

## CHAPTER 2

### THE INFLUENCE OF RĀMĀYAṆA ON THE VAISHNAVA HYMNS

#### 2.0 INTRODUCTION

Religion refines mankind's emotions and thoughts. It is the path to the attainment of God, the Supreme Being Who permeates the whole universe. Among the excavations that depict the antiquity of Indian civilization, the Indus Valley Civilization seems to be the most important. The belief in God depicted by the objects found at the excavation sites may be said to be far-reaching. Researchers are of the opinion that this ancient belief is the core that evolved into the Hinduism of today. According to Sir John Marshall who was directly involved in the excavations,

Among the many revelations that Mahenjo-daro and Harappa have had in store for us, none perhaps is more remarkable than this discovery that Saivism has a history going back to the Chalcolithic age or perhaps even further still, and that it takes its place as the most ancient living faith in the world.<sup>1</sup>

Based on this observation, it may be concluded that so far, Hinduism is the religion with the longest history.

The **Encyclopaedia Britannica** states that "Hinduism is not a religion but a whole way of life, whose precepts cover a vast range of human activity outside the scope of most modern religions."<sup>2</sup>

However, L.S.S.O'Malley in his book **Hinduism** explains the greatness and dignity of Hinduism when he says,

It is a composite religion made up of many conflicting elements; at the same time it is a social system, of which the basis is caste. It is the product of many centuries of growth and compromise, during which such widely divergent beliefs as pantheism, theism, polytheism, and animism have received recognition. It has neither a common creed nor uniformity of worship. It knows little of dogma; it acknowledges no stereotyped and unchanging canons. It allows of the greatest possible freedom of thought as apart from practice, as is frankly admitted by Hindu scholars.<sup>3</sup>

Hinduism has accepted individual freedom as being important. It accommodates and adapts new discoveries with ancient teachings and also conflicting ways of worship. As a result there are said to have been 72 differing religious beliefs and practices within Hinduism. But in the 18<sup>th</sup> century Atishankara, attempted to unify them by grouping them into six, on the basis of the Godhead they worshipped. They are *Śaivism* (Shaivism), *Vaiṇavam* (Vaishnavism) *Gaṇapateya* (Gāṇapatyam), *Kaumāram* and *Sauram*.<sup>4</sup> It is common knowledge that of these Saivism and Vaishnavism are still popular.

Vaishnavism, considered to be an aspect of Vēdic tradition considers Vishnu or Tīrumāl as Godhead. During the time the **Tolkāppiyam** was composed, he was worshipped as the god of the meadows and grasslands referred to as *mullai* or *kāṭu* in ancient Tamil literature. This is clear from the **Tolkāppiyam** line, "The *Kāṭu* region where Māl dwells".<sup>5</sup> From this it is evident that Māl became a deity worshipped by the Tamils at least since the time they knew how to divide land into five regions or *tiṇai* with different characteristics. The worship of Murukaṇ, the deity of the mountain region (*kuriñci*) gradually spread to other regions as well.

Similarly, the worship of Tirumāl also spread to other regions as evidenced by ancient Tamil works like the **Cilappatikāram**, **Maṇimēkalai** and **Maturaikkāñci**. Of special interest here is the information found in the **Maṇimēkalai**, according to which followers of Vaishnavism dwelt in Vanci, the capital of the Cheras. This shows that Vaishnava practices already existed among the Tamils even before the *Ālvārs*.<sup>6</sup> Besides, there could also have been religious texts pertaining to this sect. It is also to be noticed that the **Kalittokai** and the **Paripāṭal** contain distinct references to Tirumāl.<sup>7</sup> Information regarding his *avatāra* or incarnations are also found in the classical texts.<sup>8</sup>

Vaishnavism was thus cherished as one of the religious beliefs of the Tamils during the Sangam Period (300B.C.-300A.D.). But during the Post-Sangam period (300-600A.D.), due to the influence of Jainism and Buddhism, it lost its popularity and support among the people and losing power came to occupy a lowly position, just like other Hindu religious beliefs. It was only during the Pallava Period (600-900A.D.)<sup>9</sup> that Shaivism, Vaishnavism and other Hindu sects regained their position as the religious faiths of the Tamils. This was due to the great efforts of the great Shaiva and Vaishnava *gurus* or teachers called ‘*Nāyanmārs*’ and ‘*Ālvārs*’ respectively. This period is said to be the “Period of the Bhakti Movement” and is considered to be the Period of Revival in the development of South Indian Hindu Revival. Though Jainism and Buddhism had gained great popularity among the Tamils, the atheistic tendency and the stress on renouncement of these religions made it difficult for them to have a permanent hold on the Tamils with their traditional involvement with love, heroism, generosity and the like. Hence it would not be wrong to say that though there was the initial attraction, with the

passing of time and the emotional songs of devotion sung by *Nāyanmārs* and *Ālvārs*, the Tamils achieved clarity and returned to their ancient traditional beliefs.

During this period the 12 *alvars* sang in praise of 108 Vaishnava Temples or *sthalā/tala*. The collection of their gracious songs of devotion are known as **Nālāyirat Tivyap Pirapantam**. It is also referred to as **Ālvār Aruḷic Ceyal** (The Gracious Deed of the *Ālvārs*).<sup>10</sup>

## 2.1 ĀLVĀRS AND ĀCĀRIYARS

The great men who made Vaishnavism to thrive with renewed life and vigour may be classified into two groups known as *ālvārs* and *ācāriyars*. The *ālvārs* are said to live in union with Perumāl (Māl) out of their great love for him. While the *ācāriyars* search for and explain God with knowledge. While love is foremost in an *ālvār*, knowledge is foremost in an *ācāriya*.<sup>11</sup> In general, *ālvārs* are poets with inner light and realise or experience God (*Bhagavān*) through the path of *bhakti*. *Ācāriyars* are *jnānis* or wise men who have researched the texts (*sāstras*) who conduct discussions or debates and form doctrines. Thus *ālvārs* are special incarnations (*avatāra puruṣa*), the embodiment of knowledge of God and leaders of Vaishnavism. The *ācāriyars* are great men, who coming after the *ālvārs* followed them in word and deed, thereby saving the country. The foremost among them is Nātamūṇi.<sup>12</sup>

Nātamūṇi was a native of Vīranārāyaṇapuram. Once, while serving in the Tirumāl temple there, some devotees from Tirukkurukūr, the birthplace of Nammālvār who is one of the 12 *ālvārs*, sang a *Tiruppatikam* (a poem of 10 verses



in praise of the deity.). Hearing that the *Tiruppatikam* is from the text **Tiruvāymoli** he desired to obtain a copy of that text. At once he went to Tirukkurukūr and collected not only that particular text, but also the other texts (*pirapantam*) composed by Nammālvār as well as those of all the other ālvārs. These, he compiled as **Nālāyirat Tivyap Pirappantam** and also composed the music for the verses to be sung. Thus his service to Vaishnavism and Tamil are praiseworthy. He is said to have lived in the last years of the 9<sup>th</sup> century and the early years of the 10<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>13</sup>

The *ācāriyars*, from the time of Nātamūṇi to that of Maṇavālamūṇikaḷ,<sup>14</sup> have sung some verses in praise of the **Nālāyirat Tivyap Pirapantam**. Uyyakkoṇṭār and Maṇakkāl Nampi are important among the disciples of Nātamūṇi. But it is Ramanuja who is the main cause of the development of present day Vaishnavism, for the distinction of spreading the philosophy of Visishta Advaita goes to him. Through him, Vaishnavism spread in all countries.<sup>15</sup>

Vaishnavism, the ancient and popular religion of Tamil Nadu occupies an important position even today. The service of the ālvārs and the *ācāriyars* towards this, is immeasurable.

## 2.2 NĀLĀYIRAT TIVYAP PIRAPANTAM

The **Nālāyirat Tivyap Pirapantam** is the anthology of hymns that reflects the devotion of the ālvārs. These hymns are referred to as *pācuram*; this term is explained as “holy songs” (*tiruppāṭal*). It is said that these verses were composed

by the *ālvārs* who were immersed (*āltal*) in the divine qualities of the Lord and are about the Divine One, they are called *Tivyap Pirapantam*; the number of verses (4000) earned it the name *Nālāyira Pirapantam*.<sup>16</sup> These verses are generally accepted as the essence of the **Vēdas** and even the **Vēdas** themselves. These songs of the *ālvārs* contain much information. They depict many customs and traditions of the Tamils between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D.<sup>17</sup> Besides devotion, many cultural aspects of the Tamils are revealed by these hymns.

