lips of a "holy man" gave his views even greater legitimacy and popularity. It was the combination of these elements that made him an especially popular propagandist, with the ability to demand fairly large sums of money to preside or lecture at functions related to Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil.

Adigal’s personal charisma and talent as a master orator and dramatist also played a significant role in his unusual success and popularity. According to Tirunavukkarasu, Adigal was meticulous in both the organization and preparation of his
lecture engagements and tours. He would write to the organizers of the functions a head of time with a long list of detailed instructions regarding such things as the organization of the hall, the location and arrangements of the stage, the time of his lectures, his travel, lodging, and food arrangements down to the most minute of details. It also seems that Adigal utilized to his great advantage his good looks which according to Tirunavukkarasu was especially brought out by the robes of a Sanyasi. Despite his general “western” approach to scholarship and writing, Adigal seems to have appealed to his audiences in quite a “traditional” manner. He would begin his lectures by singing verses from Saivite hymns, often breaking down with emotion, shedding tears and at times weeping while singing these hymns. When speaking of Saivite saints he would actually re-enact some of their famous deeds on stage. Thus, in addition to the attractive message he was preaching, Adigal’s good looks, charm and his abilities as a great orator and dramatist must have contributed its share to his popularity.

Adigal’s bold advocacy of a “Dravidian” reading of Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil culture did not however, go unchallenged. In the year 1914 a long article appeared in the form of pamphlet under the name of one of Adigal’s loyal students, S. Gopalakrishnan, entitled, “Sri La Sri Swami Vedachalam Avargal
Perumaium, Avargal Met Poramaiyutrar Silar Sirumaiyum. Nattukkottaic Cetti Pirapukkal Taruma Muraimaiyum." (The Greatness of Swami Vedachalam, the Smallness of some who are Jealous of him, the charities of Nattukkottai Chettys). The article provided a detailed description of the great and wonderful “selfless” services that Adigal had rendered, from his early years, for Tamil and Saivism and a scathing attack on those who the author alleged were defaming and criticizing him due to their jealousy over his increasing fame and success. The author alleged that these “jealous pundits” had utilized an article that Adigal had written four years ago in Jnanacagaram regarding the religious charities of Nattukkottai Chetties to defame him. He further asserted that in that article Adigal knowing fully well that the Chetties spend lakhs and lakhs on religious charities had simply urged them to spend their money on the revival of Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil and not slandered them as the jealous pundits had alleged. He claimed that the jealous pundits had simply utilized Adigal’s article on the charities of Chetties as a last resort to dishonor and defame Adigal. It is important here to recall that Adigal’s guru, Somasundara Nayakar, himself had criticized the Chettys for spending their money on smarta Brahmins instead of proper Saivite temples.

The article is particularly revealing of the nature and
the kind of attacks and defamation that Adigal was receiving at this time. The language used to rebut these "jealous pundits" in the article is quite harsh and explicit. It is evident from the passionate rebuttals that it was Adigal's asceticism as a Sanyasi and his collection of money from rich zamindars's and wealthy patrons that was being attacked by these "jealous pundits." In a particularly revealing passage the author wrote:

As our Tamil Nadu became more aware of its greatness due to the efforts of our swami who is an unchallenged leader in "true" asceticism, his opponents decided that at least by defaming him they will realize their goals....We have been saddened to hear people say that many rich and influential persons have embraced prostitutes, lost their mental balance and been destroyed by such cunning lyres as false Kavirayars, false pundits and false pavalars. Having been the gurus of some Sri Lankan intellectuals and finding that the monies they obtained from them was not enough for their enjoyment of arrack and prostitutes they left this occupation, donned names of Saiva Vellalars and began earning money by falsely praising and procuring prostitutes for wealthy men and Zamindars..."

The above passage hints strongly at the cause of the pundits jealousy--primarily Adigal's efforts at instilling a sense of pride among non-Brahmin Tamils, his "false Sanyasa" and the monies he was receiving from Sri Lankan Tamils as well as wealthy men and Zamindars from Tamil Nadu. Although the

article does not directly name these "jealous pundits" there are strong hints and suggestions throughout the article as to their identities especially that of the one Tamil pundit R. Kandasamy Kavirayar.

In response to the article a defamation charge was brought against Adigal by R. Kanthasamy Kavirayar (d.1918), a Tamil pundit at Tirunelveli Hindu College; P. Muthia Pillai, vice president of Thuthukudy Saiva Siddhanta Sabha and "Pandithamany" M. Kathirecan Chetty (1881-1953). The charge was that the article insulted the three persons and that it was actually written by Adigal and not S. Gopalakrishnan. Kathirecan Chetty was a renowned Tamil pundit, who at least until the late 1920's, was a major spokesmen against a "Dravidian" reading of Tamil language, religion and culture.

Although it is not clear whether the actual conflict was instigated by personal rivalries and animosities in addition to ideological differences, the conflict soon escalated to a level that indicated a more fundamental ideological divide between the contending parties. Adigal first noted the above incident in his diary on the 7th of August 1914: "Mr. Mahipalan Kadiresan Chettiar sent a registered notice through Mr. Somasundara Bharathi that I damaged his reputation. The fact

is he sullied my reputation." The next day he wrote:"The rogue Kandasamy Kavirayar also sent a notice to me through his Vakil Mr. S. Bharati. May my Lord Rudra, the terrible, destroyer of evil doers extirpate the three rogues, Kathiresan Chetty, Kandasamy Kavirayan, and Muthia Pillai." As the court date was approached, Adigal wondered, "Very much troubled on account of the defamation civil suit brought by Mr. Kandasamy Kavirayar. He it was that despised me and insulted me unnecessarily...then why should he trouble me, let my Lord Rudra either make the Kavirayar become my friend again with all his comrades or if it were not possible destroy him and his group at once without further delay and save me."  

Adigal’s reference to Kavirayar and his “comrades” confirm that there must have been quite a number of figures opposed to Adigal’s work.

It was at the trial that the ideological differences between Adigal and his opponents became more evident. The prosecution called upon U.V. Swaminatha Aiyer and R. Raghava Iyengar, both of whom were Tamil Brahmin pundits to testify against Adigal. The fact that both these figures were clearly opposed to Adigal’s “Dravidian” reading of Tamil tradition at least from the time of Adigal’s participation at the Madurai Tamil Sangam confirms that the conflict had an ideological

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82See MMAD entry for 14th September 1915.
dimension. Adigal's observations on the trial in his diaries also suggest that it may have had a strong ideological dimension. He wrote of the first day of the trial: "...Mr. Kavirayar and his Vakil S. Bharathi came with their witness. Mr. V. Saminatha Aiyer, quasi Maha mahopadaya and Mr. Raghava Iyengar said all they could against me...my mental pain was at its highest today. Mr. Dandapani and Mr. Ulaganatha Mudaliar prevented me from crossing and requested to engage an able Vakil and accordingly we went to Mr. Viswanatha Sastri and engaged him for Rs.20."  

With his new Vakil, Adigal fared a little better at the court the next day. He noted, "...Mr Subramaniya Aiyer gave evidence against me and my pleader crossed him most intelligently and made him highly inconsistent. Then he crossed Mr. Raghava Iyengar and elicited many facts favorable to us..." Although it is not clear, the witness may have been G. Subramania Aiyer, the prominent Indian nationalist and editor of the Hindu. What is, however, interesting to note was that all the witnesses who testified against Adigal were Tamil Brahmins. On the final day of the trial on the 18th of November 1915, Adigal noted: "The commission began at 1-30P.M. and my Vakil V. Sastri crossed my witness R. Iyengar very ably. Mr. Swaminatha Aiyer seeing the ability of my Vakil and

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\(^{33}\)See MMAD entry for 13th November 1915.
the danger of incurring my displeasure, by the grace of Lord Uma Siva effected the compromise, for charity sake he requested me to give Rs.80.00 to the plaintiff, himself promising Rs.20.00 to make up Rs.100.00. Agreed to compromise...Peace be to all."  Although not much more information is available of the trial, it was as Tirunavukkarasu also confirms the most symbolic eruption of the conservative Saivite/Tamil opposition to Adigal’s views at the time." The fact that most of the non-Brahmin as well as Brahmin Tamil pundits that were engaged against Adigal during this conflict were fairly well known for their more conservative reading of Tamil/Saivite tradition also supports this view.

Adigal and the Political Articulation of “Dravidianism”

The second decade of the present century was a significant period for the development of non-Brahmin political organization in Madras Presidency. This was the period of the emergence of greater political self assertion and articulation by higher non-Brahmin castes in Madras Presidency. It was a period when associations such as the Madras Dravidian Association(1912) and the South Indian

84See MMAD entry for 18th November 1915.
85See Tirunavukkarasu, Maraimalai Adigal. pp. 221-23.
Liberal Federation, (SILF) (1916) were formed. The SILF which later came to be known as the Justice Party laid the foundation for non-Brahmin politics in Madras Presidency." It was founded by around thirty non-Brahmin leaders as a joint stock company in 1916. In the same year the SILF published its aims and objectives under the title "non-Brahmin Manifesto" in the English newspapers the Hindu and New India. A year later the SILF began publishing its own English daily Justice, the Tamil daily Tiravidan (Dravidian) and a Telugu daily Andhra Prakasikai. With its publication the Tamil daily Tiravidan, became the second Tamil daily in Tamil Nadu after the Tamil daily Swadeshamitran founded in the 1880's by the owners of the nationalist English daily, Hindu.

As Irschick suggests in his pioneering work on the Dravidian movement, the most immediate catalyst for the emergence of the SILF at this time may have been the work of Annie Besant and the activities of the Congress politicians in Madras. Besant during this period was attempting to rally the disarrayed Congress forces in India through her activities in

S8 Scholars emphasising a political science approach have linked these developments to the implementation of local structures of representative government beginning around the end of the first decade of this century. They argue that this led to the increasing involvement of local "non-Brahmin" landed interests in the decision making process at the centre of the presidency in Fort St. George, Madras. Thus the development of non-Brahmin politics in the presidency is seen by these scholars as arising out of the increasing political participation and political articulation of "non-Brahmin" landed classes in Madras Presidency by the second decade of this century. See especially Washbrook (1976) and Baker(1975) also Irschick 1986.
Madras. To this end she founded the Home Rule League in Madras in the year 1916. The newspapers begun by the SILF openly attacked Besant and the Congress and carried such headlines as "Home Rule is Brahmin Rule."

Adigal’s life and work on the eve of the formation of the SILF in many ways reflected the concerns and feelings of the members of the Federation. It was at the close of the year 1915, that Adigal emerged from a trial that pitted him against Tamil Brahmin pundits such as U.V. Swaminatha Aiyer and Raghava Iyengar and those non-Brahmin Tamil pundits who were not as critical of the role of Brahmins and Brahminical culture in Tamil society and culture. Just a year before the formation of the SILF, in March 1915, Adigal observed in his diary: "When the so-called Brahmins become extinct in Southern India, then the salvation might be expected for its people; and not before that. When will my lord, the terrible Rudra remove these wicked, most selfish and unsympathetic Brahmins from this southern India."

Although Adigal did not personally play a direct role in Justice politics, the fact that the Justice party was comprised of many non-Brahmin Tamils and that it represented the political articulation of ideas made popular in the Tamil region by figures such as Adigal meant that Adigal could not

87See MMAD entry for 19th March 1915.
but be engaged with its activities. Although the Justice party may have been dominated by elite non-Brahmin landed interests as well as non-Brahmin Telugu interests and the struggles and conflicts that ensued between them for power, it does not mean as some Cambridge scholars have claimed, that there was little relationship between non-Brahmin cultural ideology and the party." 88

A number of prominent Justice politicians and workers including P. Thiagarajah Chetty (1852-1925), S. Natesa Mudaliar (1875-1937) and Mani Tirunavukkarasu were friends of Adigal. The fact that Adigal was chosen to preside at the farewell meeting held at the death of one of the most prominent Justice politician, Thiagarajah Chetty is also significant in this regard. Many of Adigal’s former students also played a significant role in the Justice party. Adigal’s writings also appeared in Justice newspapers. In the very first year of publication in 1917, at least three of Adigal’s articles appeared in Justice newspapers, the English daily Justice and the Tamil daily Dravidian. 89 Over time, Adigal’s

88K. Kesavan suggests that the Justice party, especially during its early period was dominated by Telugu non-Brahmins and wealthy landed interests. However, this does not mean that non-Brahmin Tamil ideology and support was any less important to the Justice party. See, K. Kesavan, Tiravida Iyakatil Pilavukal (The splits in the Dravidian Movement), Madras: Alaikal Veliyitakum, 1994.

89See MMAD entry for 17th March, 13th, 25th September 1917.
articles appeared more frequently in Justice papers and he was
given a free subscription to the *Dravidian* in return for his
articles.  

There was also a strong relationship between the Saiva
Siddhanta revival movement and the Justice party. A number of
prominent Justice party men were Saiva Siddhanta revivalists
and many people associated with the Saiva Siddhanta revivalist
movement generally supported the party. As a result, many of
the Saiva Siddhanta gatherings during this period often served
as forums for Justice party politics. In fact, in 1916, the
very year that the SILF was founded, Thiagarajah Chettiar
spoke on non-Brahmin uplift at the annual meeting of the Saiva
Siddhanta Maha Samajam. He spoke of Brahmin hegemony, the need
for a political party to represent the non-Brahmins and warned
the audience not to trust the Congress party or the Home Rule
League. Some of the Saiva Siddhanta gatherings over which
Adigal presided during this period were utilized by Justice
party men as platforms for Justice party propaganda.

Adigal noted one such Saiva Siddhanta gathering at
Kulasekharapattinam where under his presidency, the editor of

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90 On the 6th of June 1923 Adigal noted in his diary: "Received a letter from the manager of Justice agreeing to send me a free copy of it and receive from me literary contributions." See MMAD.

Dravidian, and Justice party worker T.V. Subramaniam spoke on the theme of non-Brahmin uplift. Adigal noted, "...under my presidency Mr. Subramaniam, a Dravidian lecturer, delivered a good lecture on "How to Raise Ourselves" delving at length on the great injustice and harm done by Brahmins to the Dravidian people; though the style and language were not good, the lecture of this young man was on the whole a useful one...".

Adigal’s reference to the Justice party propagandist as a "Dravidian lecturer" reveals that he was clearly identifying the Justice party with the Dravidian movement. A resolution was adopted at the end of this Saiva Siddhanta gathering to send a petition to the Madras governor urging him to make Tamil a classical language. As President, Adigal’s signature was included in the petition sent to the governor.

