

Oral and Textual Traditions of Veda - Tamil Nadu Region

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I. Introduction

As we all know, the outstanding feature of the Vedic education is its orality. Sāyaṇa in his commentary on the *R̥gveda* confirms this: “the text of the Veda is to be learned by the method of learning it from the lips of the teacher and not from a manuscript”¹. The *Mahābhārata* (XIII.24.70) too asserts the importance of its oral learning. Among the different centers that are known for Vedic learning in India, even today, one can see several such centers, known as Veda *Pāṭhaśālas* in the different parts of Tamil Nadu.

The antiquity of Vedic studies in Tamil Nadu could be seen from the several inscriptions that are available from Tamil Nadu. Let us see some of the important inscriptions that are related to the Vedic studies in Tamil Nadu.

II. Antiquity of Vedic studies in Tamil Nadu

I. 1. Some important inscriptions

I.1.1. Kasakkudi Plates of Nandivarman II

The Kasakkudi (Karaikkal) copper plates of Nandivarman II, dated A.D. 753-754 mentions a grant of a village named Koḍukolli to Jyeṣṭhapādasomayājin belonging to the Bhāradvāja *gotra* and following the *Chandogasūtra*, who performed Vājāpeya and other sacrifices, who was well versed in the four Vedas and the six Vedāṅgas and skilled in all branches of holy and profane knowledge. (MAHALINGAM 1988: 240-255)

I.1.2. Bahur Plates of Nrpatungavarman

Bahur (Pondicherry) copper plates of Nrpatungavarman dated A. D. 877 mentions a grant of three villages to the Vidyāsthāna at Vāgūr (Bahur). (MAHALINGAM 1988: 454-459)

I.1.3. Two inscriptions of the reigns of Parāntaka I (A.D. 907–955) and Sundra Cōḷa (A.D. 956-973)

The existence of a Vedic school, Chandoga-kīḍaippuram, endowed by a member of the village executive (āḷuṅgaṇam) of Kāmappullur (Kāppalur, N. Arcot) with land he bought

¹ *adhyayana-vidhiś ca likhita-pāṭhādi vyāvṛtyādhyana-saṃskṛtatvaṃ svādhyāyasya gamayati. R̥gveda* (1966: p. 14); HCHARFE 2002: 8.

from a *sabhā*, is attested by two inscriptions of the reigns of Parāntaka I and Sundra Cōḷa. (NILAKANTA SASTRI 1975: 629); (cf. 268 and 270 of 1938-39, ARE II, 12).

I.1.4. Kāmarasavalli, Ariyalur Dist – A.D. 998

Mentions endowments and merit rewards gifted to those who recite the *Talavakāra-sāma*.

I.1.5. Mahāsabhā of Āniyūr (now Ānūr, Chingleput Dt.) --- A.D. 999

Provided a bhaṭṭāraṅṅti for the teaching of Veda, grammar and other subjects. (cf. NILAKANTA SASTRI 1975: 629).

I.1.6. Eṅṅāyiram Inscription --- Vikravandi Taluk in Villupuram Dist --- A. D. 1025

In the reign of Rājendra I, the *sabhā* of Rājarājacaturvedimangalam (Eṅṅāyiram) in South Arcot, resolved in the presence of an officer of the king's government, to arrange for the feeding of the pupils and the remuneration of the teachers of a college in accordance with the terms of an order made by the king himself. (cf. 333 of 1917, ARE 1918.)

From the words of the inscription it is not easy to say whether the college was founded on this occasion, or had been in existence for some time before Rājendra came forward to give it such splendid support. However that may be, the details recorded in the inscription give an accurate idea of courses, the relative esteem in which teachers of different subjects were held in so far as this may be judged from their respective salaries, and the average cost of maintaining pupils of different grades. The provision in this record contemplates 270 junior students and 70 senior students and a teaching staff of 14 persons. Among the junior students, forty studied the elements of grammar according to the *Rūpāvatāra*, and the rest were learning the Vedas --- 75 devoting themselves to the *Ṛgveda* and 75 to the *Yajurveda* twenty to each of the *Vājasaneyam* and the *Chandoga* and *Talavakāra-sāmas*, ten to the *Atharva-Veda* and the remaining ten to the *Baudhāyana-gr̥hya*, *-kalpa* and *gaṇa*. (NILAKANTA SASTRI 1975: 630-631)

The remuneration paid to teachers of different sections as well as to the senior students are also mentioned in this inscription.; (see also Renou E.V.P. VI, p. 18; R. Nagaswamy, Vedic scholars in the ancient Tamil country, *Vishveshvaranand Indological Journal*, Vol. 3 (1965), p. 192.)

I.1.7. Tribhuvani, Pondicherry --- A. D. 1048.