This **Nālāyirat Tivyap Pirapantam** is also known as “**Ālvārkaḷ Aruḷic Ceyal**”, “**Tivyap Prapantam**” and “**Shri Kōcam**”.<sup>18</sup> It is said that the sages of the Vēdic period laid the foundation with their thoughts while the *ālvārs* helped by giving the thoughts an artistic form.<sup>19</sup> It is also said to be the sacred law of complete surrender to God (*caranāgati tarumam*), taught by the **Bhagavad Gītā** in the upanishadic tradition.<sup>20</sup>

The precious concepts found in the **Nālāyirat Tivyap Pirapantam** have been examined and explained by Vaishnava sages and wise men like Paṭṭar. Others like Tirukkurukaippirāṇ Pillāṇ, Nañciyar and Nampillai who lived during the Nayak period (1400A.D.-1800A.D.) have written commentaries like **Ārāyirampadi** for these texts. With the intention of explaining the finer points and concepts he had discovered, great scholars like Vatakkuttiruvītippillai and Periyavāccāṇ Pillai hailed as the Viyākkīyāṇa Cakkaravarti (i.e. Emperor of Commentary) have written valuable prose commentaries in the *maṇipravāla* style<sup>21</sup> (in which Tamil and Sanskrit words are mixed).

The number of hymns composed by the 12 *ālvārs* is 3776. The popular idea is that this anthology is named **Nālāyirat** (4000) **Tivyap Pirapantam** because, with the 108 verses of **Rāmānuja Nūrrantāti** the total comes to apporoximately 4000<sup>22</sup> (See Appendix: Table 1).

There are two different opinions regarding the number of hymns in the **Tivyap Pirapantam**.

- (i) The number of hymns in the text which contains 23 *pirapantams* or texts:-

<b>Mutalāyiram</b>	947
<b>Periya Tirumoli</b>	1134
<b>Tiruyvāymoli</b>	1102
<b>Iyarpā</b>	593
	—
	3776
	=====

That means, when the two *Tirumataḷ* are removed the number is

	3776
<i>Tirumataḷ</i>	- 2
	—
	3774
	=====

This is short of:

	4000
	- 3774
	—
	226
	—

to make 4000. In the **Pirapanta Cāram** composed by Vētānta Tēcikar, is found the practice of counting the 2 *Tirumaṭals* as 118 verses.<sup>23</sup>

Elsewhere he has classified Tirumaṅkai Ālvār's verses as:

Periya Tirumoli	1084
Tirukkuruntāṇṭakam	20
Tiruneṭuntāṇṭakam	30
Tiruvelukkūrrirukkai	1
Cirīya Tirumaṭal	40
Periya Tirumaṭal	78
	—
	1253
	—

Thus the 2 *Tirumaṭals* contain 118 verses. Most editors accept this number; but it is considered more accurate to denote 38 verses for **Cirīya Tirumaṭal** and 80 for **Periya Tirumaṭal**. With these 118 verses the addition of the 108 verses of **Rāmānuja's Nūrrantati**

	118 +
	108
	—
makes	266
	—

With these the total number of verses in the **Nālāyirat Tivyap Pirapantam** becomes exactly 4000 (See Appendix: Table 2).<sup>24</sup>

- (ii) According to another tradition, Appillaiyācīriyar takes each couplet (i.e. 2 lines) as one verse. Thus **Cirīya Tirumaṭal** is considered to have 77½

verses and **Periya Tirumataḷ**, 148½. Then the total is 226 verses so that the number 4000 reached even without adding **Rāmānuja Nūṛrantāti**. (See Appendix: Table 3).<sup>25</sup>

But according to the rules of prosody (*yāppilakkaṇam*) each verse is a *Kalivenṇpā* which should not be divided into couplets. Thus it may be concluded that the number of verses in the **Tivyap Pirapantam** is 3776 and with the inclusion of **Rāmānuja Nūṛrantāti** the total is 3884 (See Appendix: Table 1). It seems reasonable to accept the fact that 4000 is used to denote the nearest thousand, i.e. a few verses more or less than 4000.<sup>26</sup>

### 2.3 ĀLVĀRS – A DEFINITION

The term *ālvār* (plural = *ālvārkaḷ*) is explained variously. An *ālvār* is one who has immersed and lost himself in the Divine Ocean”;<sup>27</sup> “one who remains embedded in the flood of God’s grace”;<sup>28</sup> “one who is immersed in the depths of the immense joy of God’s love”;<sup>29</sup> “one who has gone deep into the knowledge of God; one who is immersed in the contemplation of Him”;<sup>30</sup> “one who sets eyes on nothing else but are immersed in His divine qualities (*Bhagavad Guṇa*)”.<sup>31</sup> These explain their experiences of their union with God.

The term, derived from the root *āl* (to sink, fall, immerse etc.) means “one who is immersed.” But the definitions mention different things that they were immersed in – God’s auspicious qualities (*Kalyāṇa guṇas*), His beauty of form or the sorrow of mankind.<sup>32</sup>

Another explanation is as follows:

The *ālvārs* are considered to be different parts or limbs of Tirumāl. According to Vaishnava philosophy, Tirumāl is the Lord, Protector and the Origin of everything. The body and all other faculties of the soul belong to Him. But because of the feelings of “I” and “mine”, man forgets that he is a slave of Tirumāl. Thus he loses the great pleasure of serving Him. In order to save these souls (*jīvas*) who suffer by following the wrong path because they have forgotten themselves, the Lord and the joy that is rightfully theirs. Tirumāl Himself took many births. Even with these He could not save all the souls. So, out of His great compassion, He decided to save men through men. As a result He caused His various parts like the conch and the wheel to be born on earth. These human forms are the *ālvārs*.<sup>33</sup>

The opinion of Pūtūr K. Venkatacamī Rettīyar may be noted here. “They are called *ālvārs*, also because they have entered the ocean and forest which are the *Vēdas*, immersed themselves, researched and brought out the (Vēdic) truths in (Tamil) verse.” “People who learn what they should, with their own efforts and understand them properly succeed in reducing their ignorance; but only those whose ignorance is removed by God’s grace, even without learning, understand the deep, inner meanings. *Ālvārs* are those who are able to understand the Deep, Inner meaning which is God through His grace.”<sup>34</sup>

“In Our Lord, 1) knowledge (*ñānam*), 2) ability (*śakti*), 3) strength (*palam*), 4) wealth (*aishvaryam*), 5) manliness (*vīryam*) and 6) brightness (*tējas*) are the six qualities of excellence. With these other qualities like

mastership/proprietary right (*svāmitvam*), love (*vātsalyam*), friendship (*sausīlyam*), simplicity (*saṁlapyam*), compassion (*karuṇai*), patience (*kṣamā*), beauty, youthfulness, and the like are also combined. The *ālvārs* are those who are immersed in the abundance of these qualities”. This may be said to be an appropriate definition.<sup>35</sup>

A slightly different explanation is offered by M. Ragava Iyengar. According to him, this term was used in ancient times to denote deities, devotees and eminent people of both genders; the old meaning for this word must have been master (*svāmi*) or a great person. It was used in the sense of “those who ruled over others as masters” (*ālvār*). Later the difference between *ḷ* and *l̇* might have been confused. Considering that a woman devotee of Tirumāl is known as *Āṇṭāl̇* and that some leading teachers in the Vaishnava faith are referred to as “*Ālvāntār*” and *Āṇṭān*, there is cause to suspect that the root of the word *ālvār* is actually *āl̇*. He also explains in his book *Ālvārkal Kālanilai*, some sections from stone inscriptions to stress this point.<sup>36</sup>

Generally, *ālvār* is the name used for those immersed in the abundance of devotion. It is a word of pure Tamil. In particular it is used to denote the great men who have reached a state of rapture in their devotion to Vishnu.

Just like one who recites the **Vēdas** is a *vētiyaṇ*, one who practices *yōga* is a *yōgi*, one who has reached *jñāna* or spiritual knowledge is a *jñāni*, one who is immersed or *ālvāntār* is an *ālvār*.

In the inscriptions, this word is normally used generally in the sense of “a respectable person”. Thus it is also used to denote queens and princes.<sup>37</sup>

Thus it is clear that the name *ālvār* has been used in the inscriptions to denote both men and women and that it was used in the sense of “ruling” as well as “greatness and nobility” since ancient times.