Adigal also spoke at many of the Dravidian Associations that sprang up around Tamil Nadu during this time. Speaking at a meeting of the Yong men’s Dravidian Association of Palyamcottah in 1918, Adigal delivered his "inaugural address on 'The civilization of the Ancient Tamils,'" held at the local Siva temple.

With the emergence of the Justice party as a major force

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92See MMAD entry for 26th August 1918.

93See MMAD entry for 2nd September 1918.

94See MMAD entry for 26th September 1918.
in Madras Presidency it was inevitable that many figures connected with the Justice Party maintained some contact and relationship with Adigal. As a well known advocate of a "Dravidian" perspective, they no doubt derived a great deal of inspiration from his work. As early as April 1917, Adigal noted of their visits: "This morning Mr. Somasundaram M.A. my old student and Mr. Duraisamy Mudaliar sub editor at the Dravidian office came to see me at 8.15 AM and went at 11.00 AM." S.A. Somasundaram Pillai was one of the principal organizers of the important Justice conference held on the 19th, 20th August, 1917.\(^9\)

In many ways the emergence of Adigal as a powerful and popular figure in Tamil Nadu coincided with the emergence of non-Brahmin political articulation and organization in the presidency. With the establishment of SILF as a powerful political force in the year 1916, Adigal’s power and popularity also reached new heights, extending at least until the emergence of the Self Respect Movement of E. V. Ramaswami in the late 1920's. The emergence of the Justice Party as a strong political force and voice in the presidency helped create a political and intellectual environment in which Adigal’s work acquired a high degree of legitimacy as well as

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\(^9\)See MMAD entry for 28th April 1918.

popularity and appeal.

It is in the year 1916 that Adigal is thought to have launched the "Pure" Tamil movement, a movement to eliminate "foreign" words, particularly Sanskrit from Tamil. In fact, as mentioned earlier, Adigal is best known in the historiography of the Dravidian movement as the father of the "pure" Tamil movement. Most of the work written on Adigal has focused on his role as a father of the "pure" Tamil movement. Although there is little reference to the launching of any such movement in his diaries at this time, Adigal may have been encouraged by the emergence of non-Brahmin political parties to pursue more seriously his long held desire to write in "pure Tamil" during this period. At least from the time he wrote of the independence of Tamil from Sanskrit for his journal Jnanacagaram in 1902 Adigal was committed to write only in pure Tamil and to demonstrate that Tamil could indeed be used to convey any ideas including complex ideas.

The closest reference Adigal makes to such activity around this time in his diaries is in early 1918, when he noted with regard to a Tamil translation of a government memorial that he was writing on behalf of Ponnabalam.

Arunachalam of Colombo, his pleasure at writing it in pure Tamil: "By the grace of my Lord completed today the translation of the Ceylon memorial; no doubt I have taken much trouble to write the translation in pure, simple and elegant Tamil style. Writing strictly pure and sweet Tamil style is a great pleasure to me."  

By the year 1925 however, Adigal was firmly committed to writing in pure Tamil as he explained in the lengthy English preface to the second edition of his work Cinthanaik Katturaikal.  Although he gave a variety of reasons including the antiquity of the language and its great achievements as the reasons for retaining its purity, what he repeatedly highlighted, revealing his dept to Caldwell, was the threat posed to it by Sanskrit. Describing "Dr. Caldwell" as, "there never was a greater, a more profound scholar who devoted himself to a deep, careful and patient study of Dravidian languages," and after citing copiously from Caldwell's writings that asserted that Tamil can stand alone without the aid of Sanskrit, he wrote:

This impartial and candid, comprehensive yet discriminating view of the Tamilian languages and their relative merit put forth long ago by a great

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98 See MMAD entry for 10th January 1918.


100 ibid., p. 37.
European [Caldwell] ought to open—if it had not already opened the eyes of the misled Tamils to see the youthful glory, richness, and virility of their mother tongue and advance its culture on quite independent lines."

Revealing the relationship between the quest for “pure” Tamil and the related project of a wider Dravidian nationalism implicit in the work of Caldwell although little elaborated by him, he continued:

Although a like independent culture may seem impossible in the case of other Tamilian languages...it is not really so hopeless...With a resolute will the scholars in those languages should set themselves to the task of eliminating from them all Sanscrit elements and putting in their stead pure Tamil ones which are in fact their pith and marrow. The Tamil, the Telugu, the Canarese, and the Malayalam people and other Dravidians living in the remotest parts of India, being the descendants of a single highly civilized ancestral race related to each other by the closest ties of blood and speech, should once more knit themselves together by eschewing the company of the Aryan intruder who harbours no goodwill towards them and should work harmoniously for promoting the common welfare of their several communities that live scattered all over India."

Thus, it is hardly surprising that in the Tamil historiography of the Dravidian movement, the birth of the “pure Tamil” movement is considered an extremely significant event. It is generally seen as the linguistic counter part to the entire struggle against Brahmin and Brahminical hegemony

101 ibid., p. 39.

102 ibid., p.40.
in Tamil Nadu. In the view of a contemporary Tamil scholar of the Dravidian movement, the Justice party attacked Brahmin hegemony in politics, the pure Tamil movement launched by Adigal its hegemony in language and the self respect movement its hegemony in the socio-cultural sphere.

By 1916, Adigal was less keen on undertaking extensive lecture engagements and tours as in the preceding years. He spent more time at home, largely focused on his research and writing activities. It was an orientation which he maintained for most of the next decade. Part of the reason may be that he and his family had moved into the more spacious and comfortable residence of his mutt where he could focus more on his work. Financially too he was on a more secure footing as a result of the extensive lecture tours he had undertaken in the preceding years. He also began to demand more money when invited for lecture engagements and often declined invitations if he felt that the money offered was not sufficient. In response to an invitation he received in November 1916 to preside at the Tutukudy Saiva Siddhanta Sabha anniversary meeting for a sum of Rs.125, Adigal had simply declined.

Similarly replying to an invitation for a lecture tour of

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104See MMAD entry for 26th November 1916.
Jaffna for the sum of Rs.300.00, he replied that he would only come if he were offered RS.650. His sound financial status during this period is also evident from the fact that he began lending fairly substantial sums of money to various people.

Adigal was also receiving fairly regular donations from patrons in Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka towards his writing and research projects. He noted on the 16th January 1918, "by registered letter received from my beloved Mr. V. Tiruvarangam, a Madras Bank Cheque for Rs. 142.8as, the contribution made by Colombo Saiva merchants towards my expenses for the months November and December 1917." Again on the 6th of May 1918 he noted:"By his grace received from my Colombo friends Rs. 240 as pecuniary help for the months January, February, March and April..." Adigal also noted writing to, "my beloved Tiruvarangam to write to Mr. Senthilarumugam to send me his promised donation of thousand rupees for a religious and literary work of mine."

The largely Vellalar and Chetty social basis of Adigal’s

105See MMAD entry for the 6th of December 1916.

106 He lent over RS. 1,000 to the brother of Kalyanasundara Mudaliar. He was also lending money on a professional basis as he noted:"This morning ...lent on Mortgage deed RS. 1200 to Sri Rangammal wife of Velu Chettiar of Saidapet, RS. 200 to Sivagammu Ammal wife of Ratna Mudaliar of Pallavaram and RS. 100 to Mrs. Manicka Chettiar and Mr. Natesa Chettiar of Pallavaram." See MMAD.

107 See MMAD entry for 1st November 1918.
support is also evident from his note on the 3rd of March 1920: "Mr. Tiruvarangam Pillai promised to give me Rs. 100 as remuneration for every number of my Tiruvacagam commentary and to give Rs. 75,000 to a Tamil Siddhanta College, if he would get a lac of Rupees from the publication of my Tiruvacagam commentary." Adigal also received contributions from his regular patrons and well wishes such as Proctor Ariyanayakam, (Sir) P. Arunachalam and (Dr.) Ananda (Kentish) Coomaraswamy the great Orientalist. He noted on the 5th January 1923, "Dr. Coomarasamy sent me a few days ago Rs. 100 and Mr. C. Ariyanayagam Rs. 200 for expenses to be met with for printing my books." and again on the 17th of January noted, "Received by the grace of Lord a letter and check for Rs. 75. from Sir P. Arunachachalam, M.A. of Colombo..." It was only fitting then that as soon as he finished his work on the subject of Vellalar Civilization, he noted: "posted Vellalas, 2 copies, book packets to Mr. N. S. Kandiah and Dr. Coomarasamy with cards." 108

Adigal's writings were thus clearly encouraged and supported by the non-Brahmin merchant castes and the English educated non-Brahmin upper and middle classes. It was during this time that Adigal was encouraged to apply for the position of Tamil lecturer at the University of Ceylon by Sir P.

108See MMAD.
Arunachalam. In fact two weeks before his untimely death Arunachalam, who was a close friend of Adigal, paid him a surprise visit: "Towards the evening Sir P. Arunachalam M.A. of Colombo paid a surprise visit to me; he came in the motor car of justice Sada Siva Iyer accompanied by his son. He stayed here nearly an hour; he said that he was disgusted with the Brahmins and Brahmin officials of this part since none of them take any interest either in Tamil or Sivaism..."

The money Adigal was able to gather through these various sources enabled him to purchase a large number of scholarly works, most of them English works for his research and writing. Over the next decade, aside from lecture engagements in around Madras city, the occasional lecture tours and pilgrimages to various places in Tamil Nadu as well as two lecture tours to Sri Lanka, Adigal mostly focused on research and writing and published close to ten books in addition to a large number of articles and pamphlets. His books included *Maranatin Pin Manitarinilai* (Life after death) (1917), *Kokilambal Katitankal* (Letters of Kokilambal) (1921), *Arivurai Kotty* (Collection of Essays of Wisdom) (1921), *Poruntum Unavum Porunta Unavum* (Proper and Improper Foods) (1921), *Yoga Nitirai*

109He had noted: "...a letter from Sir P. Arunachalam asking me to apply for the Tamil lectureship in the University of Ceylon..." See MMAD entry 27th August 1923.

110See MMAD entry for 29th Dec 1923.
alatu Arituil (Hypnotism) (1922), Tiruvaçaça Virivurai (Extended Commentaries on Tiruvaçaçagam) (1922), and Velalar Nakarikam (Civilization of the Vellalars) (1923).

Much of the inspiration for his writings came from reading the enormous number of English works he was acquiring during this time. Revealing the kind of role these English works played in his life, he observed on the 3rd of September 1919: “This whole day was reading Montague’s very instructive Essays, Carlyle’s Splendid Heroes and Hero Worship, Emerson’s grave Essays and Bacon’s pithy Essays. On certain days I cannot remain quiet without reading, but feel an irresistible impulse to read very difficult and high class English works on Philosophy, Psychology, Religion, Ethics, and Literary Criticism.” Adigal’s lack of formal higher education may have served to heighten such a quest for learning. He also cultivated and followed a fairly regular routine for his reading: “For the last one month and more I am reading in addition to my time table books on geology, anthropology, astronomy and philosophy of Dr. F.C.S. Schiller and works on Sanskrit.”

"1 Important articles he wrote during this period included, "Caiva Carnaya Paripalanai" (Instructions for Saivites) (1918), "Alaya Valipadu" (Temple Worship) (1918).

112. See MMAD entry for the 25th September 1925.
One of Adigal’s favorite philosophers was William James. Of James’ work, his favorite was *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. Seeing similarities between the work and Saiva Siddhanta he noted, "was reading very carefully Professor William James’ varieties of Religious Experience which is not only a tonic to the wearied soul but a standard work of real philosophy which resembles closely that of Saiva Siddhanta. I train my soul in happy ways of thought by the study of this great work." Referring to the same work on another occasion, he observed: "... the book is truly an imperishable monument of a fine and great genius...by a careful study of this book my mind became clear and my soul derived great consolation. I consider Professor James as a spiritual teacher of mine." Adigal also read the writings of many of the Theosophists, although his response to them was often unpredictable. After completing Blavatsky’s *Secret Doctrines*, he noted: "More than three fourths of Blavatsky’s Secret Doctrines are replete with mad, imaginary baseless ideas in which she revels without reason like an insane person."

Adigal’s tastes for English literary works were also varied and wide ranging. His favorite writers included

113See MMAD entry for 14<sup>th</sup> April 1914.

114See MMAD entry for 13<sup>th</sup> March 1920.

115See MMAD entry 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1919.
Shakespeare, Chaucer, Walter Pater, Shelly, A. Symmonds and G. W. M. Reynolds. For prose style he greatly admired Pater and Symmonds as he noted, "Passionately longing after the works written in the style of W. Pater and A. Symmonds."  
Considering himself a fairly critical judge of literary works he noted after reading Swinburne, "Finished this evening the critical essay by Swinburne on the novelist W. Collins; no doubt it is a brilliant essay obscured only in some places by double and treble negatives."  
Adigal was especially attracted to Shelly's poetry and often identified with him. Of Shelly's poem *Rosalind and Helen*, he observed "a very pathetic poem by the angelic poet Shelly; this poem moved my heart deeply and stirred in feelings cognate with those he felt; perhaps he gave in that poem expression to his own sad and melancholy experiences that were like my own. I thought of writing a similar poem in Tamil narrating my own experience."

Tirunavukkarasu reports that Adigal would often say to his favorite daughter Neelambigai that her face looked like Shelly's. Along side his taste for these higher English literary culture, Adigal was equally captivated by the swashbuckling, semi-erotic tales of G.W. M. Reynolds. Reflecting on

116See MMAD entry 6\(^{th}\) January 1921.
117See MMAD entry for 13\(^{th}\) June 1918.
118See MMAD entry for 3\(^{rd}\) September 1918.
Reynold’s novel, *The Mysteries of the Court of London*, he remarked, “stupendous and ablest novel of uncommon merit the like of which cannot be found in the whole range of English literature.”

The fact that he utilized these works for his own writings is also evident from his diaries. For example on the 10th of November 1919, he noted “Reading Caldwell’s Comparative Grammar of South Indian Languages and Mr. Srinivasa Iyengar’s Tamil Studies for the sake of writing my essay on Tamil Phonetics.” Adigal especially made use of the more historical Orientalist works in English as he noted on the 10th of July 1924, “was marking portions of Buddhist India (Rhys David) and Comparative Grammar of South Indian Languages (Caldwell) to prove...the high antiquity of Tamil and its pre-Aryan existence in India.” He also observed, “As I was making elaborate research to find out Aryan Brahmin vices I was able to write only a few lines in the Life and Times of St. Manickavacagar.” On another occasion he noted: “The whole day I was studying Sankara’s commentary on Vedanta Sutras to prove that he rejects all the tattvas and holds Brahman as the material cause of the world and historical works to prove the prehistoric races who were highly civilized in North and South

119See MMAD entry for 14th of June 1918.
120See MMAD entry for 1st of May 1925.
America worshiped Siva Linga. I succeeded in finding out the
two and wrote them out..." Adigal also liked the Russian
historian, Zenadae Ragozins works as he noted on the 15th
April 1923, "I finished this evening Zenade Ragozin's masterly
historical work on Chaldea. I found many facts in it to
connect the history of Chaldeans to the history of the ancient
Tamils. Also began to read the same author's Vedic India." For
his major work on dietetics entitled Poruntum Unavum Portunta
Unavum he noted, "I was writing the continuation of my essay
on Proper and Improper Foods ... consulting and reading various
English books on the subject."  

