CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.0   BACKGROUND

The Rāma-kātha which has spread from its motherland India, has a lasting

effect on the literature and nearly all other aspects of human life in the host

countries as well; in the process it has also become naturalised in each of the

countries.[1] It is said that, in Asia the influence of this story may be found in about

fourteen countries.[2] The opinion of C. Hooykaas that, no other literature has

affected all aspects of the lives of the people as the Rāma-kātha is truly

noteworthy.[3]

Ever since the *Vēdic* times[4] references to the Rāma-kātha have been found

in the **Jātaka Tales**, Sanskrit literature and later in Tamil works. Vālmīki is the

first author to give this story a literary form.   In Tamil, Sangam literature and

literary commentaries contain references to certain incidents of this story.

Devotional literature which followed these works also use events from this

narrative. A considerable amount of such references are found in the **Nālāyirat**

Tivyap Pirapantam which is an anthology of hymns sung by the Tamil Vaishnava

saints known as *ālvārs*.

The Rāma-kātha which began as the story of a human hero in Vālmīki's

Rāmāyaṇa later came to be exalted as the story of God.[5] Rama who was born as a

man and passed through life with the regal dignity of a king was later transformed

into an incarnation of Tirumāl. This gradual transformation seems to have already matured by the time of the *āḻvārs*. As a result, it is noticeable that the tradition of regarding Rama as an incarnation or *avatāra* of Vishnu had taken deep root among the *āḻvārs*. This is evident in their hymns, the **Nālāyirat Tivyap Pirapantam.**

1.1   OBJECTIVES

Anyone who has undertaken a serious study of these Vaishnava hymns would notice the obvious impact of the epic events on them. While some research on this aspect of the hymns has been undertaken, they are not complete or detailed ones. Hence this thesis attempts to make a complete and in-depth study of the **Rāmāyaṇa** incidents used by the *āḻvārs*. It takes into account all such references and analyses the extent to which each of the *āḻvārs* has utilised them. The evidence thus obtained are then compared with their incidents in the work of Vālmīki and Kampar. Finally the incidents that are mentioned only by the *āḻvārs* are identified. Besides, the ethical and moral aspects of these **Rāmāyaṇa** events that the *āḻvārs* have sung are also examined.

This study, undertaken with the above mentioned aims, examines specifically, the following hypotheses.

(i)   The impact of the **Rāmāyaṇa** incidents on the hymns of the Vaishnava saints is obvious.

(ii)   They have been influenced by sources other than the **Rāmāyaṇa** of Vālmīki.

(iii)   They in turn have made a great impact on Kampar so that he has utilised the concepts of the *āḻvārs* to a large extent.

(iv)   All the important events of the **Rāmāyaṇa** narrative have been sung by the *āḻvārs*.

(v)   The Rāma-kātha which had a social outlook in Vālmīki's work acquired a religious slant because of the devotion of the *āḻvārs*.

The aim of this study is to analyse and examine the above five hypotheses and establish how far these are valid.

1.2   LITERATURE REVIEW

This study is a comparative one based on the **Nālāyirat Tivyap Pirapantam**, Valmiki's **Rāmāyaṇam** and **Kamparāmāyaṇam**. As such it is important to identify researches already conducted in relation to these works.

There are many research works and articles on the hymns of the *āḻvārs*. Researchers are also aware that there is an even greater volume of researched material on the **Rāmāyaṇa**. But studies comparing the Vaishnava Tamil hymns and **Rāmāyaṇa** incidents are certainly rare.

Of the research done so far on these hymns and the **Rāmāyaṇa**, only four works are available in which these texts are compared.

The research paper entitled "Mutalalvarkalum Kamparum" by Veera Visvanathan[6] deals with some **Rāmāyaṇa** incidents sung by the early *āḻvārs* namely Poykaiyāḻvār, Pūtattaḻvār and Pēyāḻvār and the manner in which Kampar has utilised them. But in reality only those relating to Iraṇiyan are compared. But other incidents sung by these *āḻvārs* like the killing of Mārīca, aiming through

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seven *marā* trees and the slaying or Ravana are mentioned only in general without any comparison to Kampar's treatment of these events.