## 2.4 *ĀLVĀRS*: THEIR NUMBER

There are two traditional ways of enumerating the *ālvārs*.

Sri Vēdānta Dēsikar mentions 12 of them - Poykaiyālvār, Pūtattālvār, Pēyālvār, Tirumalīcaiyālvār, Nammālvār, Maturakaviyālvār, Kulacēkarālvār, Periyālvār, Āṇṭāl, Toṇṭaratippotiyālvār, Tiruppāṇālvār and Tirumaṅkaiyālvār. He adds that the 4000 verses they have sung in 24 poems are our life.<sup>38</sup>

Sri Maṇavāla Māmunikaḷ mentions 10 of them – Poykaiyālvār, Pūtattālvār, Pēyālvār, Tirumalīcaiyālvār, Nammālvār, Kulacēkarālvār, Periyālvār, Toṇṭaratippotiyālvār, Tiruppāṇālvār and Tirumaṅkaiyālvār, leaving out Āṇṭāl and Maturakavi.<sup>39</sup> This tradition considers that the former is included in the biography of Periyālvār while the latter is included in that of Nammālvār. The fact that Āṇṭāl was accepted by Tirumāl as His Dēvi is also mentioned as a reason for not including her in this list.<sup>40</sup>



## 2.5 LISTING OF THE ĀLVĀRS

There are also differences in listing the names of the *ālvārs*. There are many like those of Nātamunikaḷ, Yamunait Turaivar, Rāmānuja Maṇavāla Munikaḷ, Tiruvaraṅkattamutaṇār, Parācara Paṭṭar, Vēdānta Dēṣikar Atikāra Caṅkirakam, Vēdānta Dēṣikar Pirapantacāram and Pinpalakiya Perumāḷ Cīyar (See Appendix: Table 4). Among these, since those of Nātamunikaḷ, Tiruvaraṅkattamutaṇār, Yamunait Turaivar and Rāmānuja are identical, researchers follow that list.<sup>41</sup>

“Four of them viz. Poykaiyālvār, Pūtattālvār, Pēyālvār and Tirumaḷicaiyālvār are said to chronologically earlier. Three of them viz, Toṇṭaratippotiyyālvār, Tiruppāṇālvār and Tirumaṅkaiyālvār are the latest. The other five, viz. Nammālvār, Maturakaviyālvār, Kulacēkarālvār, Periyālvār and Āṇṭāl are said to belong to the period in between.”<sup>42</sup>

## 2.6 THE TWELVE ĀLVĀRS: A SHORT HISTORY

Scholars who have done research on the historical aspects of the *ālvārs* are of the opinion that they lived between the 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D. and the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>43</sup>

Two works **Kuruparamparai** and **Tivviyacūri Caritam** mention that these *alvars* lived during different periods from the last part of the Dvāpara Yuga to the early part of the Kali Yuga. But those who have conducted research on their history establish with evidence that they lived between the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D.<sup>44</sup>

In this section on a short history of the *ālvārs*, this study pays more attention to their birth, date and the holy shrines sung by them. The number of the holy temples of Tirumāl (*Tivya Tēcam*) is 108. The details about the places sung by the *ālvārs* is given in Table 5 (See Appendix: Table 5).<sup>45</sup> Since their poetic works and the number of verses have been already discussed in detail (See Appendix: Table 1 and 2) such informations are omitted here.

### 2.6.1 Mutalālvārs:

Poykaiyālvār, Pūtattālvār and Pēyālvār are referred to as *mutal ālvārs*. According to Maṇavāla Māmunikaḷ, this is not only because they are the first three chronologically but also because they have sung *antāti* poems in pure Tamil and performed the best (*mutaṇmai*) service of saving the country from spiritual ruin.<sup>46</sup> According to the **Kuruparamparai**, these three were not born of a human mother's womb but of flowers.<sup>47</sup>

#### (i) Poykaiyālvār:

He was born in a golden lotus that bloomed in the pond at the sacred temple of Tiruveṅkā in Kancipuram on a Tuesday, the eighth day of the waxing moon (*aṭṭami titi*) conjoined with the Tiruvōṇam asterism. The month and year are October-November (*aippaci*) and Cittattari respectively. He is an aspect (*amcam*) of the conch Pāṇcacāṇṇiyam which is one of the five weapons of Tirumāl, the Lord of Lakshmi. It is said that by nature he was greatly devoted to Tirumāl.

(ii) **Pūtattālvār:**

He was born at Mahābalipuram (also known as Kaṭal Mallai) in a *kurukkatti* flower, among jasmine bushes, on the very next day after Poykaiyālvār. Thus he too was born in the month of Aippaci in the Cittāttari year but on a Wednesday, the ninth day of the waxing moon (*navami tīti*) conjoined with the asterism Avittam. He is an aspect of the club (*katai* or *katāyutam*) called Kaumetaki and is another one of Tirumāl's five weapons. His heart was not at all interested in worldly life but longed for the Lord's feet.

(ii) **Pēyālvār**

His birthplace was a red water lily blooming in the sacred well at the Vaishnava temple of Ātikēcavap Perumāḷ in the town of Mylapore. He was born on the day after Pūtattālvār. Thus his birthday is a Thursday, the tenth day of the waxing moon (*tacami*) conjoined with the Catayam asterism in the month of Aippaci of Cittāttari year. He is an aspect of Nāntakam, the sword which is also one of Vishnu's weapons. Since his heart was fixed firmly on the divine feet of Tirumāl, he rejoiced in singing the Lord's praises in Tamil. He is hailed as *Meyñṇaṇac Celvar* (i.e. one rich in true knowledge).

The hymns of these three ālvārs is attributed to an incident caused by God Himself. One night, God caused these three devotees to be in a small space between the entrances of two houses (*ṭaikalī*). It was so small that only one man could lie down, two sit and three stand. Vishnu as the fourth person crowded the place, made them light the lamp of their language and granted them His *darshan* in the light of their knowledge.<sup>48</sup>

### Date of the Mutalālvārs:

Based on the term Mamallai found in the verses of Pūtattālvār (Verse 70), his date is fixed at 630-668A.D.<sup>49</sup> Since they were born on consecutive days, this date is attributed to all three.

The name Māmallai (Māmallapuram/Mahābalipuram) has as its root Māmallan which is one of the titular names of the Pallava king Narasimha I. Besides the Viṇṇakaram mentioned by Poykaiyālvār (Verse 77) and Pēyālvār (verse 61, 62) is identified as Paramesvara Viṇṇakaram built by Paramesvara Varman (670-680A.D.). Hence these ālvārs are said to have lived during the years following its building.<sup>50</sup> Besides, their year of birth is Cittāttari and thus their date begins with the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

Besides, there is also the opinion that since their verses are in the *venpā* metre, they must have been composed around the time the *Purapporu! Venpā Mālai* was composed.<sup>51</sup>

Taking the name Māmallai as a name conveying its etymological meaning (see E.n. 50), M. Raghava Iyengar places the Mutalālvārs in the 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D. It may also be noted that according to the study of M. Rajamanikkanar, their date is said to be the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>52</sup>

Though the above scholars differ in their views on the date of these three ālvārs, a comparative examination of their views suggest that these ālvārs must have lived between the middle of the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. to the early 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

### 2.6.2 Tiruppāṇālvār

The birthplace of this devotee was Uraiyūr in the Chola country. He was born on a Wednesday, the second day of the waning moon (*tuviṭiyai*) conjoined with the Rōkiṇi asterism in the Kārttikai (November-December) month of the Tuṇmuki year. Since he belonged to the *pāṇar* community, he did not enter the temple at Sri Rangam but worshipped the Lord residing there from the southern bank itself and sang His praises every day. He is also known as “Pāṇ Perumāḷ”.

