

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

#### 6.0 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study has been presented in the Introductory Chapter as five hypotheses. The Second Chapter details the various information related to the topic of study. The references to and possible influences of the **Rāmāyaṇa** found in ancient and medieval Tamil literature is discussed in Chapter Three. The next chapter is the examination of the hymns of each of the *ālvārs* individually and the influence of **Rāmāyaṇa** found in these hymns. As a result of this analysis the next chapter compares the **Rāmāyaṇa** incidents mentioned by the *ālvārs* with those described by Vālmīki and Kampar. This has helped to identify the similarities and dissimilarities between the two epics as well as the hymns.

#### 6.1 HYPOTHESES

In the light of the conclusions drawn in the above mentioned chapters, the hypotheses presented at the beginning are examined and established as followed.

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

It is evident from this study that there is no *ālvār* who has not touched on **Rāmāyaṇa** incidents except for Maturakaviyālvār. These incidents have made a great impact on their hymns. The indices included as appendices to Chapters Four and Five contain the various **Rāmāyaṇa** events referred to by the *ālvārs*. For

example, it may be said that the incident that has made the greatest impact on them is the slaying of Rāvaṇa. The study reveals that all the eleven *ālvārs* have sung it in a total of 51 instances. The next oft-mentioned event is Rāma's invasion of Lanka and the destruction of the city. Nine *ālvārs* have referred to it in 39 different hymns. The other recurring feat of Rāma is his subduing the sea and building the bridge. Seven of the *ālvārs* have celebrated this in 28 occasions. Another frequently sung event in Rāma's life is his sojourn in the jungle. Though only three of the *ālvārs* sing this, they have mentioned this in twenty two instances in all. Such frequency with which the **Rāmāyaṇa** incidents are referred to clearly confirms the influence of the epic on these *ālvārs*. This proves conclusively, the first of the five hypotheses.

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

It is clear from Chapters Four and Five that the *ālvārs* have generally followed Vālmīki's epic in their references to the **Rāmāyaṇa** story. Yet, from the reconstruction of the story using the material collected from the **Nālāyirat Tivyap Pirapantam** four incidents stand out, for they are not to be found in the epic.

They are:

1. Rāma aiming his catapult at Kūṇi;
2. Sītā binding Rāma with a jasmine garland;
3. The squirrels helping in bridge-building;
4. Rāma sharing his meal with Hanuman using the same leaf.

These have been discussed in detail in section 5.8 of Chapter Five. These events are unique in that they are found only in these hymns and not in Vālmīki's work.

They could have been in circulation either before or after Vālmīki composed his **Rāmāyaṇa**. Besides these, some of the events referred to in the Sangam literature as discussed in Chapter Three are not found in Vālmīki either. Considering this it seems clear that there must have prevailed a different version of the Rāma-story among the Tamils. On this basis, the hypothesis that the *ālvārs* must have had other sources as well, is corroborated. These sources could have existed in oral tradition known as “floating literature” or folk tales. These could have affected the version sung by the *ālvārs*. Thus the second hypothesis is validated.

**6.1.3 Hypothesis (iii):** They in turn have made a great impact on Kampar so that he has utilised the concepts of the *ālvārs* to a large content.

**Kamparāmāyaṇam** is a complete and extensive work. The aim of Kampar was to sing the story of Rāma. As such he has sung many incidents which are not found in the **Nālāyirat Tivyap Pirapantam**. Besides, the four incidents found to be unique to the *ālvārs*' hymns (see 5.4 of Chapter Five) do not seem to have been included in his epic, except for the first one. Therefore, looking at his epic from the point of story or incidents that make it up, the *ālvārs* do not seem to have had a great impact on this Tamil epic. But from the religious angle, Kampar too, like the *ālvārs*, reveres Rāma as an *avatāra* of Tirumāl. This to a certain extent, may be due to the impact of the element of *bhakti* found in the hymns and Kampar's devotion to the *ālvārs* who have spread the Vaishnava precepts through their verses. However, the belief that Rāma is an incarnation of Tirumāl has existed even in the ages before the *ālvārs*. This and the fact that this concept was further popularised by the *ālvārs*, is derived at in the earlier pages (see 5.8 of

Chapter Five). Hence it may be said that Kāmpar's idea was further strengthened by these hymns. Therefore, the hypothesis may be proved only partially and needs to be revised to read, "These hymns have helped to strengthen Kāmpar's idea that Rāma is an incarnation of Tirumāl."