A.K.Athitthar in his **Kampar Kavi Valam**[7] has a chapter "Kampanum ālvārkalum" (Kampan and the *Āḻvārs*) in which he deals with Kampar's appreciation of the hymns sung by the *āḻvārs*. The author examines the epic poet's treatment of incidents like Rāma and Sītā falling in love, Sage Vasishta expressing Rāma's excellence and suitability, Rāma going to the forest, crossing the Ganges and his friendship with Guha, the meeting of Rāma and Bharata in the forest, the abduction of Sītā by Rāvana, the killing of Kavantan, the encounter of the *vānara* soldiers with Campāti, Sītā in the *asōka-vana*, the meeting of Sītā and Hanuman and the feeling of wonder experienced by Hanuman, Sugrīva, Vāli, Kumbakarna, Vibhishana and others at seeing Rāma.

A chapter with the same title is also found in N. Subbureddiyar's **Cila Nōkkil Nalayiram**.[8] In it the author has mentioned certain incidents showing the influence the *āḻvārs* had on Kampar. He explains that the *āḻvārs* identified Rāma as an incarnation of Tirumāl and praised him with hymns that are both philosophical and mystical. The manner in which the philosophical concepts of these hymns created an impression on the thoughts and epic of Kampar is discussed extensively.

In his book **Ulakap Perunkaviñar Kampar**, Ira. Va. Kamalakkannan has a chapter entitled "Āḻvār Paṭalkalum Irāmāyanak Kataiyum".[9] In it he discusses the **Rāmāyana** incidents from the *āḻvārs*' hymns that Kampar has utilised as they are

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or with slight variations. Here the author only examines certain such incidents and to what extent the epic writer has utilised them. But their treatment is quite detailed. He stresses that the hymns of the *āḻvārs* had been the main cause for implanting in Kampar the belief that Rāma is an incarnation or *avatāra-purusha*.

All the four above mentioned works explain the effect of only certain **Rāmāyaṇa** incidents on Kampar. Many other incidents have not been mentioned. Besides, these studies only explain the impact of the *āḻvār's* songs on Kampar. There is no comparison with Vālmīki's epic.

Besides these, the **Tivya Pirapanta Oḷineṟi** by T. Racamanickam lists the hymns which mention the ten forms (incarnations) of Tirumāl.[10] This complete list contains the incidents that took place during Tirumal's incarnation as Rāma, the *āḻvārs* who have sung each of the incidents, and the hymns. But it does not present any explanation or information regarding the hymns. Yet these are relevant material and have been of great help in conducting a satisfying study.

1.3   SCOPE

Since the aim of this research is to establish the influence of the **Rāmāyaṇa** as depicted in the Vaishnava hymns, only the **Rāmāyaṇa** events found in the **Nālāyirat Tivya Pirapantam** is used as the primary text for the study. The hymns of the individual *āḻvārs* are examined and thereby, **Rāmāyana** events are identified. Then they are classified, their treatment by the *āḻvārs* is discussed and their similarities on differences are estimated. The evidence thus obtained are then compared with their incidence in the works of Vālmīki and Kampar.

1.4 SOURCES

Before beginning a research work, it is important that the sources for the study are identified. For a comparative study of this nature some basic texts are important. The **Rāmāyaṇa** of Vālmīki is a Sanskrit text. Since the researcher does not know the language, English translations have to be used. The translation by Hari Prasad Shastri in three volumes, RV(HPS)[11] has been found to be most suitable and therefore used as one of the primary sources.

For the hymns of the *āḻvārs*, the **Nālāyirat Tivyap Pirapantam**[12] edited by K. Venkatacamy Reddiyar is used as the primary source. But this edition is without a commentary or explanations which are necessary for the sake of speed and completeness. Hence the edition with Annangarachariyar's Tivyartta Tipikaiyurai[13] is also used as a primary text. The commentary in this edition is complete and exhaustive and therefore suitable for a detailed study.