According to the *Kuruparamparai*, the Lord of Sri Rangam was moved by his devotion and song. So He asked the sage Lōkacāraṅka to carry the devotee on his shoulder and bring him into the temple. Brought in this manner, the devotee saw the Lord and singing Him with a melting heart he was united with Him and was not seen again.<sup>53</sup>

#### His Date

Based on the information found in the *Kuruparamparai* that he was born in the Tuṇmuki year and lived for 70 years; scholars have calculated the year of his birth as 781 A.D.<sup>54</sup> Thus he is said to belong to the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>55</sup> Some scholars point out that some of the hymns of this *ālvār* like

Even though of a low caste, if they are your devotees ... you granted they be worshipped as equal to You.<sup>56</sup>

and

Even though brahmins by birth, if they slander your devotees ... they are (low) like the *pulaiyars*<sup>57</sup>

are autobiographical in nature and based on this fix his date as the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D., the same as that of Toṇṭaratippoti Ālvār.<sup>58</sup>

Besides, it may also be noted that T. Mahalatchumi points out that based on the information mentioned in the **Mūvāyirappaṭi Kuruparamparai** (see E.n. 54) the date 15.11.601 A.D. has been arrived at.<sup>59</sup>

Yet, based on the opinions of most scholars, it seems more suitable to fix his date as 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

### 2.6.3 Tirumalīcaiṽlvār:

This *ālvār* was born in Tirumalīcai on a Sunday, the first day of the waning moon (*piratamai*) conjoined with the Makam asterism in the Tai month (January – February) of the Cittattāri year. He is believed to be an aspect of Vishnu's wheel (*ālī* or *cakra*). According to the **Kuruparamparai**, he was born as a mere lump (*piṇṭa*) without hands, legs or other organs, to Bhārgava Muṇivar and his wife Kanakāṅki. Because of his appearance he was thrown into a bamboo cluster, but with the grace of Tirumāl, he was transformed into a beautiful baby. He was brought up by a bamboo-cutter named Tiruvāḷaṇ and his wife Paṅkayac Celvi.<sup>60</sup>

Ever since his younger days he was interested in the path of *yōga*. In order to know the Everlasting Thing (God) he is said to have followed different religions existing in the Tamil country at that time. Finally, with the grace of Tirumāl he obtained Pēyālvār as his *guru* and realised the Truth. It is also said that having received *mantra upatēcam*, he was immersed in *yōga*. He is also known by the name Patticārar.<sup>61</sup>

## His Date

The date of the Mutalālvārs has been fixed at 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Since some of the religions not mentioned in their verses are found in Tirumalicaivālvār, literary historians estimate that he belongs to a period later than the Mutalālvārs.<sup>62</sup> It may be noted here that P.R.Purushottama Naidu places this devotee during the period between the late 6<sup>th</sup> century to the early 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>63</sup>

Besides, he uses the word Kuṇaparaṇ to praise Tirumāl. This name has denoted the Pallava King Mahendra Varman, ever since the time of the Shaivite devotee Appar Cuvāmikaḷ. K. Subramaniam Pillai is of the opinion that since Appar Cuvāmikaḷ belongs to the 8th century A.D. this ālvār should be placed at a later date. Since in the order of the ālvārs, Tirumalicaivālvār comes after the three Mutalālvārs, he may be said to belong to the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>64</sup> S. Vaiyapuri Pillay also supports this view.<sup>65</sup>

### 2.6.4 Toṇṭaraṭippotiālvār

The birthplace of this devotee is Maṇṭaṅkuṭi in the Chola country. He was born on a Tuesday, the fourteenth day of the waning moon (*caturtaci*) conjoined with the asterism Kēṭṭai in the Mārkaḷi month (December-January) of the Prapava year. He is the aspect of the basil (*tuḷaci*) garland of Vishnu. His father was Vēṭavicāratar and at birth he was named Vipra Nārāyaṇaṇ.

He studied the Vēdas and the other holy texts (*cāttiraṅkal*) and later, cultivated a garden from which he gave flowers for the worship of Tiruvaraṅkan (i.e. Tirumāl at Sri Rangam). Living such a life of peace, he got side-tracked due

to his association with a temple dancer or *devadāsi* named Devadevi. He was accused of theft in the king's court and was tortured by the king's men, but was saved by the Lord of Sri Rangam who called him *Toṇṭar Aṭip Poṭi*. Vipra Nārāyaṇan realised that it was a sport of Vishnu in his favour. Realising his weakness, he came out of it and began his service (*Kaiṅkaryam*). He tried to cleanse himself of his sins by washing the feet of devotees and drinking that water. Since he cleansed his heart and mind by cleansing the feet of Tirumāl devotees, he became *Toṇṭaraṭip Poṭiyālvār*. This is the account of his life as found in the **Kuruparamparai**.<sup>66</sup>

Maṇavāḷa Muṇivar using the name *Anpar Tāl Tūli* as a synonym of this *ālvār*'s name is noteworthy.<sup>67</sup>

#### His Date:

There are many opinions regarding his date. According to astrology, it is calculated as between 667-772 A.D.<sup>68</sup> The **Kalaik Kalañciyam** gives it as the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>69</sup> while the **Vāḷiyar Kalañciyam** states it as the middle of the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>70</sup>

K.Subramaniya Pillai is of the opinion that Tirumaṅkaiyālvār who is one of the twelve *ālvārs* and lived in the 9<sup>th</sup> century and *Toṇṭaraṭippotiālvār* belong to the same period and that the latter was involved in his holy service before Tirumaṅkaiyālvār.<sup>71</sup>



So it may be safe to conclude that this devotee of Vishnu lived sometime between the middle of the 7<sup>th</sup> century and the last decades of the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

#### 2.6.5 Kulacēkarālvār:

This devotee who belongs to the Chera lineage was born in the town of Kolli on a Friday, the twelfth day of the waxing moon (*tuṇṭaci*) conjoined with the Puṇarpūcam asterism, in the month of Māci (February-March) of the Prabhava year. He is the aspect of the Kaustuka gem worn by Tirumāl on his chest. He is also referred to as “Kollik Kāvalaṇ” (the King or Protector of Kolli), “Kūṭal Nāyakan” and “Kōḷikkōṇ Kulacēkaraṇ.”<sup>72</sup> Though he was a king who lived with his queen, he was steadfast in his love for Perumāl. This royal devotee who was also deeply involved in his service to *Bhagavān* and the *bhagavatas* (or devotees), came to be interested in the story of Rāma. Then, he informed his ministers that his heart was no longer engrossed in this worldly life and that he was abdicating. Later, having his eldest son crowned as king, he joined the other Tirumāl devotees and sang the Lord’s praise.<sup>73</sup>

#### His Date:

M. Raghava Iyengar is of the opinion that the Chera king of the 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> century whom Cēkkilār (the author of *Periyapurāṇam*) sings as ‘renouncing the earth took refuge in *tapas*’ is a contemporary of Tirumaṅkaimaṇṇan and Kulacēkarālvār.<sup>74</sup>

K. Subramaniya Pillai in his *History of Tamil Literature* states that the years between 825A.D. and 849A.D. could be the period of his successful reign.<sup>75</sup>

Considering the phrase *tonṭaraṭippoṭi* in a verse sung by Kulacēkarālvār as internal evidence his date may be fixed at around 800 A.D.<sup>76</sup>

Thus his date may be taken to be either the 8<sup>th</sup> century or early 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

#### 2.6.6 Periyālvār:

This ālvār was born in Sri Villiputtūr on a Sunday, on the eleventh day of the waxing moon (*ēkātaṭi*) conjoined with the Cuvāṭi asterism in the Āṇi month (June-July) of the Kurōṭaṇa year. He is believed to be an aspect of Vishnu's symbol and carrier, the Garuda (the kite). He was the son of a devotee of Tirumāl and was named Vishnucittaṇ at birth. His service to God was to tend gardens, collect flowers from there and string garlands to adorn the Lord. It is said that he obtained a *potkili* (gold coins tied in a cloth) for having explained and determined at the court of the Pandya King, that Tirumāl is the Ultimate Truth mentioned in the *Vēdas*. He dedicated it to the Lord of the Vaṭapperuṅkōyil at Sri Villiputtūr. The king granted him the title “Paṭṭar Pirāṇ” in recognition of his learning. Since he sang the “*Pallāṇṭu*” (a benediction for longevity), he came to be known as Periyālvār.<sup>77</sup>

#### His Date:

Raghava Iyengar says that “the 8<sup>th</sup> century is the distinguished period when Periyālvār lived.”<sup>78</sup> He further states that according to the **Kuruparamparais** this ālvār is supposed to have lived for 85 years. If his year of birth may be estimated roughly as 690 A.D., then the period of his life will be up to 775 A.D.<sup>79</sup>

In the **Kalaikkalañciyam**, his date is mentioned as 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>80</sup> The work **Ilakkiyattil Cōṭiṭam** arrives at 27-5-725 A.D. as according to the **Mūvāyirappaṭi Kuruparamparai**. With his life span of 85 years it places him between 725-810 A.D.<sup>81</sup>

It may also be noted that M. Rajamanikkam connects the two Pandya Kings **Netuñcaṭaiyaṇ Parāntakaṇ** (765-790A.D.) and **Cīmāraṇ Cīpallavaṇ** (835-862A.D.). He decides that the latter is the Sri Vallapa **Tēvaṇ** mentioned in the **Kuruparamparai** texts and concludes that the date of **Periyālvār** is the middle of the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>82</sup>

#### 2.6.7 Sri Āṇṭāl:

In the flower garden cultivated by **Periyālvār** at Sri Villiputtūr, to make garlands for the Lord, a baby girl was found under the basil (*tuḷaci*) bush. This happened on a Tuesday, on the fourteenth day of the waxing moon (*caturttaci*) conjoined with the Pūram asterism in the month of Āṭi (July-August) in the Nala year as an aspect of Mother Earth. **Periyālvār** who found her, named her **Kōtai** and brought her up. Ever since childhood she loved **Tirumāl** greatly and was interested in the religious texts. She always felt that she belonged to **Kaṇṇaṇ** (Krishna).