**6.1.4 Hypothesis (iv):** All the important events of the **Rāmāyaṇa** narrative have been sung by the *ālvārs*.

In Chapter Five, the Rāma-kātha depicted by the *ālvārs* is presented as a compilation of the various incidents. While doing so, it becomes possible to compare and determine if all the important events in the **Rāmāyaṇa** have been included. When examined thus, it cannot be said that the hymns of the *ālvārs* mention all of them. Those considered important in the **Rāmāyaṇa** narrative are the birth and upbringing of Rāma, marrying Sītā after breaking the bow of Shiva, Kaikēyi's plot, Rāma leaving for the forest, friendship with Guha, the arrival of Bharata, disfigurement of Sūrpaṇakha, abduction of Sītā by Rāvana, Rāma meeting Hanuman, friendship with Sugrīva, Hanuman as a messenger, building a bridge across the sea with the help of the *vāṇaras*, the slaying of Rāvana, Sītā entering the fire and other events. Besides these, there are also many supplementary or branch stories. Of the important events, the *ālvārs* do not seem to have referred to anywhere is Sītā entering the raging fire to prove her purity after she was freed from captivity. The curse on Akalya which is an important side-story has been prevalent in the Tamil country even during the Sangam period. The evidence for this is discussed in Chapter Three. This story is important to illustrate the concept that Rāma is an incarnation of Tirumāl. This could be the reason why Kāmpar sings,

O Great One with the colour of rain-clouds!  
In your fight with the ink-coloured *asuri*  
There, I saw the greatness of your arms.  
Here I saw the merit of your feet,<sup>1</sup>

implying the valour and divinity of Rāma. But this incident is not found in the hymns of the *ālvārs*. Based on these, the fourth hypothesis is not correct and may be modified as follows: “From the important events of the **Rāmāyaṇa**-story the *ālvārs* have used only those suitable to express, the loving compassion of Tirumāl or their personal devotion to him.”

**6.1.5 Hypothesis (v):** The Rāma-kātha which had a social outlook in Vālmīki’s work acquired a religious slant because of the devotion of the *ālvārs*.

Vālmīki depicted Rāma as an ordinary human being. The idea that Rāma is Tirumāl incarnate came later.<sup>2</sup> This concept seems to have existed even during the Sangam period. As discussed in Chapter Three, the 70<sup>th</sup> poem of the **Akanānūru** in which Rāma is said to have quietened the noisy birds with his divine nature is sufficient proof for this. Hence it would not be totally correct to say that the Rāma-story which had a social bent in Vālmīki’s epic was given a religious meaning by the devotional hymns of the *ālvārs*. It may however be said that the tradition of considering Rāma as an incarnation became more deep-rooted in the devotion of the *ālvārs*. This study shows that the social bias of Vālmīki, due to the traditional belief in Rāma’s divinity and the religious fervour of the *ālvārs* developed into the story of an incarnation. Thus the fifth hypothesis too, cannot be established as valid. It needs to be modified to read, “The Rāma-story which had

a social meaning began to acquire a religious one even during the Sangam period. This evolution matured further with the religious ardour of the *ālvārs*.”

## 6.2 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, these revised hypotheses suggest certain facts. The aim of the Bhakti Movement in Tamil Nādu was to convey lofty ideas in a simple manner through the language of the people.<sup>3</sup> The *ālvārs* as representatives of this movement imparted these sublime ideas embedded in the Vaishnava religion and set the people on the path of religion and virtue. During that period the Rāma-kātha was already popular among the Tamil people and the belief that Rāma is Tirumāl which came down with it, made it most suitable and convenient for the *ālvārs* to use it. But they chose only those incidents that fitted their aims and purpose. Therefore, it is not possible to see the complete story of the **Rāmāyaṇa** in these hymns. The concept of Rāma’s divinity and that he is an *avatāra*, which was found during the Sangam period, thus developed further with the hymns of the *ālvārs* and gained lasting strength with Kampar.

## 6.3 SOME RECOMMENDATIONS

While undertaking this study, the researcher also came across some information not relevant to this thesis but nevertheless important and worthy of detailed study.

1. The hymns of the **Nālāyirat Tivyap Pirapantam** which contain references to the Rāma-kātha may be studied more deeply so that their inner-meaning or philosophy is explained.

2. A study of the similes and metaphors found in these verses also seems feasible.
3. The sources for the incidents found only in these hymns (5.8 of Chapter Five) may be searched for in oral or folk literature.
4. This study has pointed out that some events considered important for the general story are not mentioned in the hymns. The causes for this omission may also be studied.
5. Apart from the influence of the **Rāmāyaṇa** on these hymns the effects of other texts may also be studied. It is possible to examine to what extent the ideas from the **Vēdas**, **Mahābhārata** or **Bhagavad Gīta** have moulded or influenced the thoughts of the *ālvārs*.

## Endnotes

1. RK., I, 9: 82.
2. Ananda Guruge. 1960. The Society of the Ramayana. Ceylon: Saman Press, Maharagama, p. 41.
3. Varadarajan, M. 1972. Tamil Ilakkiya Varalāru. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, p. 99.