For a comparative study with Kampar, his **Rāmāyaṇa** also becomes essential. The edition published by the Annamalai University named **Kaviccakkaravartti Kampar Iyarriya Irāmāyaṇam** (RK)[14] published in six volumes (*Pāla Kāṇdam, Ayōttiyā Kāṇdam, Araṇiya Kāṇdam, Kiṭkintā Kāṇdam, Cuntara Kāṇdam* and *Yutta Kāṇdam*) is used as another primary text.

It is said that Kampar only wrote the first six cantoes and that he did not write the *Uttara Kāṇdam* which is the seventh. Since this study will be incomplete without the last canto, the *Uttara Kāṇdam* by Oṭṭak Kūttar, with S. Venkataramac Chettiyar's commentary also becomes one of the primary sources. It is entitled

Oṭṭakkūttar Iyaṟṟiya Uttara Kāṇḍam. (<u>UKO</u>).[15] Other sources for the study are listed in the bibliography.

1.5   METHODOLOGY

Methodology is the orderly procedure used to collect particulars or facts in a detailed and exact manner, so as to use them for further examination. Generally two research methods are used. One is library research which is based on texts already published and the other is field work. Since this study uses published works and their literary interpretation, library research is the chief, basic method used.

The necessary details have been collected using the documentation method. Through this the texts concerned and their commentaries have been examined so that besides the detailed facts and information clear interpretations are obtained. This method has been used for Chapters Two, Three and Four.

The information thus collected have been analysed using the synthesis method. Using this the researcher is able to classify the details gathered. Then the explanations are examined on the basis of similarities or differences. This helps to further elaborate on the findings.

In Chapter Four, this synthesis method has been utilised.

The comparative method has been very useful for Chapter Five, because it deals with the similarities and differences found in the **Rāmāyaṇa** incidents

referred to in the hymns of the *ālvārs*. The Rāma-kātha thus constructed is compared to the **Rāmāyaṇa** of Vālmīki to study the similarities in the events. Then, its influence on Kampar is also studied and compared.

Endnotes

1. Alexander Zieseniss. 1963. <u>The Rama Saga In Malaysia, Its Origin and Development.</u> With a Foreward by C. Hooykaas. Singapore: Malaysian Sociological Research Institute Ltd. See Foreward.

2. Raghavan, V. 1975. <u>The Ramayana In Greater India.</u> Surat: South Gujarat University.

3. Alexander Zieseniss. 1963. <u>The Rama Saga In Malaysia,</u> see, Foreward.

4. The *Valviyar Kalanciyam* states that the earliest reference to the **Ramayana** story is found in the Rg Veda. But Ananda Guruge explains that there are no references to Rama in Vedic literature. They are found only in the works which belong to a later period. <u>Valviyar Kalanciyam.</u> 1991. Vol. 4, p. 117; Ananda Guruge. 1960. <u>The Society of The Ramayana.</u> Ceylon: Saman Press, Maharagama, pp. 44-45.

5. Ananda Guruge. 1960. <u>The Society of The Ramayana,</u> p. 41.

6. Vishvanathan, V. 1979. <u>11th Karutttaranku Aivukkovai.</u> Vol. 1. Hydrabad: University of Usmania. Intiyap Palkalaikkalakat Tamilaciriyar Manra Veliyitu, pp. 620-623.

7. Athitthar, A.K. 1982. <u>Kampar Kavi Valam.</u> Madras: Vanati Patippakam, pp. 146-167.

8. Subbureddiyar, N. 1983. <u>Cila Nokkil Nalayiram.</u> Madras: Pari Nilayam, pp. 317-334.

9. Kamalakkannan, Ira. Va. 1984. <u>Ulakap Perunkaviñar Kampar.</u> Citambaram: Manivasakar Patippakam, pp. 181-187.

10. Racamanickam, T. 1988. <u>Tivya Pirapanta Oli Neri.</u> Madras: The South India Saiva Siddhanta Works Publishing Society, Tirunelveli. Ltd., pp. 144-175.