Vellalar Nagarikam (Vellalar Civilization).

One of Adigal's most important and well-known works and
one that perhaps best reflects the interests and concerns of
Adigal's support base was entitled Vellalar Nagarikam
(Vellalar Civilization) (1923). It also marks the apotheosis
of his efforts to construct a genealogy and identity for the
Tamils that privileged the non-Brahmins, especially the higher
non-Brahmin castes. Adigal's own account of the inspiration

121 See MMAD entry for 21st January 1923.
122 See MMAD entry for 2nd December 1920.
123 Maraimalai Adigal, Velalar Nagarigam. Madras: SISSW. 1975.(first edition, 1923) All the
citations are from the 1975 edition.
for the work reveals the socio-cultural moorings of its ideological thrust. The work had its origin in a lecture he had given in Jaffna, in January 1922, entitled, "Tamilar Nagarikam" (Civilization of the Tamils). The response had been tremendous and the news of it evidently quickly spread through Sri Lanka and to those places to which Jaffna Tamils had emigrated in the Malayan states. Two Jaffna Tamils from those places had pressed him to publish it as a book and even collected and donated RS. 200. The second incident that had inspired the work was a controversy over the "Sudra" status of Vellalar that surfaced again as a result of an article that appeared in the Nattukkottai Chetty journal Tanavaisiya Uliyan in 1923. Revealing the continuing rivalry between the trading and landed castes, the article had argued that since the Vellalars were Sudras, it was below the dignity of Chetties, who considered themselves Vaishyas, to marry them.

In the English preface to a later work, Adigal had referred again to the incident:

In the middle of 1923, a hot controversy was opened in the Tamil papers on the subject whether the Velala people should be included in the Vaishyas, the mercantile caste or in the Sudra, the slave caste of the Aryan classification. I was called upon to decide this moot point, and consequently a critical and historical study of that interesting question was made on the basis of facts gathered from Tamil and Sanscrit literatures. I traced the origin and growth, the rank and station of the Velala community and the results were published in
Both incidents reveal that Adigal was urged and supported by the Vellalars—both the Jaffna Vellalars and the Tamil Nadu Vellalars—to write and publish the work. In Jaffna the Vellalar constituted over 50% of the population and were clearly the undisputed leaders in religio-cultural affairs and political matters. The Tamil Nadu Vellalars however, were not as secure in their pre-eminence as those in Jaffna, as there were many other powerful non-Brahmin castes in Tamil Nadu. Most of the regular subscribers to Adigal’s books and journals were Vellalars although there were a significant, though a smaller number, of Chetties too. In writing and publishing this work Adigal was clearly taking on the role of defender and propagandist for the Vellalars. The very title of the first edition Tamilar Nakarikam Allatu Velalar Yavar (Tamil Civilization or Who are the Vellalar) reveals how Adigal, much like his “Dravidianist” predecessors, such as Sundaram Pillai, conflated Tamil Civilization with the Vellalar. Sundaram Pillai had described the Vellalar’s as the “flower of the Dravidian race.”

Adigal’s description of his work in the Tamil preface to the first edition reveals both the tone and tenor of the work.

Claiming that it was impossible to write about Vellalalars without writing about Tamil civilization, he wrote:

Since my research clearly reveals that since time immemorial it was the Vellalars--of the Tamil people--who lived an exemplary civilized life; established the Tamil language, the worship of Shiva and reformed and elevated the Aryans--while explaining who are the Vellalars it became essential and unavoidable that I explain the civilization of the Tamils. As a result I expanded the above mentioned work on "Tamil civilization" and wrote this work.  

Conceding that this may seem strange or revolutionary to some, he added:

This work demonstrates the error of those who praise the Aryans and look down upon the Tamils--a practice which arises as a result of their lack of scholarship in ancient Tamil literary works and their dependence purely on Sanskrit sources. Although the claim that the Tamils are the most civilized may seem strange to those who have not undertaken such research, any impartial person who looks at the agreements that I have presented along the evidence will of their own accord be able to appreciate its truth.

In the main body of the work, Adigal sought to demonstrate that Vellalars rather than the Aryans were the bearers of high culture in India and that their troubles began when they began to emulate the ways of the Aryan Brahmins. Sounding much like Caldwell in the English preface to the work, he wrote:

125See Maraimalai Adigal, Velalar Nagarikam. pp. 5-6. The above is from the Tamil preface to the first edition (my translation).

126ibid., p. 7.
So long as the Tamil Kings and rich trading communities yielded to the wishes and devices of the Aryan priests and lavished their wealth on rituals, the latter pretended to treat them with utmost respect by designating them the Kshatriyas and Vaishyas, while in fact they were positing themselves openly at the zenith in the scale of castes and casting others secretly much below. But from the moment the kings and nobles...began to suspect the motives of the Aryan priests, these supercilious parasites gave up their bloody sacrifices but devised other effective means to suck the wealth of the Tamilians."

Taking Caldwell's ideas a little further he wrote:"

At first they brought all the Tamils under the three denominations of Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra, formulated rigid rules exclusively for each and ordained numerous ceremonies to each, doing all these by means of a dead language Sanscrit, as if in the interest of the people's welfare... but in fact to establish their supremacy... and make their priestly help seem indispensable to the people for consulting them on such rules and conducting ceremonies prescribed for each....After this the further work of vilifying the Tamils was made much easier... Brahmins discovered it to their great benefit and glory, to efface the three grades of distinctions to which their predecessors classed the Tamils and to put them all together under the generic term "Sudra.""

Claiming, like his predecessor Sundaram Pillai, that the Aryan-devised caste categories really do not apply to the Tamils, he wrote: "But in the Tamil country nobody will call himself a Sudra, or a Vaisya or a Kshatriya. The Tamils are

127ibid., 13.

either agriculturalists or traders, artisans or laborers; every class of people follow a hereditary profession and call themselves by the name of that profession." Conceding however, that the "Aryan" categories were beginning to have some renewed impact in the Tamil region, he wrote:

But quite recently a great mania has taken possession of some classes of people whose professions though much useful are looked down upon as low by the Brahmins and their imitators, to bring them under the Aryan appellations of Brahmin, Kshatariya and Vaishyas and escape being called the Sudra. This mania is setting one class against the other and breeds enmity and arrogance in each.

He concluded his preface by stating that he had taken it upon himself to demonstrate that,"All this mischief and injustice of classifying the Tamils who are above such caste inequities are exposed in the body of this treatise and remedial measures suggested." 129

He explained and expanded upon these assertions in the main body of the text under such chapter headings as "Ariyar Natsativil Vellalar Adagamai" (Vellalar do not fall under the four Varna scheme of the Aryans), "Ariyar Vellalarai Taltatac Ceita Culci" (The Trickery done by Aryans to suppress the Vellalar), "Ariyar Parpanar Tamilaiyum Sivataiyum Ikaltai" (The Insulting of Tamil and Saivism by Aryan Brahmins), " and "Ariyar Serkai Tamilarkum Tamilukum Akatu" (Mixing and

integrating with Aryans is not good for Tamils nor for the Tamil language). The chapter titles themselves reveal Adigal’s concern and engagement with fashioning a new identity for the Tamils Centred on the primacy of the Vellalars.

In the work Adigal characterized the Vellalars as given to learning, intelligence, compassion, vegetarianism, qualities which he associated with their profession as agriculturalists. He contrasted them with the ancient Aryans whom he pointed out had qualities that were in keeping with their ancient life style as nomads, herdsmen and hunters. To buttress his argument Adigal cited from a wide range of Tamil literary and religious works. What gave the work a high degree of authenticity and legitimacy was Adigal’s ability to relate effectively his broader arguments to the details of various caste practices as well as the more general cultural practices and institutions in Tamil Nadu. For example when speaking of the Vellalars, he referred to their “supposed” practice of never under-measuring their own products when selling them and always being honest when buying the products of others.  

Adigal’s concern and engagement with fashioning a modern Tamil identity centred around the Vellalars is particularly brought out in his analysis of the origins of various castes in Tamil Nadu. Thus, according to him most of the dominant

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130 Ibid., p. 8.
castes in Tamil Nadu had originated from the Vellalar castes. Even the Brahmin priests serving in Temples in Tamil Nadu were a segment of the Vellalars who were selected and groomed on the basis of their intelligence by the Vellalars themselves to serve as philosophers, temple priests and hymnists from the ancient days itself. He cleverly utilized an alternate Tamil word for Brahmins, "Antanar" to refer to these people. The "real" Aryan Brahmins had been kept away he argued from the temples and serving in the temples by the Vellalars since they were consumers of goat and buffalo meat. As a result of being punished for their carnivorous habits by the Vellalars they gradually gave up the practices of killing and eating flesh, and to avenge themselves began to speak of themselves highly and began to call the Vellalars derisively as Sudras.

Similarly, the warrior castes of Tamil Nadu had also emerged in a similar fashion, since the Vellalars had selected and groomed from among themselves, men who were strong and capable of protecting others to serve as kings. Adigal also offered a similar explanation for the origin of the business castes in Tamil Nadu, in the process seeking to nullify the rivalry between the Chettys and the Vellalars, though still

131 Ibid., p. 9.
132 Ibid., pp. 9-10.
maintaining the pre-eminence of the Vellalars.\textsuperscript{133}

Throughout the work Adigal stressed the compassionate nature and vegetarian practices of the Vellalar and contrasted it with the carnivorous habits of the Aryans. In a chapter entitled, "Arulum Anpum Udaiyore Uvarntha Catiyar" (Those with love and grace are the High Castes) Adigal elaborated his central argument that Vellalars as upholders of vegetarianism and compassionate living cannot be disgraced and suppressed by the act of merely being called Sudras, especially he asserted by those who kill and eat flesh but call themselves Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas.\textsuperscript{134}

In a chapter titled "Natunilayudaiva Airopia Acirivar Urutira Valipadu Tamilarentendramai" (The assessment of some balanced European scholars that Tamils are the originators of Rudra worship), Adigal characteristically identified with and supported the Orientalist scholarship of Europeans and Americans on India. He argued that the scholarship of European scholars such as "Max Muller, Muir, Taylor, Weber, Ragozin and Griffith Macdonell" suggest that the worship of Rudra and Shiva were from ancient times the practice of Tamils rather than the Aryans.\textsuperscript{135} He boldly asserted that though Indian

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{133}ibid., p. 11.
\item \textsuperscript{134}ibid., pp. 21-22
\item \textsuperscript{135}ibid., p. 59.
\end{itemize}
scholars by comparison did not have even one thousandth of the skills that European scholars possessed in research or knowledge of Sanscrit, they tended to easily dismiss the work of the Europeans.\(^{136}\) Mocking their attitude, he characterized the Indian scholars approach as, "Since we are Brahman, we possess the knowledge of all works; we do not need the knowledge of any other works."\(^{137}\) He urged the Tamils not to take seriously the charge by Vedantists that Europeans were insulting their religions by condemning idol worship. Citing European scholars such as William James, who had asserted the necessity of idol worship, Adigal made the point that it was in fact the Vedantists such as Dayananda Saraswati and Rammohan Roy who were criticizing idol worship. He asserted when there are Indians such Dayananda and Roy who are critical of idol worship, he argued, it was unjust to blame the European scholars. He concluded the section by asserting that Tamils should not disregard but follow the example of European scholars who continue to contribute to the progress of the world by their numerous scholarly endeavors.\(^{138}\) This pro-European stance was an enduring theme in Adigal’s writings.

Adigal’s celebration of Vellalars was also tempered by a

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136ibid., p. 60.
137ibid., p. 61.
138ibid., p. 63.
broadly inclusive reform agenda. That he was critical of the caste arrogance of the Vellalars is evident from his earlier work *Cativetrumaiyum Polic Caivarum*. Revealing his aversion to the unusual caste arrogance of some sects of Vellalar, he had once noted in his diary: "An arrogant old man of silly and vain Tondaimandal Vellalar caste came from Kundrathoor and stayed for the night. This caste people while possessing no virtue of any kind think themselves superior to other people! Silly and mischievous mass of putrid flesh they are.!

Thus, it is hardly surprising that in a section entitled, "Tuyavar Ellam Velalaratarku Uriyar" (Those who are pure have the right to become Vellalar), Adigal urged the Vellalar to desist from segregating themselves and urged them to accept into their fold members of any caste who led a pure and clean life. He argued that one only need to look at the caste origins of the sixty three Nayanars (Saivite saints) described in *Tirutondar Puranam* to demonstrate that all the castes including the lowest have the right to be Saivites. He further suggested that this would enable the Vellalar community to multiply and be strengthened like the Christian community "which did not have such false beliefs".

The final chapter is the most polemical and propagandist

139See MMAD entry 10th October 1925.

140ibid., pp. 109-10
in the book and is entitled, “Arivarceryai Tamilarkum Tamilukum Akatu” (Integrating with Aryans is bad for the Tamils as well as the Tamil language). It is also the chapter where the missionary genealogy of Adigal’s ideology is most evident. Adigal urged Tamils not to mix nor conduct their lives according to the advice or strictures of Aryan Brahmins which he asserted were in every way detrimental to the progress of the Tamils. He lamented that the leaders of Saivite Mutts, little kings, zamindars, wealthy men, educated men and others of Tamil Nadu have lost their grandeur, prestige, wisdom and respect by inviting Brahmins among their midst and following their advice. Continuing his scarcely concealed warning to Tamil elites who patronized Brahmins, Adigal wrote, “as soon as the Brahmins would spot those among the Tamil who are wealthy and prestigious they would surround them, behave according to their wishes and soon deprive them of not only their wealth but their prestige and glory.” Thus, “it was the duty of every Tamil to consider the Brahmins as worse than poison and be vigilant so as not to give any room for the Brahmins to approach and mix with them.”