Another *pāṭhaśālā*, similar to that of Eṅṅāyiram, was maintained at Tribhuvani, near Pondicherry with 260 students. The inscription describes the honorarium to be paid for the teachers and the stipend for students thus:

... four *kalams* of paddy for 12 persons --- three persons who teach *Ṛgveda*, three persons who teach *Yajurveda*, one person who teaches *Sāntōka Sāman*, one person who teaches *Talavakāra Sāman*, one person who teaches *Apūrvam*, one person who teaches *Vājasaneyam*, one person who teaches *Bhautā[ya]nīya sūtram*, one person who teaches *Sattūṣāta sūtram* – at the rate of one *tūṇi* of paddy per day per person. ... 11 *kalams* and two *tūṇis* and one *patakkū* of paddy for 190 people – 60 people who study *Ṛgveda* and *Apūrvam*, 60 people who study *Yajurveda* and *Apūrvam*, 20 people who study *Sāntōka sāman*, 50 people who study *Talavakāra sāman*, *Apūrvam*, *Vājasaneyam*,

Bhautānyasūtra, Sattujāta sūtram --- at the rate of six *nālis* of paddy per day per person. (Pondicherry Inscriptions, Part II, pp. 50-51)

I.1.8. Madhurantakam taluk of the Chingleput District --- A. D. 1067.

The Tirumukkūḍal of Virarājendra contains a detailed account of the *vedapāṭhaśāla* in which *R̥gveda* and *Yajurveda* were taught. Provision was made here for one teacher and ten pupils for the studying of each of these two Vedas.

I.1.9. Tiruvāṭuturai, Tanjore Dist. --- A.D. 1121

An inscription of the third year of Vikramacōla, A. D. 1121, from Tiruvāṭuturai mentions gifts of land given to Bḥṭṭas who were well versed in the Vedas.

I.1.10. Tiruviḍaikkaḷi, Tanjore Dist. ---- A.D. 1229

This inscription mentions the provision made for the free feeding in the local *maṭha* of Brahmin students of the Vedanta from the Malabar country (276 of ARE 1925).

Apart from the several inscriptions that are mentioned above, we also see that several Tamil literary texts mentions the Vedic learning or speaks about the Vedic scholars:

I. 2. Tamil Literature

I.2.1. Paṭṭinappālai, (பட்டினப்பாலை)

<p>நீர் நாப்பண்ணும் நிலத்தின் மேலும் ஏமாப்ப இனிது துஞ்சிக் கிளை கலித்துப் பகை பேணாது வலைஞர் முன்றில் மீன் பிறழவும் விலைஞர் குரம்பை மா ஈண்டவும் கொலை கடிந்தும் களவு நீக்கியும் அமரர் பேணியும் ஆவுதி அருத்தியும் நல் ஆனொடு பகடு ஓம்பியும் நான் மறையோர் புகழ் பரப்பியும் பண்ணியம் அட்டியும் பசும் பதம் கொடுத்தும் பண்ணியம் முட்டா தண்ணிழல் வாழ்க்கைக் கொடும் ஏழி நசை உழவர் (194- 205)</p>	<p>nīr nāppaṇṇum nilattiṅ mēlum ēmāppa iṇitu tuñcīk kiḷai kalittup pakai pēṇātu valaiñar munṛil mīṇ piṛalavum vilaiñar kurampai mā iṇṭavum kolai kaṭintum kaḷavu nīkkiyum amarar pēṇiyum āvuti aruttiyum nal āṇoṭu pakaṭu ōmpiyum nāṇ maraiyōr pukaḷ parappiyum paṇṇiyam aṭṭiyum pacum patam koṭuttum puṇṇiyam muṭṭā taṇṇilal vāḷkaik koṭum ēli nacai uḷavar (194- 205)</p>
<p>நான் மறையோர் புகழ் பரப்பியும் (l. 202)</p>	<p>“spread the fame of Brahmins who recite the four Vedas”.</p>

I.2.2. Kalittokai (4th A.D.)

<p>ஆறு அறி அந்தணர்க்கு, அருமறை பல பகர்ந்து, தேறு நீர் சடைக் கரந்து, திரிபுரம் தீ மடுத்துக், கூறாமல் குறித்ததன் மேல் செல்லும், கடும கூளி, மாறாப் போர் மணி மிடற்று எண் கையாய்! கேள் இனி;</p>	<p>āru ari antaṇarkku, arumarai pala pakarntu, tēru nīr caṭaik karantu, tiripuram tī maṭuttuk, kūrāmal kuṛittataṅ mēl cellum, kaṭum kūḷi, mārāp pōr maṇi miṭarṛu eṇ kaiyāy! kēḷ iṇi;</p>
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I. 2.3. Tevaram (7.100.8)

அர ஒலி, ஆகமங்கள்(ள்) அறிவார் அறி தோத்திரங்கள்,
விரவிய வேதஒலி, விண்எலாம் வந்து எதிர்ந்து இசைப்ப,
வரம் மலி வாணன் வந்து(வ்) வழிதந்து, எனக்கு ஏறுவது ஓர்
சிரம் மலி யானை தந்தான்---நொடித்தான்மலை உத்தமனே.