She was in the habit of wearing the garlands that her father prepared for **Tirumal** and looking in the mirror to see if she was suitable for the Lord. One day when the father saw, he felt that the garlands had lost their purity and therefore did not take them to the temple. But the Lord appearing in **Periyālvār**'s dream told him that He desired the garlands worn by **Āṇṭāl** before being offered to Him. Due

to this she came to be known as *Cūṭik Koṭutta Cūṭarkkoṭi* meaning the bright creeper-like lady who wore (the garlands) before giving (the Lord). From that day onwards Periyālvār considered her as the goddess who came to rule and protect (*āl*) him and called her *Āṇṭāl*.

She became confident that the Lord, by showing his preference for the garlands that she wears has accepted the divine love that she cherished in her heart. Finally she went to Tiruvarankam and was united with the Lord as His bride.<sup>83</sup>

#### **Her Date:**

The opinion that she belongs to the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D. and that she composed the **Tiruppāvai** on the full moon day in the month of *Mārkali* of the year 731 A.D.<sup>84</sup> is worth considering.

From astronomical calculations, her birth date is determined as the 25<sup>th</sup> day of *Āṭi* in 776 A.D.<sup>85</sup> This is comparable to the opinion of M. Raghava Iyengar.<sup>86</sup>

Hence it may be concluded that she lived during the middle of the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

#### **2.6.8 Tirumaṅkaiyālvār:**

This *ālvār* was the son of *Ālināṭuṭaiyār* and *Vallittiru Ammai* of *Tirukkuṟaiyalūr*. He was born on a Thursday when the *Kṛttikā* asterism conjoined the full moon of the *Kārttikai* month of the *Naḷa* year, as an aspect of *Tirumāl*'s bow, *Cārṇkam*. He was named *Nīlaṇ* at birth. His wife was *Kumutavalli*. He

ruled with Tirumaṅkai as his capital. He also received the title Parakālaṇ and was the chief of the Chola army. He was a great devotee of the Lord. Once, the Lord gave him the wealth payable as tribute to the Chola king by causing it to appear on the bank of the Vēkavati River.

Since he spent all his wealth in the service of the devotees of Tirumāl, he became poor. So in order to continue his service, he turned to the old ways of his clan, which is highway robbery. Once, when he stood in hiding, waiting for his preys, the Lord as a bridegroom and his Consort as the bride appeared decked with jewellery. Not knowing who they were, Tirumaṅkaiyālvār robbed them. By divine sport of the Lord the jewels became too heavy for him to lift. Thinking it was due to some magical *mantra* that the bridegroom knew, he insisted on knowing it. It is believed that this is the manner in which this devotee received his *mantra-upadēsa* or the teaching of the eight syllable *mantra*. When the bridal couple disappeared, the ruler of Tirumankai attained true knowledge and he sang the greatness of the *mantra*.

According to the **Kuruparamparai** stories this ālvār is supposed to have built the surrounding wall of the large temple at Tiruvaraṅkam and after staying at Tirukkuruṅkuṭi for some time was merged in the light of the Lord's divine feet. He had many special names like Kalikaṅṇi, Parakālaṇ and Aruḷmāri.<sup>87</sup>

#### **His Date:**

Tamil scholars fix his period as the 8<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>88</sup> The **Vālvīyaṛ Kalañciyam** states that he must have been born in 776 A.D. and since he lived for

105 years, his period must have been from the later part of the 8<sup>th</sup> century stretching over most of the 9<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>89</sup> Astronomical calculations also point to this date.<sup>90</sup>

Besides, S. Vaiyapuripillai is of the opinion that he lived between the years 800 to 870 A.D.<sup>91</sup> while K. Subramanya Pillai thinks that the *ālvār* belongs to the later part of the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>92</sup>

It would be more appropriate to say that he lived from the later part of the 8<sup>th</sup> century through a greater part of the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

#### 2.6.9 Nammālvār:

This Tirumal devotee was born in Ālvār Tirunakari (Tirukkurukūr) of the Nellai district in the Kāṭaka *lagna* on a Friday, the twelfth day of the month of Vaikāci in the Pramati year. On that day the Vicāka asterism was conjoined with the full moon. He is believed to be the aspect of the army chiefs of Tirumāl. His parents were Kariyār and Naṅkai. Though they named him Māraṇ, he was also known by many other names.<sup>93</sup>

It is said that from the moment he was born, he remained without any worldly interest. He did not drink milk, cry, move his limbs or open his eyes. On the twelfth day after birth, he was left in the presence of the deity in the temple. There he sat under a tamarind tree till he was sixteen years old, meditating on God. He taught the Vaishnava religion to Maturakavi who took him as his *guru*. Later,

he began to sing the praises of God, lived for another 35 years and reached salvation.<sup>94</sup>

Among the *ālvārs*, Nammālvār is the most celebrated in the Vaishnava community. Unlike other *ālvārs* this devotee was blessed even at birth so that he attained true knowledge (*jñāna*) and devotion (*bhakti*) and lived till the last without any worldly desires. This gave him priority of rank among the *ālvārs*.<sup>95</sup> Ālavantār in his hymns of praise refers to him as the Kulapati (head of a family) of Vaishnavism. That is the reason why the other *ālvārs* are considered by our ancients as the “limbs” (*avayava*) and Nammālvār as the “soul” (*avayavi*) which has a body or collection of limbs.<sup>96</sup> The other *ālvārs* and the limbs they represent are as follows:

<u>Ālvārs:</u>	<u>The holy limb they represent:</u>
Pūtattālvār	- hair ( <i>tirumuṭi</i> )
Poykaiyālvār ) Peyālvār )	- two eyes
Periyālvār	- face
Tirumalīcaiyālvār	- throat
Kulacēkarālvār ) Tiruppaṇālvār )	- two hands
Toṇṇaratippotiālvār	- chest
Tirumaṅkaiyālvār	- navel
Maturakaviyālvār	- feet <sup>97</sup>

It may be noted that Āṇṭāl is not included in this list.

Nammālvār is held in high esteem as the whole body of which the other ālvārs are only parts. Therefore the name ālvār is most suitable for him even though the other eleven are also referred to by that name. At one time, the works of the other ālvārs were not available. But it was Nammālvār who brought them to light by bestowing knowledge of them to Sri Nātamūṇi as a recognition of his great devotion. This act which is important in the history of Tamil Vaishnavism itself shows this body-limb relationship between this ālvār and the others. It is said that the body knows the acts of each of the limbs but not vice versa.<sup>98</sup>

Though he has many names, the name Nammālvār shows his greatness and eminence. Two reasons may be mentioned: when the **Kamparāmāyaṇam** was presented before the learned community for the first time (*arāṅkētram*), the Lord gave him the name Nammālvār; according to Tamil grammar, the particle *na* (meaning eminent, good) as the first syllable gives the name and the person it denotes a certain dignity.<sup>99</sup>

#### **His Date:**

The literary historian, M. Arunachalam places Nammālvār before 850 A.D. The common usage of the two names – Tiruvāymolī Tēvar and Caṭakōpar, during the reign of Rajarajan I (998 A.D.) and the years mentioned in the inscriptions about properties endowed to temples for the singing of **Tiruvāymolī** provide evidence for this opinion.<sup>100</sup>

M. Raghava Iyengar thinks that historical methods of research show that his period is the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>101</sup> K. Subramaniya Pillai, based



on the mention of the two sacred places – Cīvaramaṅkai and Varakuṇamaṅkai – in the **Tiruvāymoḷi** thinks that this devotee belongs to the last years of the 8<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>102</sup>