Adigal next turned to the subject of how Aryan Brahmins after having failed to resurrect their own “dead” Sanskrit language sought to resurrect it by Sanskritizing the

\[\text{ibid.}, \text{p. 111.}\]
Dravidian languages. Much in the vein of Caldwell he lamented that they had succeeded in their plans “more than half way” with reference to Malyalam, Telugu and Kannada. He warned that, “little understanding their trickery some Tamil pundits are even agreeing with these Brahmins that Tamil can not flourish alone and are even attempting to disrupt the practice of writing in “pure” Tamil.” Continuing in this vein he wrote:

As each Tamil word gradually gets replaced by Sanskrit word, soon there will be no Tamil language to speak of. People feel it is more prestigious to use Sanskrit words instead of Tamil words. How can those who cultivated the lands, established cities and civilization at a time when all the others were hunting and eating flesh be ashamed of themselves or their language? Are not those who never worked a day in their lives, but wash their stomach through deceiving those who work hard really the disgraceful ones.? Is it not their language that is lowly.?"14

Adigal thus urged Tamils and their Tamil teachers to be on guard against allowing the use of Sanskrit words instead of “pure” Tamil words in their language. He added that his present work as well as his previous works such as Mullaipattu Araichiurai are a testament to the possibility of writing in “pure” Tamil.

Adigal next turned to the subject of every-day cultural practices of the Tamils. Challenging the dependence on Brahmins to perform all the important rites of passage in

142ibid., pp. 112-14.
Tamil life such as birth, marriage and death ceremonies, he urged Tamils to appoint persons from among their respective castes to conduct such rituals, claiming it to be an ancient practice of the Saiva Vellalars. Finally, Adigal turned to the religious practices of the Tamils. Here again, Adigal lamented that the ancient Tamil practices and forms of worship of God in the form of Siva and his female principal Tirumal (Vishnu) had been completely eradicated and replaced by the Aryan Brahmins. According to Adigal they had changed almost every aspect of the original Tamil forms and practice of worship. First they confused and identified the female principal of Siva with the numerous kings of the Tamil lands and wrote many false Puranas to propagate such views. Through this, they divided the Tamils into opposing camps of Saivites and Vaishnavites, laying the basis for internal dissension among the Tamils.

Furthermore, they changed the whole form of worship. In ancient times, according to Adigal, Tamils had built their own temples and worshiped their gods by directly touching them, bathing them etc. The priests that were appointed were merely there to look after the temples and facilitate worship. With the coming of the Aryan Brahmins however, the Tamil priests

143 Claiming legitimacy from traditional texts he further argued that it was a great sin to invite Brahmins to attend to these functions and asserted that such practices should be completely abandoned by the Tamils. ibid., p. 115.
joined with them to claim only they and no one else could touch the gods. They also abandoned the worship of God in Tamil using Tamil hymns. In its place they introduced the practice of reciting Vedic hymns which were essentially composed to honor the ghosts that Aryans regarded as their little gods. Revealing his awareness of the absence of temple Centred worship in the Vedic tradition, Adigal next posed the question, “Is it not a great sin to sing these Vedic hymns which make no reference to any of the major Shiva or Vishnu temples in North or South India at temples in Tamil Nadu?” He also asked, “Is there no greater sin than singing these Aryan hymns which do not acknowledge the primacy of Shiva and Vishnu but instead sing the praise of hundreds of minor gods which are really ghosts in the presence of Siva and Vishnu?” Adigal concluded his work with an appeal addressed to the “Tamil people”:

Tamil people, You who have descended from the ancient Tamils, who have never trespassed the gracious command of the Lord, Awake! Awake from the long slumber that has befallen you--caught in the grips of Aryan Maya! Hence forth, abandon the use of the Aryan language and Aryan Vedas from our temples and in its place recite Tevara Tiruvacagam’s (Saivite hymns) and Nalayiram’s (Vaishnavite hymns) and through them worship our lord and gain a blessed life! Om.”  

With this work, Adigal clearly established himself as an

144 Ibid., pp. 117-19. (Translated and paraphrased by me)
intellectually versatile popular champion of non-Brahmin Tamils, able at once to please a large segment of the higher non-Brahmin castes as well as non-Brahmins lower down in the caste hierarchy. Thus at the eve of the emergence of the Self Respect movement in the mid 1920's, Adigal had clearly become one of the most popular advocate of non-Brahmin Tamil Nationalism in South India. The fact that Adigal was chosen to preside at the farewell gathering of one of the most important Justice politicians, Thiagarajah Chettiar, also reveals the status he had acquired by this time as an intellectual champion of non-Brahmin ideology.
Chapter Seven

The Final Years, 1926-1950.

The Southern lands, forgetting itself was lost in sleep for very long years. It was Adigal's honor to awaken it... Even the earth and the trees would roar that it was Adigal who awakened the Southern lands!.

Thiru Vi Kalyanasundara Mudaliar (1949)

Adigal celebrated his fiftieth birthday in 1926 on the eve of the Self-Respect movement launched by E.V. Ramasamy Nayakar (1879-1973). Aside from a brief period of intense confrontation with Nayakar and the Self-Respect movement from 1928 to 1930, Adigal's life during this period was perhaps the most settled and sedate of his entire career. By the 1930's Adigal had not only established and identified himself as the most passionate advocate of "non-Brahmin" Tamil nationalism in Tamil Nadu but had also secured a solid financial base and life-style. Such security allowed him to immerse himself even more in his passion for English scholarly and literary works. It was again to these works that he principally turned for inspiration for his writings. Although he published more than ten monographs during this period alone, much of his intellectual output was further elaborations and developments of the ideas that he had laid out in the preceding two

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decades. Quite paradoxically, the emergence of the Self-Respect movement, after an initial period of confrontation, created an intellectual environment which helped to validate and legitimize his views as well as stimulate further development of his work.

No major gathering of Tamil enthusiasts or Saiva Sidhdanta revivalists would consider inviting Adigal as anything but the presiding lecturer during this period. The numerous requests he received from various individuals or associations to preside or officiate at functions or deliberations that involved Tamil concerns also confirm the status he had acquired by this time. He was for example invited to be the "Director of the Board of Dravidian Studies" aside from being chosen as a member of the board of officials in charge of the Tamil Lexicon Project.

The Challenge and Dialogue with the Self-Respect Movement

E. V. Ramasami Nayakar (1879-1973) was the central figure and inspiration behind the Self-Respect (Suyamariathai Ivakkam) and Rationalist movement (Pakutharivu Ivakkam) that began to make its presence felt in South India by the late 1920's.

2Tirunavukkarasu confirms that Adigal's reputation as one of the most popular champions of non-Brahmin Tamil consciousness and Saiva Sidhdanta revival meant that he was invited to preside at most of the major Tamil and Saivite gatherings in Tamil Nadu. Tirunavukkarasu, Maraimalai Adigal. pp. 823-25.

3See MMAD entry for 25th July and 8th December 1926.
Nayakar, formerly an ardent Gandhi supporter and active Congress worker, left Congress and began his career as a socio-cultural reformer after the Congress meeting held at Kanchipuram in November 1925 voted against caste-based reservation. Although his early reformist campaigns largely espoused anti-Brahmanism and caste-based reservation, by 1927 they broadened to include attacks on all branches and aspects of Hinduism and Hindu society including Vedanta, Vaishnavism, Savaism, the institution of caste, family practices, and the oppression of women in Indian society. Most of these attacks appeared in the Tamil journal founded by Nayakar and his friend V.M. Thangaperumal Pillai in 1925, called Kudi Arasu, and later in the journal Viduthalai. By 1927, vehement and sustained attacks against such Hindu classical texts as the Puranas and Upanishads appeared in the pages of Kudi Arasu. It was argued that such literature was against rationality, commonsense and even fundamental ethical behaviour. One of the earliest targets was the Ramayana and Saivite scholars were drawn to critically expose its "fallacies and absurdities."

The Self-Respecters soon turned their ire on such

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5 Most of the above information on the Self-Respect movement’s confrontation with the Saiva Siddhanta revivalists is derived from Venkatachalapathy, *Thirvida Ivakkamum Vellalarum*. For an in-depth analysis of the work of Ramasamy Nayakar and the history of the Self-Respect movement see Rajadurai and Geeta also Pandian.
hallowed Saivite works as the *Periyapuranam*, *Tiruvilayadat Puranam* and even the hagiographical tales of the canonized Saivite saints. They not only critiqued these works from a "rationalist" perspective but also questioned the fundamental argument of Saiva Siddhanta revivalists such as Adigal that Sivaism and Saiva Siddhanta was not an Aryan religion but a uniquely "Dravidian" religion. From the beginning of 1928, the journal *Kudi Arasu* carried a stream of articles critiquing the Saivite classic *Periyapuranam*. From August of that year, a writer who identified himself as MeiKandan (a word play of the name Meikander the renowned medieval author of *Sivajinna Botham*) published a series of articles on *Periyapuranam* in *Kudi Arasu*. In his essays he characterized this hallowed Saivite text as one "that creates religious wars; a work that encourages caste; and a work that depicts murder as service to Sivaism".

The trajectory of the relationship between Ramasamy Nayakar, the Self-Respect Movement and Adigal is indeed a complex one and one that needs much more serious scholarly attention. Despite, the atheistic vision of Nayakar and the theistic vision of Adigal, they both shared in common a more

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*The only recent work available seeks to distance the Self-Respect Movement from the "Vellalars" and the Saiva Siddhanta revival movement. Towards this end it focuses on the confrontation between them rather than on the relationship between them. See Venkatachalapathy, *Thiravida Iyakkamum Vellalarum*. 
"rationalist" and reformist vision for the Tamils. The emergence of the Self-Respect Movement in 1926, as Sivathamby suggests, eclipsing gradually the older elite, Justicites signalled the broadening of the social base of the non-Brahmin movement that had so far been dominated by the elite non-Brahmins, especially the Vellalars. In many ways Adigal's more progressive vision of Saivite revival made him much more resilient to the challenges posed by the Self-Respecters than his more conservative Saivite counterparts. Thus, aside from a brief initial period of confrontation and hostility, the emergence of the Self-Respect movement did not have any serious impact on Adigal's career or popularity. In fact, it may have helped him emerge as the undisputed leader of the Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil revival movement by its attack on the ideas of the more conservative wing of the movement.

**Period of Intense Confrontation 1928-1930**

The earliest Saivites to be alarmed at the emergence of the Self-Respect Movement were figures such as Tiru V. Kalyanasundara Mudaliar who not only represented the more conservative wing of the Saiva Siddhanta revival movement but was perhaps the most important non-Brahmin advocate and exponent of Indian nationalism in Tamil Nadu. Tiru Vi Ka's autobiography suggests that as a non-Brahmin and a prominent Tamil and Saiva Siddhanta revivalist he was used as a major plank against the Justice party by the Congress supporters in
Madras. It is evident from Adigal's diaries that it was these more conservative (nationalist) Saivites who first alerted Adigal to the dangers posed to Sivaism by the movement. Adigal's earliest reference to the Self-Respect movement in his diaries is on the 28th of May 1928, when he noted: "...Mr. T.V. Kalyanasundara Mudaliar came at 11 a.m. and had a long conversation with me till 1.30 p.m. about the mischief wrought by Mr. Ramasami Nayakar and his party against Saiva religion and Saiva saints. I wanted him to arrange for a series of my lectures in all the important centres of South India to oppose them, he went gladly promising to do so..."  
Adigal's observation a few months later also suggests the strong role Kalyanasundara Mudaliar played in goading Adigal against the Self-Respect Movement: "...Mr. T.V. Kalyanasundara Mudaliar and his brother came and told me that Ramasami Nayakar and his party were devising foul means to check my activities in defence of our religious matters and requested me not to take any part in the movement..." 8 In many ways Tiru. Vi. Ka's instruction to Adigal, "not to take any part in the movement" reveals his suspicions regarding Adigal's potential ambivalent stance towards the Self-Respect movement. 

Over the next few months, Adigal along with a number of others discussed and organized ways of checking the movement's

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8 See MMAD entry for 27th May 1928.

9 See MMAD entry 26th June 1928.
growth. He noted on the 16th of June 1928: "...Mr. T.V. Kalyanasundara Mudaliar and his brother, Tamil Nadu editor Mr. Chockalingam Pillai and another came to consult me about the organized attack to be started against the atheistic and destructive movement of Mr. Ramasami Nayakar..." Adigal only began to play a major role in these efforts after June 1928. One of his earliest articles against the movement was entitled "Saiva Samayamum Suvamariathay Iyakkamum" (Sivaism and the Self-Respect Movement). Adigal also utilized his presiding address at the anniversary gathering of one of the Saiva Siddhanta Associations in Madras the Balasubramania Bhakta Sabha in July 1928 to vehemently criticize the movement. 

This presiding address brought Adigal into open conflict with Nayakar and the Self-Respect Movement at least until the end of 1928. The trouble began when his presiding address was interrupted by a certain Dandapani Pillai of the Self-Respect Movement who disrupted the gathering by asking provocative questions. This led to disturbances at the meeting. The "biased" coverage of this event by the Self-Respect journals and newspapers led to a bitter exchange mainly through newspapers and journals between the supporters of Adigal and the Self-Respecters. Writing in his diary on the 31st of July 1928 he observed: "...I couldn't sleep well day and night for

Of the speech he delivered Adigal noted: "...I presided at the meeting at 3.30P.M. and delivered my stirring speech for 3 hours on "One God and one family of human beings" and condemned vehemently the atheistic doctrines of Mr. Ramasami Naicker and the mischief of his Suvamariathai (Self-Respect) movement." See MMAD entry for 22nd July 1928.
the last four days. Further the atheistic Suyamariathai (Self-Respect) Movement engages my thoughts even in (my) dream. I am always thinking of thoughts on how to refute its doctrines and check its spread..." The bitterness that developed between Adigal and Nayakar as a result of this conflict was finally resolved, quite ironically, through the mediation again of Kalyanasundara Mudaliar and associates towards the end of August 1928. Even during the bitter exchange that took place, the Self-Respecters did not wish to unduly antagonize Adigal as they considered him to be a man who shared much of their sensibilities and goals. They even suggested that Adigal may have been goaded into opposition by the connivance of some others. 

By the end of 1928, the open conflict between Nayakar and Adigal was largely resolved, so much so that Adigal was considering contributing articles to Nayakar's English weekly Revolt. Adigal noted on the 24th of November 1928, sending a "letter to Mr. E.V. Ramasami Naicker acknowledging the receipt of his newly started English weekly "Revolt" and offering to contribute articles on social and religious reforms if he

11 See MMAD entry for 31st July 1928.

12 On the 24th of August 1928, Adigal noted in his diary:"...Mr. T.V. Kalyanasundara Mudaliar, Mr. Balasundara Mudaliar and Mr. Viswanatha Pillai of Trichy came to conciliate me to Mr. E.V. Ramasami Naicker's side and requested me to write him a letter in a friendly tone which I readily did and gave the letter to Viswanatha Pillai...By the grace of Lord may there be peace over all!" See MMAD.