11. Valmiki. <u>The Ramayana of Valmiki.</u> Translated into English by Hari Prasad Shastri. London: Shanti Sadan. 3 vols.
Vol. I. 1962. <u>Bala Kanda</u> and <u>Ayodhya Kanda.</u> First Edition; Vol. II. 1969. <u>Aranya Kanda, Kishkindha Kanda</u> and <u>Cuntara Kanda.</u> Second Edition; Vol. III. 1959. <u>Yutta Kanda</u> and <u>Uttara Kanda.</u> First Edition.

12. <u>Nalayirat Tivyap Pirapantam.</u> 1973. K. Venkadasamy Reddiyar. Madras: Tiruvenkatam Tirumanram. First edition.

13. <u>Iyarpa Ayiram: Four Tiruvantatis, Tiruviruttam, Tiruvaciriyam, Periya Tiruvantati, Tiruvelukkurrirukkai, Ciriya Tirumatal, Periya Tirumatal, Ramanuja Nurrantati.</u> 1946. Kaaraikkudi: Chettinaadu Press; Annangarachariyarin Tivyartta Tipikai Urai. Chennai: Published by M.R.Govindasamy Naidu. (a) Kulacekaralvar. 1930. <u>Perumal Tirumoli;</u> (b) Tirumalicaiyalvar. 1930. <u>Tiruccantaviruttam;</u> (c) Tontaratippotiyalvar. 1930. <u>Tirumalai</u> and <u>Tiruppalliyelucci;</u> (d) Tiruppanalvar. 1930. <u>Amalanatipiran;</u> (e) Periyalvar. 1928. <u>Tiruppallantum Periyalvar Tirumoliyum;</u> (f) Tirumankai Mannan. 1956. <u>Tirukkuruntantakamum Tirunetuntantakamum;</u> Annangarachariyarin Tivyartta Tipikaiyurai, Kanchipuram. a) Tirumankaiyalvar. 1950. <u>Periya Tirumoli;</u> (b) Nacciyar. 1956. <u>Nacciyar Tirumoli.</u> Annangarachariyarin Tivyartta Tipikaiyurai. Kumbakonam. (a) Antal. 1948. <u>Antal Arulic Ceyta Tiruppavai;</u> (b) Nammalvar. 1953. <u>Tiruvaymoli Ayiram;</u> Nammalvar. <u>Tiruviruttam.</u> Annangarachariyarin Tivyartta Tipikai Urai (details are not available).

14. Kamban. <u>Kaviccakkaravartti Kampan Iyarriya Iramayanam.</u> Commentary by R.P. Cetuppillai and others. Annamalai Nagar: Annamalai University. Vol. 1 and 2. Vol. I. *Pala Kandam.* Part I (1957) and II (1958); Vol. II. *Ayottiya Kandam.* Part I and II (1959); Kamban. <u>Kaviccakkaravartti Kampan Iyarriya Iramayanam.</u> Commentary by K. Subramaniya Pillai and others. Annamalai Nagar: Annamalai University. Vols. 3-6. Vol. III. *Araniya Kandam.* Part I (1963) and II (1964); Vol. IV. *Kitkinta Kandam.* Part I (1964)

and II (1965); Vol. V. *Cuntara Kāṇdam*. Part I and II (1956); Vol. VI. *Yutta Kāṇdam*. Part I (1968), II (1969), III (1969), IV (1970) and V (1970).

15.   Oṭṭakkūttar.   Irāmāyaṇam, Oṭṭakkūttar Iyaṟṟiya Uttara Kāṇdam.   Commentary by S. Vengadaramac Chettiyar. 1977. Annamalai Nagar: Annamalai University.