It may be noted here that K.A. Nilakanda Sastri considers Nammālvār and Maturakaviyālvār as the last two *ālvārs* and that they lived during the last part of the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>103</sup>

The historian Gopinatha Rao also contributes to the opinion that Nammalvar lived during the first half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>104</sup>

Hence, based on the evidence mentioned above, it may be deduced that he lived during the early 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

#### 2.6.10 Maturakaviyālvār:

This *ālvār* was born in Tirukkōḷūr near Tirukkurukūr in the Nellai district on a Friday when the fourteenth day of the waxing moon (*caturtaci*) was in conjunction with the Cittirai asterism in the Cittirai month of the Īcuvara year. He is the aspect of Tirumāl's flute made of bamboo and was a great devotee of Vishnu. It is said that during his pilgrimage to the north he reached the sacred town of Ayodhya. While he was there he saw a great light that originated in the south. Guided by it he reached Nammālvār who instructed him on his spiritual path. Accepting him as his *guru*, Maturakaviyālvār began his holy services. When his *guru* attained salvation he installed a statue of him and worshipped him. It is believed that since this devotee had poetic ability and sang sweet (*maturam*) poems

(*kavi*) in praise of the Lord, he came to be known by this name.<sup>105</sup> This *ālvār* is different from the others in that he sings the praises of his spiritual mentor and teacher Nammālvār and not Tirumāl. As such there are no temples or holy shrines sung by him.

#### His Date:

Based on the conclusion that Nammālvār, the *guru* of Maturakaviyālvār lived in the early 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. (see, 2.6.9) it may be said with certainty that he too lived during the same period. The fact that he was born earlier than Nammālvār and lived even after his death, worshipping the sacred form of the *guru*, is worth considering here.<sup>106</sup>

### 2.7 RĀMĀYAṆAM – AN INTRODUCTION

Two great masterpieces of India put Sanskrit on the map of world literature, the *Pañcatantra* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*.<sup>107</sup> The *Rāmāyaṇa* is the *Ādi-kāvya* and the model and fountainhead of all Sanskrit poetry and drama and inspirer of the literatures in all Indian languages.<sup>108</sup> For ages it has been passed down orally from generation to generation. This story has the great distinction of having spread all over Asia and unifying the people who are of different language, culture and geographical region. The unifying factor is basic human emotions. Besides, it is also lofty in various general aspects of ordinary life, like time, language, literature, religion, age, economics and education.<sup>109</sup>

It was Vālmīki who gave the Rāma-story that was prevalent among the people great prominence by giving it a literary form. He made it into a great

*itihāsa* in the Sanskrit language. Through the ages it has gained popularity and is now found in epic form in 300 different languages.<sup>110</sup> The different **Rāmāyaṇas** were composed in different periods of time, in differing cultural situations with varying religious leanings. These depict the different stages of development in society, religion and traditions.<sup>111</sup>

References to the **Rāmāyaṇa** story are found in the **Rg Vēda** itself. Later, they are also found in the **Jātaka Tales** written in the Prakrt language for the purpose of spreading the Buddhist religion. Faber is of the opinion that the **Jātaka Tales** belong to the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. In other words they are placed before Vālmīki. He also thinks that the **Dasaratha Jātaka** must be the germ for the **Rāmāyaṇa** of Vālmīki. Dinesh Candra Sen also agrees with Faber's views.<sup>112</sup>

### 2.7.1 The *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki

Vālmīki was the cause for the spread of the Rāma-story among the people, by giving it a literary form. He is celebrated as the *ādi kavi* (first poet) and his **Rāmāyaṇa** as the *ādi kāvya* (the first *kavya* or poem).

Thousands of years ago Vālmīki asked, “Who is the Purushottama (i.e. perfect man) on earth, with all the good qualities?” Sage Narada's instruction served as an answer, “There is no *purushottama* on earth, blessed with good qualities. When Vishnu, the Primal Supreme Being is born on earth as Rama, He will shine with all those excellent qualities.” This reply is the basis of the Rama-story.<sup>113</sup>

Vālmīki himself has mentioned the length of his epic in two places, namely *Bala Kandam*, Sarga 4 and *Uttara Kandam*, Sarga 94. According to him the **Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa** contains seven *kandas*, 500 *sargas* and 24,000 *slokas*. But in the three publications available today, the number of *sargas* vary. The South Indian version has 643 *sargas*, the Kautilya version has 673 and the north-western version has 666. This **Rāmāyaṇa** is referred to by many names like **Rāmacaritam**, **Sītācaritam** and **Paulatsya Vadham (Rāvaṇa Vadham)**. Generally, scholars agree that the **Rāmāyaṇa** was composed by Vālmīki in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. The Rāma that Vālmīki characterised was a hero with distinctive abilities and qualities, born of the Ikshuvāku race. But those who came after Vālmīki made him an incarnation of Tirumāl.<sup>114</sup>

### 2.7.2 Kamparāmāyaṇam:

The **Kamparāmāyaṇam** is hailed as the best **Rāmāyaṇa** written in Tamil. This great work was composed by Kampar who has been praised for ages by scholars, poets and the common people as *kaviccakaravartti*. This poet of the later Chola period (9<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D.) was born as the son of Ātittan̄ at Tiruvaluntūr. He had the benevolent Caṭaiyaṇ̄ of Veṇṇainallūr as his patron.<sup>115</sup>

### Date of Kampar:

It is difficult to come to a definite conclusion regarding the date of Kampar. There are many views that place him in the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D., the 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D. and the 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

There is an indication that Kampar authoured the work **Caṭakōparantati** which sings the distinctions of Nammāl̄var who is praised as “the great one who

sang the Vedas in Tamil.” So, R.V. Kamalakkannan thinks that he must have lived around 885 A.D.<sup>116</sup> The 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> century copper statues of Hanuman found in Vishnu temples depict him as a humble and faithful servant standing before the master. He has his arms folded and mouth covered by his hand. This appearance is not mentioned by Vālmīki. These statues are the concrete forms of the Hanuman described by Kampar in words. Thus it is argued that Kampar is clearly prior to these statues.<sup>117</sup> Many other scholars<sup>118</sup> are also of the opinion that Kampar belongs to the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

K. Subramaniam Pillai reasons that **Cīvaka Cintāmaṇi** was composed during the early 10<sup>th</sup> century and since Kampar himself says, “I have drawn a little from the sea of Cintāmaṇi,” the *Kamparāmāyaṇam* must have been written only after the **Cīvaka Cintāmaṇi**.<sup>119</sup>

According to the **Vālyiyar Kaḷañciyam** Kampar, due to his disagreement with the Chola King, left the country and lived at Ōraṅkal in Andhra for some time. The king of Andhra at that time was Pratāpa Rudran (1162-1197 A.D.) and his contemporary Chola king was Kulōtuṅka III (1178-1208 A.D.).<sup>120</sup> This makes Kampar a poet of the 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Other scholars also support this view.<sup>121</sup>

Based on the above views, the date of Kampar may be safely said to be between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D. This shows that research on his date is not complete till today and needs a separate detailed study. Hence this matter is not pursued further in this study.

### His Work:

Kampar's **Rāmāyaṇam** contains six *kāṇḍams*, divided into 116 *paṭalams* with a total of 10436 verses. He depicts Rāma as an incarnation of Tirumāl and hence named it **Irāmāvatāram**.<sup>122</sup> Though he took his story from Vālmīki, he has changed and made adjustments to it to suit Tamil cultural traditions as well as his own ideas and aims.<sup>123</sup> For this creation of Kampar the **Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa** was only the source. Kampar's epic is not a translation of Vālmīki's *kāvya*.<sup>124</sup>

**Kamparāmāyaṇam** ends with six *kāṇḍams*. He did not sing the **Uttarakāṇḍa** of Vālmīki. Scholars are of the opinion that the Tamil version of this *kāṇḍam* that is available today was sung by the famous Ottakkūttar who lived in the 12<sup>th</sup> century around 1163 A.D. This poet who was well-versed in Tamil was driven by the desire to create a great work. So he sang the **Uttarakāṇḍa** that was left out by Kampar. This is a well composed work based on Vālmīki's last *kāṇḍa*. This earned him the name Vāṇitācaṇ as mentioned in the *Cola Maṇṭala Catakam*.<sup>125</sup>

The special features of the **Uttarakāṇḍa** is enough proof to maintain that Ottakkūttar is its author. Another important reason is that its *pāyiram* (preface) makes it a separate work by itself.