13 See Kudi Arasu, 02-09-1928.
would send it free." Two weeks later Adigal "began to write in English an essay on the "The story of Ramayana" for the weekly paper Revolt."¹⁴ Thus, despite their differences, their rapid reconciliation as well as their easy collaboration on certain matters confirm that they had much in common.

Adigal's attitude towards Nayakar and the Self-Respect movement despite its earlier hostility, was rather ambivalent. He shared with the Self-Respecters their concern for the upliftment of "Tamilsm" and their contempt for Brahmanism, but differed sharply with them over their criticisms of the Saivite tradition and their general propagation of what he regarded as "Godless atheism." His observation on the 14th of February 1929, particularly captures his ambivalence towards the rising movement:

...Every where (the) Godless movement is spreading. Although I welcome all merciless criticisms of the so-called Vedas, Puranas, Smritis and Itihasas in Sanscrit and their copies in Tamil, I do not like but strongly condemn the mischievous wrangling of the arrogant critics who make wholesale attack on such great saints as St. Manickavacagar, St. Thirujnanasambhandar and others. May Lord grant good sense, piety and fear to these base critics.¹⁵

His initial opposition to the rise of the Self-Respect Movement was also due to the fact that he felt that a movement that basically propagated what he had been saying so far was attempting to undermine him and usurp his pre-eminence.

¹⁴See MMAD entry for 7th December 1928.

¹⁵See MMAD.
Support for such a view also comes from Tirunavukkarasu's observation that Nayakar regarded Adigal's work *Pandaikkalat Tamilarum Ariyarum* (Ancient Tamils and Aryans) as his "*Veda*" (holy book). Nayakar certainly utilized the notion of Southern non-Brahmins as Dravidians, a notion popularized most passionately by Adigal. In an article submitted to the Hindu, Nayakar wrote: "The terms "Aryan" and "Dravidian" are not my inventions. They are historical realities...the fundamental difference between the two cultures, Aryan and Dravidian, cannot be refuted by anyone who has closely studied the daily life, habits...customs and literature of these two distinct elements in South India". Thus, it is hardly surprising that Adigal and his supporters felt that a movement that drew its main inspiration from their work was now betraying and abusing them. In the words of a contemporary Saiva Siddhanta revivalist, the Self-Respecters were "behaving like a man who after watering and caring for a tree then turns around and slices the roots of that very same tree." 

In an effort to restrain the emerging movement from attacking them, some Saivites sought to remind the Self-Respecters of the similarities in their concerns and objectives. One of Adigal's most ardent disciples and later

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biographers emphasized their identical concerns and objectives
in an article he wrote for the Tamil journal *Senthamil Selvi*:

The Saivite religion does not at all contradict the
objectives of the Self-Respect Movement: The Self-
Respect Movement arose to liberate the Tamil people
from the clutches of Brahmanism. The Saivite
religion has the same objective; The Self-Respecters
do not like the Aryan Brahmins. Similarly the
Saivites do not like them one bit; The Self-
Respecters want to liberate the oppressed castes.
The Saivites underlying objective is the same; The
Self-Respecters feel that the Tamils should not have
caste divisions among them, similarly the Saivite
religion also earnestly urges the same. Why then
disgrace and blame the Saivite religion and its
hallowed Saivite saints?18

The editor of the Saivite Tamil journal, *Siddhantam*, was
more forthright in his claims. He directly linked the Self-
Respect movement's underlying ideological origins to the work
of Adigal:

That the best parts of the Self-Respect Movement is
derived from the blessed offering of the wise
philosophical father Maraimalai Adigal is known to
all Tamilians. If those who do propaganda work based
on these blessed offerings are not grateful to its
holy founder, their efforts would be as vain as the
rain that falls on the sea.19

The Self-Respecters too were aware that they shared many
things in common with the Saiva Siddhanta revivalists. At the
end of the bitter exchange that took place between Adigal and


the Self-Respecters, they wrote of Adigal: "Ever since we heard of his (Adigal) name we have a kind of respect for him that we cannot explain. Whenever we speak of him with our friends we speak of him as a man who greatly shares our feelings and objectives." However, they insisted that they did not wish their regard for Adigal or their recognition of the many points they shared with him to prevent them from attacking the Saivite religion. They made this clear in the same letter of conciliation they published after their open conflict with Adigal at the end of the year 1928. It was particularly aimed at the kind of "religious intellectualism" or "religious punditry" that in their opinion, figures such as Adigal were engaged in. They wrote:

In conclusion we would like to say one thing to Mr. Vedachalam and his group. That is we and our movement are open and avowed enemies of Puranas, and the religions that are found in the Puranas-- the religious saints that are found in those religions-- the gods that are hailed by those saints-- and even the wives and children of these gods. This position of ours is plain for all to see. From now on we would like to emphatically say that we will no longer tolerate but openly condemn the kind of "religious punditry" which explains how this symbol or ritual means that, and that symbol or ritual means this. We are happily prepared to enter the fray with any religious figures or pundits who conduct such intellectual and political battles."

The way Adigal responded to the challenges posed to Sivaism by the Self-Respecters is clearly evident in the article he wrote during the heat of the conflicts in 1928.

39Kudi Arasu, 2-09-1928.
"Caiva Camayathin Nerukkadiyana Nilai" (The difficult predicament of the Saivite Religion). He presented the Saivite religion as caught between two factions. The first faction he characterized as one though considering themselves to be Saivites and claiming to be the guardians of it were in reality people who little understood it. This was Adigal's way of representing and subverting the conservative wing of the Saiva Siddhanta revival movement. The second faction (the Self-Respecters) he argued were reformists who on the basis of the articulation of these misguided conservative Saivites sought to destroy Sivaism since they believed it was in the way of the liberation of the Tamil people. This was Adigal's way of both depicting and subverting the efforts of the Self-Respect movement. The logical deduction then, was that neither parties were really dealing with Sivaism at all. Adigal thus positioned himself to present the "true" version of Sivaism shorn of the "impurities" that had accreted as a result of the influence of Aryan Brahmins. In Adigal's argument it was these impurities which the Aryans introduced that were being misrepresented as Sivaism by both the conservative Saivites as well as the Self-Respecters. Here, Adigal was not only challenging the Self-Respecters and the conservative wing of the Saivites at the same time, but also in the process sought to consolidate his preeminent role as both a spokesman of the "true" Saiva Siddhanta and as the central ideologue and propagandist of anti-Brahmin Dravidian ideology.
This kind of exercise by Saivites such as Adigal to distance themselves from the more conservative wing of the Saiva Siddhanta revivalists while at the same time proposing further reforms within the Saivite camp was the characteristic feature of their response to the rise of the Self-Respect Movement. Much of Adigal's writings and work during the remainder of his life was informed by such an impulse.

As noted earlier, the emergence of the Self-Respect movement prompted many Saiva Siddhanta revivalists including Adigal to organize meetings and conferences to curb the spread of the Self-Respect movement and to strengthen Sivaism. Notable among the early efforts was the *Saiva Periyar Thanikkootam* (Exclusive Conference of leading Saivites) held at the end of March 1929 in Tirunelveli and the *Saiva Manadu* (Great Saivite Conference) held at Thirupathirupuliyur in May 1929. The *Saiva Periyar Thanikkootam* was organized by Adigal's former patron Tivarangam Pillai with the help of Tirunelveli Saivites. The meeting at Thirupathiripuliyur was held on a grand scale under the auspices of Jnaniar and the Tirupathiripuliyur Saiva Siddhanta Mutt and was presided over

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21It was held with the express purpose of gathering all the major Saivite figures to consider the questions and doubts that had arisen among the Saivites as a result of the Self-Respect movement and to devise ways and means to meet this challenge. Although Adigal was unable to attend the meeting he provided the conference with a copy of the reforms that he advocated. Despite the grand objectives of the conference, only a limited number of reforms were adopted. It fell to the second meeting organized by the Saiva Siddhanta Mahasamasam at Thirupathiripuliyur to resolve and confirm many of the issues debated in the first meeting. See Venkatachalapathy, *Tiravida Ivakkamum*, pp. 29-39.
by Adigal. In both these meetings radical reforms were suggested by Adigal to contain the spread of the Self-Respect Movement.

Adigal in the 1930's

Despite the initial alarm and tension caused by the rise of the Self-Respect Movement, by the early 1930's Adigal was leading a relatively settled and comfortable life. His popularity and prestige did not seem to have suffered as a result of this latest challenge. In fact, as noted earlier, Adigal may have emerged as a much more popular figure in the Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil revivalist world. His voice may have acquired a more important resonance in the changed and charged socio-cultural and political landscape introduced by the Self-Respect movement. Adigal's diary entries during this period suggest that he was not only much more financially secure but had acquired a fairly large number of regular disciples, patrons and supporters.

22His presiding lecture was published as a special issue of the popular Tamil daily Navasakti. A great many resolutions were adopted to advance Saivism and combat the impact of the Self-Respect Movement doing this meeting. The fact that Adigal was chosen to preside at such an important and consequential meeting for the Saivite world confirms again that by this time he was seen as the most popular and powerful spokesman for Saiva Siddhanta in the Tamil region. The spirit of the reforms adopted during this conference very much reflected Adigal’s ideological standpoint. They came very close to the suggestions that Adigal made in his essay, “Camavc Ceerthirutham” (Religious Reform), published around the same time in the Saivite Journal Siddhantam. The article reads much like a Tamil nationalist manifesto from a Saivite perspective. The article is reproduced in Tirunavukkarasu, Maraimalai Adigal, pp. 667-76. See Venkatachalapathy, Tiravida Iyakkamum, for a detailed discussion of the gathering and the events that followed it.
This financial security and stability also enabled him to devote even more time and money on his passion for English scholarly and literary works. He acquired and read an inordinate amount of English works on a variety of subjects during this period, more so than any other period of his life. The range of subjects that he was covering was also much more diverse. They included "Greek Studies", Eugenics, Anthropology, Marxism and Psychoanalysis. A significant development during this period was his increasing interest and engagement with Christian theological works. Revealing both the number of books he would often acquire in a day's purchase as well as the kind of Christian works that he was reading, he noted on the 2nd of February 1930:


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23That Adigal attained a certain level of confident self-assuredness by this time is evident also from his systematic and self-assured appeals for money from wealthy patrons and donors. He observed on the 9th of November 1930: "J.S.D. Maraimalai took down to my dictation the Tamil letter of appeal to the rich for pecuniary help." Adigal also noted casually of appealing for money from one of most wealthy Nattukottai Chetty philanthropist of the time, "In the evening added a few more lines in the Tamil and English letter of appeal to Rajah Sir Annamalai Chettiar." See MMAD.
Sex and Religion for which I have already sent money on the 18th of December 1929. Thanks to God for these valuable books.

He was also especially fond of the writings of Cardinal Newman during this period. Adigal found these works useful for his writings and lectures, on religion, particularly in his efforts to reinterpret Saiva Siddhanta. Revealing such a practice, he observed on the 15th of January 1930: "In the evening wrote English preface to the Life of Saint Manickavacagar after reading high class English books as usual." Adigal was quite systematic in his habit of writing after reading such "high class books" as he observed on another occasion: "I am regularly reading one hour in the morning, one hour in the afternoon, and one hour in the evening, religious, philosophical, historical and literary books. Only after reading I begin to write usually." 

Adigal's utilization of such works for his writings and discourses on Tamil language, literature, history, Saiva Siddhanta illustrate very well the diverse cultural influences that were at work in his re-interpretation of Tamil culture and Saiva Siddhanta and also confirms the scholarly use of the term "Protestantised" to describe the "modern" transformation of the Tamil/Saivite identity. 

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24See MMAD entry for 27th April 1931.

Adigal also utilized his wide reading for his role as teacher for the classes he conducted at his residence as he observed on the 12th of January 1930:

Mr. Ganapathi Pillai my Tamil master Mr. V. Narayanasamy Pillai's brother's son and his uncle came to see me in the forenoon, stayed till evening and attended the Sivajnana Botham class. I taught the first argument of the third sutra and all the students were much impressed with my exposition. I dwelt at length on the intimate connection between life and evolution of human thought.

Similarly, he observed on the 29th of January 1930: "Taught Ward's Pluralism to Mr. Chandrasekhara B.A. and showed him how Ward misunderstood Liebnitz's theory of Preestablished harmony. Cardman, Adamson, Tilly and Carr represented it correctly and I showed it to him."

While Adigal noted that, "reading high class English works has become a deep rooted passion in me." it is clear they also provided a form of escape from what he considered as a fairly humdrum passionless existence in his home front:

I have to do all (the) work; helpless for the last 35 years. My mind when not occupied with the study of great works, is always uneasy and is troubled with gloomy thoughts and sentiments. I have not been as yet blessed with a cultured companion. My illiterate and arrogant wife though a faithful servant has not even ordinary capacity of brain to do her household work neat and clean. She is not even sensible to direct her servants. Whenever she comes to talk to me, she invariably speaks ill of her neighbours or else brings worthless matters. In

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26See MMAD entry for 8th August 1931.
a day she offends me a hundred times." Thus, Adigal's intellectual pursuits in addition offered a form of escape from what he regarded as the misery of his married family life. His unhappy family life however provided much of the inspiration to write against what he considered as loveless arranged marriages and the education and upliftment of Tamil women.

The Twentieth Year Celebration of Adigal's Order

It was to celebrate his success and achievement during this period that Adigal decided to hold a grand religious convention at his residence and mutt on the twentieth anniversary of his order in February 1931. The convention was also intended to mark the formal opening of a small temple in his mutt, the "anointing ceremony of our Lord and Lady and the opening ceremony of Manimoli Library" at his mutt. Adigal constructed on the second floor of his mansion a small temple and installed in it a golden, dancing idol of Shiva, Shiva's consort Parvati as well as idols of the four canonized Saivite saints. He also built on two of the floors of his mutt a library for the enormous number books that he had acquired by this time. Thus, the convention was also held to formally open these two new additions to his mutt.

On the first day of the convention on the 2nd of February

27 See MMAD entry for 7th August 1931.
1931, Adigal observed in his diary:

Performed the anointing ceremony of our Lord and Lady and the opening ceremony of Manimoli library... Delegates and visitors came from all parts of South India and Ceylon and stayed here as our guests. We arranged four houses besides our own for lodging; but meals were prepared and served in our own mansion... the ceremony was grand and simple and full of meaning. Hot water, breakfast and delicious meals were supplied to all, and all ate together without distinction of caste.

The convention ran for four days. The way it was organized, the people invited to speak, the nature of the subjects they addressed, the resolutions passed and adopted, in fact the way the whole convention was conducted and reported, clearly reflected the strong reformist and Tamil nationalist agenda of Adigal’s order and mission.

The convention was also announced in the form of a pamphlet under the "pure" Tamil name of his order which was now increasingly referred to by the "pure" Tamil name of Pothunilaik Kalaham. In setting out its goals and objectives the pamphlet reads much like a manifesto of Tamil nationalism. Adigal began by asserting:

The Tamil people of Tamil Nadu without following the sagely advice of their own Tamil sages, but following the Puranic stories that came later are split into numerous castes, religions, habits and ways. They are now found strongly disunited and confused, having forgetting completely the ways of love and grace and without education or an investigative spirit...[38]

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[38] This article entitled "Pothunilaik Kalagham", was probably first published announcing the twentieth year celebration of his order in Jnanacagaram. It is republished as part of a collection of essays by Maraimalai Adigal. See Maraimalaiyadigal, Uraimanik Kovai. (Collection of
The pamphlet was devoted to explaining how through the goals and objectives of his order he proposed to remedy this unfortunate situation. Adigal also outlined the three main objectives of his order. The first was to cultivate among the Tamil people the principles and methods of leading a spiritual life. The second objective was to propagate a life-style and attitude among the peoples that eschewed caste and religious distinctions, killing and meat eating and encouraged the compassionate treatment of all life forms. Since the cultivation of "pure Tamil" was needed he argued, in order to ensure and propagate such ideals, the third major objective was to promote the cultivation of "pure" Tamil.

Elaborating on why the cultivation of pure Tamil was essential for his mission he argued that this "only ancient living language" was essential since Sanskrit and Sanskritic culture were responsible through the Puranic stories for dividing the Tamil people into numerous castes, and religious divisions and inducing them to practice such cruel customs as caste discriminations, the worship of numerous differentially ranked minor gods and countless animal sacrifices to these minor gods. He contrasted this with the culture advocated in the "pure" Tamil language which he argued encouraged a monotheistic spirituality, and an appreciation of the beauties and subtleties of nature and life. There was also one more

reason for the cultivation of Tamil, since it was only in Tamil that those who actually saw god such as saint Manickavacagar and Tirujnanasambhandar wrote their verses.  

He also represented the construction of the temple and the installation of the dancing image of Shiva and Paravati at the mutt, in reformist language. Claiming that the worship of god in the abstract was impossible, he justified his choice of installing these images by arguing that it represented the dancing or vibrating aspect of God. As for the establishment of the library at the mutt he argued that the ancient Tamils always fostered learning and ensured that libraries were always established at every temple. Saddened by the lack of such arrangements in more recent times, and hoping to set an example, he had installed a library along with the temple.

The reformist agenda of the convention and Adigal's order is also evident from the list of reform resolutions proposed and passed without opposition. They concerned almost every aspect of Tamil religious, social, cultural and family life, addressing such issues as caste discrimination in temples, call for Saivite mutts to sponsor Tamil and Sivaism and to train members of all castes to perform rituals, use of Tamil in temple worship and rituals and the promotion of mixed caste

\[\text{ibid., pp. 11-13.}\]

\[\text{ibid., p. 18.}\]
marriages and widow remarriages. It was also suggested that these "new self-styled reformers" (Self-Respecters) would not be able to fault the Saivites if they were to follow the great reformist principles that had already been enunciated and laid out by the Saivite saints twelve hundred years ago.

In terms of reforms related to the Tamil language, the proposals included urging the "Chetty Nadu king Sir Annamalai Chettiar" to give primacy to the Tamil language at Annamalai University; to urge the Madras University not only to give primacy to the Tamil language at the University, but all educational institutions throughout Tamil Nadu as well as make Tamil a sole subject for the B.A. program at Madras University and all other Universities and Colleges in Tamil Nadu.

Adigal's attempt to gain "traditional institutional" legitimacy for himself, his mutt and order is also evident in the way the convention was organized. It began with a speech by "Avinaci Karunalaya swami" on the greatness of the head of the Tiruvaduthurai mutt and the greatness of Adigal, followed by the presentation of golden silk clothes valued at Rs. 300, two gold bordered Ochre robes of a sanyasi and Rs. 100 cash to Adigal sent by the head of Tiruvaduthurai mutt with his blessings. It is thus clear that Adigal sought to gain for

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31The proceedings of the convention including the reforms passed were published in 1937 in preparation for the twenty-sixth year celebration of the order. It is titled Pothunilaik Kalagha Arikai (The Notice of Pothunilaik Kalagham). It was perhaps published as a pamphlet or published in Adigal's journal Jnanacagaram.
himself and his order the support of the Vellalar-led Saiva Siddhanta mutts in Tamil Nadu. He had also managed to gain the support of another Saiva Siddhanta mutt, the Tirupanandal Mutt--to pay the cost of publishing the papers read at the convention. The fact that gaining the support of these mutts for his revivalist efforts needed much cajoling is revealed by the fact many of the reform proposals passed especially urged the Saiva Siddhanta mutts to donate generously towards the development and cultivation of the Tamil language and Saivism and for the publication of Tamil and Saivite works."

The successful celebration of the twentieth anniversary of his order and mutt marked an important personal as well as career milestone for Adigal. The celebration signified that he had largely realised his goal to be an important Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil propagandist and as an important figure head for non-Brahmin Tamil consciousness in the Tamil speaking world. The financial success and prestige that came through this achievement was clearly visible not only through his

32The above information on the convention proceedings and resolutions are from the article, "Potunilaik Kalaha Arikkai," 1937.

33Adigal’s twentieth anniversary celebration of his order was quite successful. The day after the convention Adigal noted: "Last evening my order's convention by the grace of our lord ended with an unexpected success; and my students garlanded me and swami Ponnambalaswami read the verses he composed in praise of my humble self; similar verses sent by others were also read. Swami Sivanesan spoke highly of me and my wife and children." Reflecting on the donations he received, he observed, “all through last week received donations and subscriptions from many by post and personally. From many an unexpected quarters came this help through the grace of my Lord.” See MMAD entries for 6th and 9th February 1931. Adigal held a similar convention for the twenty sixth year celebration of his mutt in the year 1937.
capacity to hold such a grand convention but more concretely through the completion and extension of his large mutt. The success of the convention also meant that the reformist Tamil nationalist message that he propagated had earned for him a significant number of followers and patrons in the Tamil regions. It was this kind of reformist vision with a strong anti-Brahmin Tamil nationalism that Adigal maintained and propagated for the remainder of his life.

Adigal and Indian Nationalism

It was also towards the late 1920's that Adigal began to develop a coherent oppositional stance toward the Indian nationalist movement and Gandhi's role in that movement. As noted earlier, since at least the beginning of the century Adigal had followed the ideas, personalities and events of the nationalist struggle with some interest. He was particularly impressed with the writings and speeches of Bengalee Brahmo Samajists and neo-Vedantic revivalists and nationalists such as Bipin Chandra Pal, Vivekananda and Balgangadhar Tilak. Despite his advocacy of Saiva Siddhanta, the neo-Hindu revivalist ideology underpinning the ideas and work of many Indian nationalists appealed to him.

Adigal's view of the English and English government in India, nevertheless was generally positive. Such a view of the English, largely stemmed from his admiration of English intellectual traditions, scholarship, literature and
Christianity.\textsuperscript{34} Despite Adigal's partiality for neo-Hindu revivalist discourses on the unique nature and wisdom of "Eastern spirituality", it was his underlying ideological stance towards "modernity," and the enlightenment tradition along with the intellectual, cultural and administrative achievements of the English that inspired his more positive stance toward the British. What made Adigal's approach different from that of neo-Hindu revivalists was his vision of a golden age of the Tamils resembled the age of enlightenment and reason in Europe before it was corrupted by the arrival of the Aryans. The binary construction of the spiritual East posed against and the material West that was popular with the neo-Vedantists and Indian nationalists was hardly developed in Adigal's thought and ideas. Much in the fashion of figures such as Caldwell and Pope, Adigal felt that it was through the ---

\textsuperscript{34} His admiration for the English, however, did not arise out of ignorance of racist elements among the British. He too, had endured at least one experience of racism at the hands of the English in India. The incident happened when Adigal was traveling by train to Bangalore in June 1918. Reflecting on the incident he noted: "Yesterday night two English gentleman and an English soldier were traveling in the same carriage in which I was; the English soldier behaved very badly, abused me and even attempted to assault me but by the grace of my Lord the other two English men rendered me help by diverting his attention from me; the fellow got drunk badly and behaved like a brute. I was very much afraid of him till I got down at Bangalore cantonment station..."See MMAD entry for the 28th June 1918. Despite this incident, his diaries reveal that he treated the English very much on equal terms and hardly felt cowed by their ostensible position of power in India. Adigal even noted an incident where he had given letters of recommendation to an Englishman who was looking for an "appointment."Adigal noted in his diaries on the 11 July 1924: "Mr. Browne, a young man who has come from Punjab and whose friendship I formed on the train came to consult me on palmistry; I foretold him success in a few months as he was trying to get an appointment in the Police, I gave him a recommendation letter to Mr. Bhavananda Pillai."See MMAD.
intercession, help and example of European civilization that
the Tamils could once again reclaim and recover their golden
age of reason and enlightenment and liberate themselves from
the "fetters of Aryan Maya".

Such an attitude towards the West is particularly evident
in Adigal's writing towards the end of the 1920's. He was also
much more bold in his criticism of the nationalist movement by
this time. The emergence of the Self-Respect movement and its
more open attitude toward European civilization and its vocal
criticism of the nationalists may have helped crystallise
Adigal's own ideas on these issues. Reflecting this gradual
shift in his position he observed on the 30th of December
1927: "My loyal Tamil students, Mr. Jeevanantham and Mr.
Kumbalingam came to see me. I talked to them of Gandhi's
unpractical goals. I told them that since he is utilized as a
handmaiden of the Brahmins, that he will only bring troubles
to the Tamils..." 35 Again on the 28th of April 1930 Adigal
reflecting on the disturbances in Madras caused by the
agitation of Gandhi supporters, observed: "Yesterday the three
so-called leaders of Gandhi movement were arrested in Madras
and were sentenced to rigorous imprisonment. The madman Gandhi
is originating unruly mob rising by his utterly non-sensical
and blind teachings against the wise and established English

35See MMAD.
Government. May God alone avert this evil." 36

Around the same time, Adigal also noted with some malicious satisfaction the colonial government's banning of the nationalist Tamil weekly Navasakti edited by his friend Kalyanasundara Mudaliar: "I heard the Government had again stopped 'Navasakti', the Tamil weekly conducted by the self-interested, arrogant, false promising, venom-hearted man Tiru V. Kalyanasundara Mudaliar. He played false with me and was punished again by God." 37 Although it is not clear what had motivated Adigal to criticize Mudaliar with such vehemence, Mudaliar's spirited campaign on behalf of the nationalists, his seemingly ambivalent alliance with both the Saiva Siddhantists as well as the nationalists and his possible role in Adigal's open confrontation with the Self-Respecters may have been a constant irritation for Adigal.

Adigal's critique of Gandhi's "neo-traditional" vision for India particularly illustrates their different visions for India. Remarking on the turmoil caused by Gandhi's leadership of the Swadeshi movement, Adigal observed in mid 1931: "...Owing to Gandhi's movement trade was spoiled and the people suffer much from want of work and income. Gandhi has no vision of future and understands not the conditions of the present. It is only through the social, intellectual and

36See MMAD entry for 22nd April 1930.
37See MMAD entry for 27th December 1930.
commercial intercourse that people prosper."

By early 1932 Adigal's critique of the nationalist struggle and Gandhi's role in it resembled that of the Self-Respect movement. Reflecting on the arrest of Gandhi on the 4th of January 1932, he observed:

...Gandhi was arrested today along with some other political leaders. It is a pity that Mr. Gandhi often goes to jail for the caste ridden people of India who do not deserve so much self sacrifice on his part. The Indian people who are hopelessly divided amongst themselves and clinging to most ignorant customs, devil worship and Brahmin reverence are unfit to rule themselves. Rebellion all throughout and the government has unwisely taken to most cruel and repressive measures. May our lord bring good sense both to our people and the government...

A decade later in his last major work, Adigal articulated more clearly and boldly his views on British rule in India and indirectly on the Indian nationalist movement. Sounding much like his missionary predecessors, he wrote, "...the Tamils must take note (that the ) British government is the only best government which has been directed by providence to rule impartially over all the Indian peoples who are torn by endless caste distinctions, and irreconcilable racial and religious differences." For Adigal it was the countless caste and religious divisions in India that necessitated what he considered as the "impartial justice" of British rule. He

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38 See MMAD entry for 17th June 1931.

39 See English preface to his work Tamilar Matam (Tamilian Creed), 1941, p. 48.
continued, "Each section of the Indian people is dominated by its own self-interest to the detriment of every other section. No one of them, however enlightened, can occupy an important place in government without seeking the interest of his own community and ignoring that of others." Critical especially of Hindu administration, he wrote, "No place of importance must be left to be occupied by any Hindu--here I except Muslims and Christians--for the Hindu administration ends as we have recently seen in the dire distress and dissatisfaction of the people." Adigal was no doubt referring here to the failure of the Congress ministry in the Presidency under the "Southern Gandhi", Rajagopalachariar. Adigal however did not foreclose the possibility for self-government at a future date, he wrote:

Until the people are educated at least fifty percent, until they are made to realize the responsibility they bear to each other in the social and political situations, until they learn to consolidate their interests rising above baneful caste and racial claims, they must not be suffered to bear the burden of self government or any government in which they cannot participate intelligently, earnestly and disinterestedly."46

Tamilnatavarum Melnatavarum (Tamils and the Westerners)

Adigal's attitude towards the English, modernity and the enlightenment traditions is most clearly evident in the controversial essay he wrote during the early 1930's entitled,

46ibid., p. 48.
Tamilnatavarum Melnatavarum (Tamils and the Westerners). In many ways it was his most personal and revealing work, reflecting more than any of his other writings the central socio-political impulses and agenda that informed his life and career. The work through its engaged and sustained critique of contemporary Tamil and Indian society argued against the anti-British efforts and goals of the Swadeshi and Indian nationalist movements.

The article sought to provide a profound critique of contemporary Tamil society in particular and Indian society in general with respect to the "Westerners." Throughout the essay, Adigal compared and contrasted the attitudes, lifestyle, values, habits and institutions of the Tamils with those of the Westerners. The reason for writing it, he explained at the beginning of the essay, was to prevent further suffering caused by those who were needlessly goading the people against the British government by spreading the idea that Westerners are draining the wealth of India.