Since this study cannot be complete without the **Uttarakāṇḍa** of Ottakkūttar, this work is also included with the **Kamparāmāyaṇam**.

### 2.7.3 Other Works On The Rāmāyaṇam

Commentaries on various grammatical texts show that Rāma-stories existed in Tamil even before Kampar. Works like **Yāpparuṅkala Viruttiyurai**, **Vīracōliya Urai**, **Ācīriyamālai** and **Naccinārkkiniyar Urai** refer to the **Rāmāyaṇa**. Besides, **Rāmāyaṇa** incidents are mentioned in Sangam literature and Tamil epics.<sup>126</sup> The influence of **Rāmāyaṇa** on the devotional literature which came into prominence in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries is clear. Special mention may be made of the hymns of the *ālvārs* that make very clear references to them.

Even after Kampar, the **Rāmāyaṇa** story has been narrated in Tamil in different literary forms. **Irāma Nāṭaka Kīrttaṇai**, **Irāmāyaṇa Veṇpā**, **Irāmōdantam**, **Irāmacāmiyam**, **Irāmāyaṇat Tiruppukal**, **Akalikai Veṇpā**, **Ilankaip Parani**, **Irakava Kaviyam** and the like fall into this category.<sup>127</sup>

Modern literary forms like poems, novels, short stories and dramas have also been created based on incidents from the **Rāmāyaṇam**. A suitable proof is Kavinar Vali's **Avatārap Purushan**. Writers of modern Tamil blank verse (*putukkavītai*) have used aspects and incidents from the epic as ancient stories to explain certain ideas.<sup>128</sup>

Table 1 : Works of the Ālvārs

<u>Ālvārs:</u>	<u>Texts:</u>	<u>Number of Hymns:</u>	
1. Poykaiyālvār	1. First Tiruvantāti	100	
2. Pūtattālvār	2. Second Tiruvantāti	100	
3. Pēyālvār	3. Third Tiruvantāti	100	
4. Tiruppāṇālvār	4. Amalaṇātipirāṇ	10	
5. Tirumalicaiyālvār	5. Nāṇmukaṇ Tiruvantāti	96	
	6. Tiruccantaviruttam	120	
6. Tontaratippotiālvār	7. Tirumālai	45	
	8. Tiruppalliyelucci	10	
7. Kulacēkarālvār	9. Perumāḷ Tirumoli	105	
8. Periyālvār	10. Periyālvār Tirumoli	461	
	11. Tiruppallāṇṭu	12	
9. Sri Āṇṭāl	12. Tiruppāvai	30	
	13. Nācciyār Tirumoli	143	
10. Tirumaṅkaiyālvār	14. Periya Tirumoli	1084	
	15. Tirukkuṇṭāṇṭakam	20	
	16. Tiruṇṭuntāṇṭakam	30	
	17. Tiruvelukkūṇṭirukkai	1	
	18. Cīriya Tirumaṭal	1	
	19. Periya Tirumaṭal	1	
11. Nammālvār	20. Tiruviruttam	100	
	21. Tiruvācīriyam	7	
	22. Periya Tiruvantāti	87	
	23. Tiruvāymoli	1102	
12. Maturakaviyālvār	24. Kaṇṇinunciruttāmpu	11	3776
Emperumāṇār	Rāmānuja's Nūrrantāti		108
			3884



**Table 2 : Works of the *Ālvārs***

Texts	Number of Hymns		Ālvārs
(A) Icaippā:			
(i) <u>Mutalāyiram</u>			
1. Periyālvār Tirumoli	473	}	Periyālvār
2. Tiruppāvai	30		Sri Āṇṭāl
3. Nācciyār Tirumoli	143		
4. Perumāḷ Tirumoli	105		Kulacēkarālvār
5. Tiruccantaviruttam	120		Tirumalicaiyālvār
6. Tirumālai	45	}	Tōṇṭaratippotiālvār
7. Tiruppalliyelucci	10		
8. Amalaṇṭipirāṇ	10		
9. Kaṇṇinuṇṇiruttāmpu	<u>11</u>		Tiruppāṇālvār
		947	Maturakaviyālvār
(ii) <u>Periya Tirumoli</u>			
10. Periya Tirumoli	1084	}	Tirumaṅkaiyālvār
11. Tirukkuruntāṇṭakam	20		
12. Tiruneṭuntāṇṭakam	<u>30</u>		
		1134	
(iii) <u>Tiruvāymoli</u>			
13. Tiruvāymoli	1102	1102	Nammālvār
(B) Iyarpā:			
(iv) <u>Iyarpā</u>			
14. First Tiruvantāti	100		Poykaiyālvār
15. Second Tiruvantāti	100		Pūtattālvār
16. Third Tiruvantāti	100		Pēyālvār
17. Nāṇmukaṇ Tiruvantāti	96		Tirumalicaiyālvār
18. Tiruviruttam	100	}	Nammālvār
19. Tiruvācīriyam	7		
20. Periya Tiruvantāti	87		
21. Tiruveḷukkūrirukkai	<u>1</u>	591	Tirumaṅkaiyālvār
		3774	
22. Cīriya Tirumaṭal	38		
23. Periya Tirumaṭal	80	118	
Rāmānuja's Nūṟrantāti		108	Emperumāṇār
		<u>4000</u>	

Table 3 : Works of the Ālvārs

Texts	Number of Hymns:	Ālvārs
<b>(A) Icaippa:</b>		
(i) <u>Mutalāyiram</u>		
1. Periyālvār Tirumoli	473	} Periyālvār
2. Tiruppāvai	30	
3. Nācciyār Tirumoli	143	} Sri Āṇṭāl
4. Perumāḷ Tirumoli	105	
5. Tiruccantaviruttam	120	} Kulacēkarālvār
6. Tirumālai	45	
7. Tiruppalliyēlucci	10	} Tirumalīcaiyālvār
8. Amalanātipirāṇ	10	
9. Kaṇṇinuṇṇiruttāmpu	11	} Tōṇṭaratippotiyyālvār
		947
(ii) <u>Periya Tirumoli</u>		
10. Periya Tirumoli	1084	} Tirumaṅkaiyālvār
11. Tirukkuruntāṇṭakam	20	
12. Tiruneṭuntāṇṭakam	30	
		1134
(iii) <u>Tiruvāymoli</u>		
13. Tiruvāymoli	1102	1102 Nammālvār
<b>(B) Iyarpa:</b>		
(iv) <u>Iyarpā</u>		
14. First Tiruvantāti	100	Poykaiyālvār
15. Second Tiruvantāti	100	Pūtattālvār
16. Third Tiruvantāti	100	Peyālvār
17. Nāṇmukaṇ Tiruvantāti	96	} Tirumalīcaiyālvār
18. Tiruviruttam	100	
19. Tiruvācīriyam	7	} Nammālvār
20. Periya Tiruvantāti	87	
21. Tiruveḷukkūṇṇirukkai	1	} 591
		3774
22. Cīriya Tirumaṭal		} 77½
23. Periya Tirumaṭal		
		148½
		4000
		=====

Table 4 : Listing of the *Ālvārs* by the *Ācāriyars*

<i>Ālvārs</i>	Poykai.	Putal.	Peyal.	Tiruppan.	Tirumali.	Tontā.	Kulace.	Periya.	Ant.	Tiruman.	Namma.	Matura.
<i>Ācāriyars</i>												
Nātamunikaḷ	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	-
Yamuṇait Turaivar	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	-
Rāmānuja	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	-
Maṇavāḷa Māmunikaḷ	3	1	2	10	5	9	8	6	-	7	4	-
Tiruvaraṅkattamutaṇār	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	-
Parācara Pattar	2	1	3	7	5	8	6	4	-	9	10	-
Vēdānta Dēsikar Atikāra Caṅkirakam	1	2	3	8	10	9	7	5	6	11	4	12
Vēdānta Dēsikar Pirapantacāram	1	2	3	11	4	10	7	8	9	12	5	6
Piṇṇalakiya Perumaḷ Cīyar	1	2	3	11	4	10	7	8	9	12	5	6