Setting much of the tone for the paper, Adigal began the essay by addressing what he felt was one of the greatest shortcomings of contemporary Tamils: their total lack of an

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41Maraimalai Adigal, "Tamilnatavarum Melnattavarum" in Arivuraik Kothu. Madras: Pari Nilayam, 1960. pp. Though a collection of essays by Adigal with the same name was first published in 1921. It was from the third edition published in 1935 that the above article was included. All translations and quotations cited here are from the essay as it appears in the 1960 edition.

42ibid. (translated and paraphrased by me)
inquiring or investigative spirit. This lack of original thinking or individuality made them follow blindly the ideas of the group or those others among them who possessed merely an outer polish or glamour. Such qualities also made them unappreciative of those few among them who were really learned or those who were attempting to do some "real" good in their society. Adigal here was most likely referring to his own efforts. The most significant characteristic of Westerners by contrast, Adigal maintained, was their deeply inquiring and investigative spirit, a spirit not given to being impressed by the superficial appearance of things or people. Having established these two fundamental differences between the Tamils and the Westerners, Adigal proceeded to build and elaborate on them in the remainder of the work.

Building on these, he asserted that the second major failing of contemporary Tamils was their lack of any sense of civic responsibility. They, Adigal maintained, were solely concerned with the welfare of themselves, their families or at best their relatives. They do not, like the westerners, possess a sense of fellow-feeling, brotherhood or even concern or compassion for their neighbours. In addition they are completely disunited since they are divided into innumerable castes. Illustrating his characterisation he wrote, "When a group of our people meet, all they talk about is the subject of caste; whose caste they are superior to, whose caste they wouldn't even drink water from, the giving and receiving of
brides or else they talk about making money... These are the very conversations you will here in the trains, in public meetings, in temples... and even at the beach. The westerners in contrast, Adigal continued, are generally devoted to intellectual pursuits. They think, research, write and publish countless volumes on every conceivable subject. In addition, they ardently support intellectual pursuits by establishing countless educational institutions, societies and associations. Adigal also sought to relate the westerners' success in such endeavours to their "private" life and habits. Launching on a major indirect critique of Indian personal habits and family practices, he declared, "By eating wherever and whenever they are hungry and marrying whoever they like from wherever they happen to be," and by thus easily disposing their most basic and immediate needs, they are free to devote most of their life (quite unlike the Tamils) to a life of productive enquiry, invention and the cultivation of knowledge.

Holding that even English education does not hold much promise for the Tamils, he asserted that Tamils seek education solely for the purpose of acquiring status and wealth and not out of any sincere desire for knowledge. For him all that English education had done for the Tamils was that it had enabled the English-educated Tamils to spend the wealth they

\[\text{\textsuperscript{[1]}}\text{ibid., p. 141. (my translation)}\]
derived from such an education for acquiring wives with "fat" dowries, expensive jewellery and clothing for their wives, in addition to luxury carriages and motor cars rather than for a sincere cultivation of knowledge or service to the nation. "Our people" he continued "do not acquire English education to learn the profound researches, knowledge and wisdom that such an education is capable of inculcating." They would rather, he continued, "listen to the uneducated women in their houses or their foolish neighbours and spend their money on inviting Brahmins for observing the countless rituals that take place at their homes and fall at the feet of these Brahmins." Adigal here was clearly attempting to critique the lifestyle of the English-educated Tamil middle classes.

Adigal next focussed his attention on comparing the wealthy in Tamil Nadu, their life style and devotion to the "national cause" with that of the westerners. He declared that the wealth that it is in the hands of the rich in India such as the Kings, minor Kings, zamindars, Saivite, Vaishnavite and Smarta mutts are unimaginable. Describing rather vividly the numerous "gold bordered silk clothes", "gem studded jewellery", the "gold and silver wares" at the mansions of zamindars and little kings, as well as the countless wealth "hoarded" in religious mutts, Adigal posed the question, "If all these hoarded treasures could be used for the welfare of the common people, would there be poverty, disease and
ignorance in this Indian land of ours?"

Continuing in this vein, he suggested: "We can open hundreds of thousands of schools all over the land, build charitable feeding stations for the hungry, freely feed, clothe and educate the poor, improve the technology of agriculture and crafts... build our own railways, aeroplanes... build irrigation works,... establish educational institutions and Universities... and establish hospitals". He included among these numerous proposals, projects with a socio-cultural and religious mandate. Thus he called for the abolition of the "sinful and cruel" practices of worshipping and sacrificing to minor deities. The establishment of "Social Service Leagues" to eradicate the "inhuman" practices of caste and to promote love and unity among the people.

The central argument that Adigal sought to underline here, was when there was so much useless hoarded wealth among India's extravagantly rich why were nationalists raising the slogan, "Our country's wealth is going to western countries!" instead of attempting to liberate this "useless" wealth, for the service of the nation. He attacked the nationalists for causing unnecessary suffering to the "ignorant Indian people" by turning them against the government when they do not even want to be liberated from the numerous caste and religious

44ibid., p. 150. (my translation)
45ibid., p. 153.
divisions among them."  

He portrayed the wealthy among the westerners as more benign. They, he argued, unlike the wealthy Tamils, patronise learning and the arts and thus spend their wealth on very useful activities and professions that are not only good for them but also for the rest of the world. Utilizing as an example the wealth the westerners spend on missions and missionaries, Adigal argued that despite the westerners being monotheists and "worship the one true God" they have sympathy and compassion for people who worship the souls of the dead, trees, animals and even stones. They spend millions and send hundreds of thousands of their well educated priests to distant places to spread spiritual knowledge to people. He asserted that the westerners are not only keen advocates of both religious and secular knowledge but spend vast amounts in their desire to spread this knowledge among others. Adigal then posed a series of provocative questions, "Have Tamils spent or done such things for themselves or others?" They do not he continued even "let their neighbours into their own temples and if they approach too close they cut them down." "Are such people of one nation? Have you seen such bad blood and cruelty as you see in Tamil Nadu anywhere else in the world? Do we really need to further economically strengthen such people? Is it not clear that it would only be better for  

*ibid., p. 152. (my translation).
the world to remove the wealth from these people and give it to the westerners.?

Turning to the history of education in Tamil Nadu, Adigal after reminding his readers of the millions that the westerners spend on education asked "Did we have a single institute of higher education before the arrival of the westerners?" "We had only "Pial schools" run by poverty stricken teachers. Many of them were not even proficient in Tamil. Since there were no printed books it was difficult to access good quality Tamil works. The people who were considered as lower castes could not often attend these schools. Most Tamil pundits earned a living by falsely singing the praise of wealthy and powerful men." Adding that such practices have yet to be fully eradicated, he asked "Could any one refute the fact that Tamils have received a much better education with the arrivals of the westerners? Did the westerners impose any restrictions on which groups could receive an education? Aside from the Brahmin and Vellalar areas, have they not established schools at Parayar and Pallar areas? Have they not opened the eyes of all groups to education.?

Comparing the philanthropic activities of the rich westerners with that of their counterparts in Tamil Nadu. He

47 ibid., pp. 154-55. (my translation)

48 ibid., p. 155.
continued, "Have the kings, little kings, zamindars, heads of mutts who have earned their wealth on the backs of the vast majority of the poor of Tamil Nadu, help feed or clothe these people? No! Have they established schools for them to learn Tamil? No! Not only this, they have stipulated that these poor could not use their streets, use the water from their wells..."

Utilizing the apathy of the rich in Tamil Nadu to embark on a critique of Sanskrit and Brahmanism. Adigal asserted that when the wealthy and powerful in Tamil Nadu are questioned as to why they treat the poor so badly, they utilize works written in "alien" Sanskrit to argue that it was their Karma (destiny) to be treated thus. Arguing that "Sanskrit works are not applicable to the Tamils." he posed the question, "Have we been instructed to be so cruel to our people in any ancient Tamil works? Have not our Saivite saints lived and sung without observing caste discrimination? Should we not live according to them?" After providing some examples of cruel caste practices and the way they are justified by higher caste Tamils, Adigal ended his argument by posing the question, "Are these the people who are going to get rid of the English government and rule themselves?" Adigal also asserted that the Aryans had systematically promoted their Sanskrit works and culture in Tamil Nadu, knowing fully well

49 ibid., p. 158-59.
that it encouraged polytheism and superstitious habits and ways of thinking and despite being aware that the ancient Tamil/Saivite works promoted monotheism and ethical social and cultural practices.\textsuperscript{52}

Adigal next compared and contrasted Hindu and Christian priests. He declared that unlike the Christian missions and missionaries who spend vast sums of money on religion, the Hindu priests simply utilize religion to make money. Launching a profound critique of the numerous rituals involved in Hindu life, Adigal argued that Hindu priests have devised countless number of rituals—from a person's birth to his death—to extract money not only from the rich but from the poorest of the poor. For Adigal these rituals were devised solely to keep the Tamil people ignorant and poor and to "fatten" the "Aryan priests". Furthermore, he highlighted the fact that the rituals are not even conducted in a language(Tamil) that the people could understand. Even worship in Tamil temples he observed is conducted in Sanskrit. Continuing on this theme he wrote, "Just imagine the sheer bravado and cunning of these Aryan Brahmins who in the very temples built by Tamil Kings and graced by Tamil Saivite saints offer worship in a language(Sanskrit) quite foreign and ununderstandable to the Tamil people. Do you think that the people who did this and disparagingly dismiss Tamil hymns, as "Sudra hymns" will upon

\textsuperscript{52}ibid., p. 160-61.
independence ever give us our rights or even dream of it."

Insisting, "that from the temple to educational institutions, factories, railways, restaurants, ...it is the Brahmins who are in control and who are an impediment to the progress of other classes," he argued that the Brahmins had devised the caste system and sectarian differences to keep the people disunited and ensure their supremacy. In Adigal's view the Brahmins maintained their cultural and social hegemony, and kept the vast majority of people disunited and in the grips of ignorance and superstition through the systematic dissemination of their Sanskrit works. It was through the dissemination of such Sanskritic legends and Puranic tales as the Ramayana, the stories of Krishna, Ganesha...in every village that the Brahmins were able to inculcate such ignorance and superstition while portraying themselves as demi-gods. Adigal also added, much as Dubois had done earlier, that if any Tamils had courage enough to point these out or challenge their work, the Brahmins would ensure that every obstacle be placed in their life and efforts.

Having presented a profound critique of contemporary Tamil society and in the process blaming the Aryan/Brahmins for its alleged "degradation", Adigal called on those leaders who are "really sincere" in their devotion to help the nation

\[\text{**\textsuperscript{51}}\text{ibid., pp. 165-66.}\]

\[\text{**\textsuperscript{52}}\text{ibid., pp. 166-67.}\]
to cease goading the hapless common man against the British government and instead urged them to take up earnestly the recommendations he had suggested throughout the article and which he again reiterated in his conclusion.\(^{53}\)

Adigal suggested three major ameliorative strategies. His principal remedy for ameliorating the "fallen" condition of the Tamils again, was through the teaching of "Pure Tamil"; Tamil shorn of the "obscurantist and superstitious impact of Sanskrit". Thus, he proposed the setting up of Tamil schools in every village and town to teach "pure" Tamil. Insisting that the curricula used should not contain any "Aryan false and imaginative stories" he proposed instead that they should teach such subjects as ethics, nature, biographies of valiant heroes, histories of civilizations, instructions in agriculture and crafts, methods of empirical research, etc. Perhaps attempting to valorize his own role, his second proposal was to send itinerant lecturers-Tamil intellectuals with an empirical bent--to every village to lecture to the masses on the ideas outlined in the article. These ideas were to include the eradication of caste distinctions and to supplant in its place merely the two categories of vegetarians and non-vegetarians. To urge all people to only worship the "birthless deathless" one true God and to abolish the worship and sacrifice to countless minor deities. His final proposal

\(^{53}\textit{Ibid.}, \text{p. 169.}\)
was to obtain the money needed for the above projects from the wealthy persons and institutions in Tamil Nadu.

Thus, Adigal not only presented a profound critique of contemporary Tamil/Indian society in the article, but ascribed the blame for its "decay", much like his missionary predecessors, to the powerful influences exerted on that society by Aryan Brahmins. The principal remedial measure he suggested, in keeping with what he considered as the problem, was to encourage the teaching of "pure" Tamil--Tamil shorn of Sanskritic influences. His proposal reflected his underlying impulse to reorder Tamil society on the basis of the more "rational and egalitarian" principles enunciated in ancient Tamil and Saiva Siddhanta works. These Adigal felt were much more consonant with the more progressive, rational, egalitarian, enlightenment traditions of the west and unlike the "superstitious and obscurantist", tradition of the Aryan Brahmins.

Although Adigal went on to write much more during the remaining twenty years of his life, this brief work written in 1931 reflected in many ways the intellectual apotheosis of his "Dravidian" message. The essay along with a collection of some of his other works was published in 1931 under the title *Arivurai Kottu* (Essays of Wisdom). Its adoption as part of the Tamil curricula at Madras University in 1935 resulted in a storm of protests by many Tamil Brahmin intellectuals and nationalist figures of the time. These protests and counter-
protests in defence of Adigal's article organized mainly by the Self-Respect Movement helped further consolidate the friendship and collaboration between Adigal and members of that movement.

Of the incident Adigal noted on 28th of July 1935: "Thank God, in yesterday's issue of Viduthalai, the editor in his editorial defended me against the attack of the Brahmins and Brahmin paper Dinamani, Swadeshimitran and Hindu who try their utmost to cancel my Arivuraik Kottu from the Tamil text books for the Intermediate in Arts examination of the Madras University." Adigal also sent a letter the next day to "Mr. J.A.V. Nathan thanking him for defending me in his Viduthalai."

That an elaborate defence of Adigal's article was mounted with the help of the Self-Respecters is evident from Adigal's diary entries during this period. Not only were meetings organized but Self-Respect Movement papers and journals were utilized to present articles in support of Adigal's views. Adigal noted on the 31st of January 1936, "My 'thank you' written in English by me in connection with my Arivuraik Kottu controversy appeared also in the Justice for Jan, 1936." Thus the controversy over Adigal's article not only revealed the underlying ideological affinity between Adigal's vision and that of the Self-Respect movement but also heralded a period

54See MMAD entries for 2nd, 3rd, 11th and 22nd August 1935.
of cooperation and collaboration between them. Thus, it is hardly surprising to observe Adigal's diary entry on the 6th of February 1936: "Mr. Sivajnanam of Self-Respect Movement visited me bringing with him yesterday's Viduthalai in which appeared a strong protest against M. Raghava Iyengar's indictment on Tamil women's chastity in his Tolkappia Araichi." Raghava Iyengar, closely associated with Madurai Tamil Sangam, was clearly not on the same side as Adigal in his interpretation of Tamil history and civilization and Adigal cooperated with the Self-Respecters to challenge Iyengar's views. Preparing to write a rebuttal to Iyengar, he noted, "Read the criticisms that appeared in Viduthalai about the Aryan marriage customs. I was reading books relating to the marriage customs of different people all over the world--Lubback, Westermark, Cambridge Ancient History, Wells Outline of History..." He noted a few months later, "...my article on 'Tolkappiam and marriage' in English appeared in yesterday's number of the Justice." It was this kind of dialogue with the Self-Respecters while maintaining his own allegiance to Saiva Siddhanta that animated the writings and work of Adigal for the remainder of his life. By the 1930's he was clearly seen as the greatest champion of "non-Brahmin" Tamil/Saivite cultural nationalism.

55See MMAD entry for 16th February 1936.

56See MMAD entry for 19th April 1936.
Thus, in 1937 when the newly elected Congress ministry under Rajagopalachari introduced the compulsory study of Hindi, Adigal was invited to preside at a huge anti-Hindi rally organized by the Self-Respect movement. He was again called to preside at anti-Hindi rallies organized in the year 1938 and in 1948. In addition he published in the year 1939, a pamphlet in Tamil and English entitled, Inti Potu Moliva (Can Hindi be the Lingua Franca of India) in which he countered the dominant Congress position urging Hindi to be the national language of India. Adigal argued that English and not Hindi should be the link language of India until Tamil replaces English, basing his argument on the antiquity of Tamil relative to Hindi.  

Similarly in 1939, Adigal was invited to preside at a conference devoted to examining and establishing a consensus on Tamil marriage rites and rituals entitled Tamilar Tirumana Manadu (Tamilian Marriage Conference). Adigal had published a few years earlier his English pamphlet entitled The Tamilian and Aryan Forms of Marriage. Similarly in 1940 Adigal organized and presided at the Anait Intiya Tamilar Mata Manadu (All India Tamil Religion conference) aimed at examining and establishing a consensus on Tamil religious rites and rituals. The latter conference provided the inspiration for his last

57 See reprint, Swami Vedachalam alias Maraimalai Adigal, Can Hindi be the Lingua Franca of India?, Madras: SISSW. 1969.
major work published in 1941, entitled Tamilar Matam (The Tamilian Creed). In both these efforts one can see not only the radical or reformist impact of the Self-Respect Movement but also the increasing impact of English and Christian scholarship on Adigal's Saivite Tamil vision. They reveal Adigal's continuing efforts to fashion a Tamil culture cleansed of Aryan Brahminical impact and one that reflected what he regarded as the more rational and egalitarian principle of ancient Tamil civilization.

That much of the inspiration for Adigal's work continued to come from the tradition of missionary Orientalism is evident from a reading of one of the many such works on India he acquired during this time, entitled Mother India by Katherine Mayo. Many passages in Adigal's work Tamil Nattavarum Melnattavarum (Tamils and the Westerners) strikingly resemble Mayo's writings, especially in its trenchant critique of Brahmins and Brahminical Hinduism. Recalling Adigal's work, Mayo wrote:

> Each Hindu in India pays to the Brahman many times more than he pays to the State. From the day of his birth to the day of his death, a man must be feeding the Earthly God. When a child is born, the Brahman must be paid...Sixteen days afterward,...the Brahman must be paid...A little later the child must be named the Brahman must be paid...After cremation, every month for a year, the dead man's son must hold a feast for Brahmans...**5**

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**5** *ibid.*, p. 115.
Although it is not certain whether it was Mayo's work that had inspired his essay on "Tamils and the Westerners", it is clear that he had not only read the work from cover to cover but underlined many passages in it approvingly. Many passages that Adigal underlined in the work resonated with the particular vision that seems to have also animated Adigal's life's work. Mayo, in a chapter entitled, "The Brahman", much in the fashion of Abbe Dubois, wrote:

Madras, citadel of Brahminic Hinduism. Citadel also of the remnant of the ancient folk, the dark skinned Dravidians. Brahminic Hinduism broke them, cast them down and trampled upon them, commanded them in their multimillions to be pariahs, outcastes, ignorant and poor. Then came the Briton...Gradually the Dravidian raised his eyes and then, most timidly his head. With him also, the multitudes of the low castes of the Brahman's world. And now all these become an Anti-Brahman party...Which, in itself, constituted an epoch in Indian history."

Adigal, agreeing with Mayo's characterisation of the developments in Madras, had boldly underlined the above passage and written beside it "True". Mayo continued, allegedly citing an interview with a person from an anti-Brahmin party who spoke of the "Brahman:"

...So in all Hindu India he(Brahman) ruled the spirit of man, and none dared dispute him, not till England came with Schools for all. Now here in this Province, Madras, we fight the Brahman. But still he is very strong, because the might of thousands of years breaks slowly, and he is shrewd as a host of

60Adigal's copy of the book along with most of his library is available at the Maraimalai Adigal Library in Madras.

61ibid., pp. 113-14.
demons. He owns the Press, he sways the Bench, he holds eighty percent of the public offices and he terrorizes the people... For we are all superstitious and mostly illiterate. The Earthly God has seen to that. Also he hates the British, because they keep him from strangling us. He makes much "patriotic" outcry, demanding that the British go. And we—we know that if they go now, before we have had time to steady ourselves, he will strangle us and again India will be what it used to be, a cruel despotism wielded by fat priests against a mass of slaves. because our imaginations are not yet free from him."

Adigal again had not only approvingly underlined the above passage but written beside it in his elegant handwriting, "Quite True the whole," an action that clearly confirmed the continued appeal of missionary Orientalism for Adigal.

To buttress her arguments in favour of the Anglicist rather than the Orientalist policy regarding education in India, Mayo had also cited passages from Thomas Babbington Macaulay's famous minute on behalf of English education. Citing Macaulay, she had written:

In the name of honour and of humanity the full light of western science must, he felt be given to the Indian world. And he demanded with fervour, to know by what right, when, "...we can patronize sound philosophy and true history, we shall countenance at public expense, medical doctrines which would disgrace an English farrier,—astronomy, which would move laughter in girls at an English boarding school, —history abounding with kings thirty feet high, and reigns thirty thousand years long...What we spend on the Arabic and Sanscrit Colleges is not merely a dead loss to the cause of truth; it is

62ibid., p. 114.
bounty money paid to raise up champions of error." Adigal here had not only boldly underlined the above passage, especially the last two lines approvingly, but had written beside it, "Well Said."

However, despite his continuing engagement with missionary Orientalism, Adigal was much clearer in including his own efforts along side that of the missionaries in tracing the intellectual genealogy of Dravidian nationalism, in one of his own works published during this period:

The knowledge of Tamil and Tamil classics had to lie concealed, or rather unrecognized for centuries, even from the searching eye of the European intellect, until a few learned and very painstaking Christian missionaries such as Dr. Caldwell and Dr. G.U. Pope ventured to turn their serious attention to Tamil classics and devote their whole life time to a deep study and correct representation of their nature and contents. . . I consider my Tamil works to be more important than the work I intend to do in English. For my Tamil brethren are mostly illiterate and even the very few who are literate are unenlightened. . . Therefore, I had to apply myself most strenuously for more than forty years to the hard labour of bringing enlightenment to my country men.  

Thus, by implicating both missionary Orientalism and his own unique role in the project of reclaiming and recovering Dravidian civilization, Adigal was able to represent that project as moving beyond its Orientalist foundations, and thus indigenise it.

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63ibid., p. 139. (Italics mine)

64Maraimalai Adigal, Saiva Siddhanta as a Philosophy of Practical Knowledge. 1940, pp. 49-50.
Conclusion

This study has explored the relationship between missionary Orientalism, caste and the construction of cultural identity and nationalism in colonial Tamil Nadu. It demonstrates that influential non-Brahmin Tamil/Saivite revivalists embraced and incorporated missionary Orientalism's critique of the role of Brahmins and Brahminism in South India as well as their construction and valorization of a separate linguistic, cultural and racial genealogy for non-Brahmin's. More importantly, they embraced and incorporated missionary Orientalism's call to reclaim and recover a once "pure" ancient pre-Brahminical, Dravidian language, civilization, religion and culture.

The study demonstrates that missionary Orientalism in South India helped empower vernacular languages, religions, cultures and communities. In many ways the work inspired by the missionary Orientalists laid the ideological basis for one of the most powerful and far reaching critiques of Hindu social order, cultural practices and cosmology to appear in India in the modern period. Missionary Orientalism also played a powerful role in reconfiguring and rearticulating earlier tensions and contradictions within South Indian society in quite transformative ways. The ideas of figures such as Caldwell acquired their power and appeal not so much through
radical transformations of the meanings of earlier categories but by strategic shifts in the meanings of key categories that appealed to emerging potentially powerful groups. Figures like Caldwell and Pope were clearly cognizant of the internal dynamics and contradictions within South Indian society and culture and were sensitive to their emerging forces. Their work had the potential to disrupt and reorder previous socio-cultural hierarchies and hegemonies in the South Indian "Hindu" order. This is particularly borne out in the study by Dravidian nationalism's moderate success at disrupting the close alliance and cultural nexus between Brahmins and dominant non-Brahmin groups in Southern India. It needs to be underlined, however, that it was not missionary Orientalism which ultimately effected this transformation through its "hegemonic" Orientalism, but rather, it was the dominant non-Brahmins who, utilizing this missionary Orientalism for their own purposes and mandates ultimately effected this transformation.

The relationship between missionary Orientalism and indigenous intellectual and cultural brokers that the present study illuminates questions the current perspectives regarding European Orientalism that Edward Said's famous work has helped inaugurate. (e.g. Edward Said 1978; Gauri Viswanathan, 1989; Partha Chatterjee 1986; Nicholas Dirks, 1987) The study reveals that there was often a symbiotic relationship between European Orientalists and local intellectuals rather than one
where local intellectuals and cultural brokers had little agency as suggested by the "Saidian school." The fact that many of the indigenous "cultural brokers" examined here were corresponding with or attempting to correspond-- often as fellow scholars-- with Orientalists such as G.U. Pope, Julian Vinson, Max Muller and F.C.S. Schiller underlines the symbiotic nature of this relationship. The relationship between Pope and Nallaswami Pillai particularly illustrates this symbiosis.

Thus, far from being passive victims of an Orientalist discourse, indigenous scholars and revivalists played a decisive role in the construction, maintenance and propagation of Orientalist knowledge. The study also proposes that just as missionary Orientalism was dependent for its success on the participation and support of dominant non-Brahmin groups in South India, a similar dependence and "dialectic" existed between the dominant school of Orientalism and elite Hindu castes and classes in India. Seen from such a perspective, one can indeed view the Saidian thesis as serving as a mask for an altogether different and long forgotten "local" intellectual conquest, explaining perhaps why Said's thesis continues to be so attractive to many elite scholars in Asia and the West.

The Dravidian ideology that missionary Orientalism inspired proved attractive to the emerging higher non-Brahmin caste Tamil/Saivite revivalists in their struggle against Brahmin ascendancy in the socio-political as well as religio-
cultural realm. In the religio-cultural realm the struggle was against the ascendancy of neo-Vedanta, Vaishnavism, and Sanskritic culture that was associated predominantly with Brahmins and Brahminical culture in South India. The study particularly seeks to underline that these struggles in the religio-cultural realm had roots in socio-political struggles and competition. It also seeks to highlight the important though much neglected linkages between caste and construction of cultural identity in colonial India.

That Dravidian nationalism was preceded and accompanied by a Saivite/Tamil revival that began in Jaffna and spread to Tamil Nadu is also clear from this study. Saivism with its long history in the region, its close association with the Saivite Bhakti tradition as well as its relationship, at least from the medieval period with the powerful non-Brahmin landed castes in the region, provided an ideal vehicle for the higher non-Brahmin castes to mobilize the "Tamils" and the Tamil "nation" against Brahmin ascendancy in the socio-political and cultural realm as well as for the larger imperatives and demands of "modernity." In line with Benedict Anderson's view of nationalism as drawing from and superseding earlier pre-modern identities and sense of community, the study demonstrates that Tamil Nationalism drew from earlier religious, caste and linguistic identities. Just as in the case of Indian nationalism, which drew from a transformed Brahminical vision of India, Dravidian nationalism derived its
peculiar resonance from its inclusion of earlier Saivite, Tamil, non-Brahmin identities and histories.

The ambiguous and ambivalent relationship between the traditional institutions of Saivites, particularly the Saiva Siddhanta mutts and new cultural brokers like Somasundara Nayakar and Maraimalai Adigal is interesting and complex. The ambivalent relationship seems to have arisen from the fact that despite the important role played by higher non-Brahmin castes in these institutions their very claim to leadership in these institutions was articulated within a Brahminical normative framework. Those Tamil/Saivites who embraced the Dravidian ideology posed a threat to the normative framework within which these Saivite heads claimed their pre-eminence. Adigal's attempt to court the patronage of the Saiva Siddhanta mutts while at the same time attacking them for their "hoarded" wealth and apathy towards the Dravidian nationalist cause, underlines this essential tension between the new cultural brokers and the traditional institutions of the Saivites. The fact that the Vellalar-led Saiva Siddhanta mutts conferred titles as "Navalar" (Great Orator) on Jaffna revivalists such as Arumuga Navalar but did not confer similar honors on Dravidian ideologues supports such a contention. Navalar did not fundamentally challenge the Brahminical normative framework within which Vellalars as "Sat Sudras" (Clean Sudras) maintained their pre-eminence in Tamil society. In fact he supported the "Sat-Sudra" status of
Vellalars quite vehemently.

The social background of Maraimalai Adigal was particularly suited to the kind of Tamil nationalism that he constructed and propagated. Although his father's Vellalar genealogy provided the necessary legitimacy to be a champion of non-Brahmins, his mother's lower caste background provided the necessary stimulus to fashion a more inclusive non-Brahmin Tamil nationalist ideology.

Adigal's vision for Tamils was characterized by its greater openness to the West and Western intellectual and cultural traditions and a trenchant critique of contemporary Tamil social and cultural practices. Consistent with the missionary genealogy of his ideology, it was the achievements of the West that provided the main inspiration and basis for his criticism of both Brahminism and contemporary Tamil society and culture. Adigal's essay Tamilnattavarum Melnattavarum (Tamils and the Westerners) particularly illustrates the difference between his more open attitude towards the West and that of Indian nationalists, who at best expressed a grudging admiration. Perhaps the most important legacy of missionary Orientalism for Adigal and the Dravidian ideologues who followed him is this greater openness toward Western intellectual and cultural traditions. Adigal's receptivity to Western intellectual traditions right up to the end of his life is striking, particularly when compared with Gandhi's "Southern commander," C. Rajagopalachari, who had
once noted that additional learning or reading after a certain age was merely self-indulgence.¹

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