Table 5 : The 108 Holy Shrines sung by the *Ālvārs*

<i>Ālvārs</i>	Poykai	Putai	Peyal	Tiruppan	Tirumali	Tontai	Kulace	Periya	Ant	Tiruman	Namma
Holy Shrines											
Shrines in Chola Nāṭu (40)											
1. Tiruvaraṅkam Periya Kōyil	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2. Uṟaiyūr-Nicuḷāpuri										✓	
3. Tañcai Māmaṇik Kōyil		✓								✓	
4. Tiruvaṇṇil					✓						
5. Tirukkarampaṇūr (Uttamar Kōyil)										✓	
6. Tiruvellaṟai								✓		✓	
7. Puḷḷampūtaṅkuṭi*										✓	
8. Tiruppērnakar (Kōyilaṭi)					✓			✓		✓	✓
9. Tiruvātaṇūr										✓	
10. Tiruvaluntūr (Tēraḷuntūr)										✓	
11. Cīrupuliyūr										✓	
12. Tiruccērai (Sāraḷsetram)										✓	
13. Talaiccaṅkaṇṇamatiyam (Talaiccaṅkāṭu)										✓	
14. Tirukkuṭantai (Kumpakōṇam)		✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
15. Tirukkaṇṇiyūr (Kaṇṇanapuram)											
16. Tiruvīṇṇakar (Uppiliyappaṇ Canniti)	✓		✓							✓	✓
17. Tirukkaṇṇapuram							✓	✓		✓	✓
18. Tiruvāli Tirunakari										✓	
19. Tirunākai (Nākappattāṇam)										✓	

Ālvārs		Poykai.	Putai.	Peyal.	Tiruppan.	Tirumali.	Tonta.	Kulace.	Periya.	Ant.	Tiruman.	Namma.
Holy Shrines												
20.	Tirunaraiyūr (Nācciyār Kōyil)										✓	
21.	Nantipura Viṇṇakaram (Nātan Kōyil)										✓	
22.	Tiruvintālūr										✓	
23.	Tiruccittirakkūṭam (Citamparam)*							✓	✓		✓	
24.	Kāliccīrāmaṇṇakaram										✓	
25.	Tirukkūṭalūr										✓	
26.	Tirukkaṇṇaṇkuṭi										✓	
27.	Tirukkaṇṇamaṇkai										✓	
28.	Tirukkavittalam					✓						
29.	Tiruvelḷiyaṇkuṭi*											
30.	Tirumaṇimāṭakkōyil (Tirunāṅkūr)										✓	
31.	Tiruvaikuntaviṇṇakaram (Tirunāṅkūr)										✓	
32.	Tiru-arimēyaviṇṇakaram (Tirunāṅkūr)										✓	
33.	Tiruttévaṇartokai (Kīlaiccālai)										✓	
34.	Tiruvaṇpuruṭōttamam (Tirunāṅkūr)										✓	
35.	Tiruccemponceyckōyil (Tirunāṅkūr)										✓	
36.	Tirutteṇṇiampalam (Tirunāṅkūr)										✓	
37.	Tirumaṇikkūṭam										✓	
38.	Tirukkāvaḷampāṭi										✓	
39.	Tiruvelḷakkulam (Aṇṇaṇ Kōyil)										✓	
40.	Tiruppārttanpaḷḷi	✓									✓	

<i>Ālvārs</i>	Poykai .	Putat .	Peyal .	Tiruppan .	Tirumali .	Tonta .	Kulace .	Periya .	Ant .	Tiruman .	Namma .
Holy Shrines											
<u>Shrines in Pandya Nātu (18)</u>											
41. Tirumāliṛuñcōlai (Kallalakar Canniti)								✓	✓	✓	
42. Tirukkōṭṭiyūr								✓		✓	
43. Tirumeyyamalai										✓	
44. Tiruppullāṇi (Tarppacayanam)										✓	
45. Tiruttaṅkāl		✓								✓	
46. Tirumōkūr										✓	✓
47. Tirukkūṭal (Teṇ Maturai)					✓				✓	✓	
48. Sri Villiputtūr								✓	✓		
49. Tirukkurukūr (Ālvār Tirunakari)											✓
50. Tolaivilli Maṅkalam (Iraṭṭait Tiruppati)											✓
51. Cīṟvaramaṅkai (Vāṇamāmalai or Nāṅkuṇēri)											✓
52. Tiruppulṇkuṇṇi											✓
53. Tiruppērai											✓
54. Sri Vaikuntam											✓
55. Varakuṇamaṅkai											✓
56. Tirukkulaṇṭai (Peruṅkulam)											✓
57. Tirukkuṇṇikuṇṇi					✓			✓		✓	✓
58. Tirukkōḷūr											✓

<i>Ālvārs</i>	Poykai,	Putal,	Peyal,	Tiruppan,	Tirumali,	Tonta,	Kulace,	Periya,	Ant,	Tiruman,	Namma,
Holy Shrines											
<u>Shrines in Malai Nātu (13)</u>											
59. Tiruvananthapuram (Anantacayanam)											✓
60. Tiruvaṇṇaricāram											✓
61. Tirukāṭkarai											✓
62. Tirumūlikkaḷam										✓	✓
63. Tiruppuliyūr (Kuṭṭanātu)										✓	✓
64. Tirucceṅkuṇṇūr											✓
65. Tirunāvāy										✓	✓
66. Tiruvallavāl (Tiruveḷḷā)										✓	✓
67. Tiruvaṇṇaṇṭūr											✓
68. Tiruvāṭṭāru											✓
69. Tiruvittuvakkōṭu							✓				
70. Tirukkaiṭṭāṇam											✓
71. Tiruvāṇvīlai											✓
<u>Shrines in Nātu Nātu (2)</u>											
72. Tiruvayintirapuram		✓								✓	
73. Tirukkōvalūr (Kōḷalanakaram)	✓									✓	

<i>Ālvārs</i>	Poykai,	Putai,	Peyal,	Tiruppan,	Tirumali,	Tontā,	Kulacc,	Periya,	Ant,	Tiruman,	Namma,
Holy Shrines											
<u>Shrines in Tontai Nātu (22)</u>											
74. Tirukkacci (Attikiri)			✓							✓	
75. Aṭṭapuyakaram (Aṣṭapujam)			✓							✓	
76. Tiruttan̄kā (Viḷakkoḷi Kōyil)										✓	
77. Vēḷukkai			✓							✓	
78. Pāṭakam (Pāṇṭavar Tūtar Canniti)		✓	✓		✓					✓	
79. Tirunīrakam										✓	
80. Nilattiṅkaḷtuṇṭam										✓	
81. Tiruvūrakam (Ulakaḷanta Perumāḷ Kōyil)					✓					✓	
82. Tiruvekkā (Yatōktakāri)	✓		✓		✓					✓	
83. Tirukkārakam										✓	
84. Tirukkārvāṇam										✓	
85. Tirukkaḷvanūr										✓	
86. Tiruppavaḷavanṇam										✓	
87. Paramēccura Viṇṇakaram (Vaikuntapperumāḷ Canniti)										✓	
88. Tiruppuṭkūḷi										✓	
89. Tiruṇiṇṇavūr (Tiṇṇaṇūr)										✓	
90. Tiruvevvuḷ (Tiruvaḷḷūr)					✓					✓	
91. Tirunīrmalai (Tōyācalam)		✓								✓	



<i>Ālvārs</i>	Poykai .	Putal .	Peyal .	Tiruppan .	Tirumali .	Tonta .	Kulace .	Periya .	Ant .	Tiruman .	Namma .
Holy Shrines											
92. Tiruviṭaṇṭai										✓	
93. Tirukkaṇṭ Mallai (Makāpalipuram)										✓	
94. Tiruvallikkēṇi (Piruntāranya Ksētram)*										✓	
95. Tirukkaṇṭikai (Cōlaciṅkapuram)										✓	
<u>Shrines in Vataṇātu (12)</u>											
96. Tiruvēṇkaṭam (Tirumalai, Tiruppati)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
97. Ciṅkavēḷkuṇṇam (Ahōpilam)										✓	
98. Tiruvayōtti *										✓	
99. Naimicāṇayam										✓	
100. Cālakkirāyam										✓	
101. Vataiyācciramam (Patrikāśramam)										✓	
102. Tirukkaṇṭaṇṭakkar (Tēvaprāyākai)										✓	
103. Tiruppiriti (Jōshimaṭam)										✓	
104. Tvārakai (Tuvarai)									✓	✓	
105. Vaṭamaturai (Kōvarttanam)									✓	✓	
106. Tiruvāyppāṭi (Kōkulam)									✓	✓	
107. Tiruppārkaṭal	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<u>Shrine in Tirunātu (1)</u>											
108. Paramapatam	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓

\*Holy Shrines with Rāma as the Main Deity.

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