_ara _oli, _ākamaṅkaḷ(!) _arivār _ari tōttiraṅkaḷ,
viraviya vēta_oli, viṇ_elām vantu _etirntu _icaippa,

varam mali vāṇaṇ vantu(v) vaḷitantu, _eṇakku _ēruvatu _ōr
ciram mali yānai tantāṇ---noṭittāṇmalai _uttamaṇē.

(அர ஒலி, ஆகமங்கள் அறிவார் அறிதோத்திரங்கள் விரவிய வதஒலி, விண் எலாம் வந்து எதிர்ந்து இசைப்பு: `the sound of the name arakara, the sound of ākamaṅkaḷ, the sound of songs of praise which were sung by intelligent people and **the sound of the vētam-s which were of many kinds**, to reverberate throughout the sky filling it completely.' Translation by VM Subramanya Iyer, *Digital Tevaram*, http://www.ifpindia.org/digitaldb/site/digital_tevaram/INDEX.HTM)

1.2.4. Divyaprabandham – Tirumaṅkai Ālvār's Periya Tirumōḷi 4.2.2

pallavan tikaḷ pūṅkaṭam pēriyak kāḷiyaṇ paṇavarāṅkil,
ollai vanturaṇ pāyntaru naṭaṅceyta umparkkō nuṇaikōyil,
nalla ventaḷal **mūṇru-nāl vētam-ai vēḷviyō ṭ-āraṅkam,**
valla vantaṇar malkiya nāṅkūr vaṇpuru ṭōttamamē (4.2.2)

“Vaṇpuruṣōttamam [in] Naṅkūr, [where] flourish brahmins capable [of mastering]
the three hot fires, the four Vedas, the five sacrifices [and] the six aṅgas.”

Thus from the inscriptions as well as from the early Tamil texts we get an idea of the antiquity of the Vedic studies in Tamil Nadu.

II. Brahmins of Tamil Nadu

II. 1. As MAHADEVAN (2009: 50) observes, based on the Pallava-Cōḷa copper plate epigraphy, it seems that, in the beginning, the Brahmins of Tamil Nadu were “settling in the north and north-east parts of the Tamil country, the Tonṭaimaṅṭalam area and its northern outskirts in the Vēnkata hills and what is southern Andhra Pradesh today, and later [in] the Kaveri delta. Their places of domicile before arrival in the Tamil country are, in most cases, villages in southern Andhra Pradesh, but these Brahmins as a whole are traceable from their Śrauta Sūtra traditions ultimately to the Mathurā region of the Yamunā river.”

II.2. Presence of Brahmins in the Sangam Tamil Country

Arrival and presence of Brahmins in the Tamil country during the Sangam period is well known. It is worthy of note that about ten percentage of the Sangam poets were brahmins. We find enough evidence to show the existence of brahmins in Sangam literature:

“And all those horses of our man of the tall hills
have tufts of hair like the Brahman urchins of our town”
(*Aiṅkurunūru* 202; A.K.Ramanujan's [1985: 9] translation)

“[T]he tuft on his head is like the mane of a horse”
(*Puṇānūru* 310:11; George Hart's [1999: 179] translation)

The description of the *agnicayana* in the *Puṇānūru* 224 (ll. 6-9) further confirms that the brahmins were performing the *śruta* rituals during that time and we see, too, the reference to four *gotras* in the Sangam texts: Kaundīniya-Vasiṣṭha, Kauśika-Viśvāmitra, Ātreya, Gautama-Āṅgīrasa.

II. 3. Śākhās mentioned in some early records

From the Taṅṭamtōṭṭam copper plates of Nandivarman II, dated to his Regnal Year 33, A.D. 765-766, we get details of 467 families and also the *vedaśākhās* of 442 families (Āpastamba 274;

Hiraṇyakeśi 18; Bhāradvāja 1; Pravacana 101; Āśvalāyana 7; Candogā 23; Kātyāyana 8; Agniveśya 2; Pavīliya 4; Jaiminīya 1; Kalarakha 1; Kaṭu 1; Goduma 2)

Also, in the Karandai plates, we see a grand grant to 1080 families by Rajendra I, (A.D. 1019-1021), a vast area, *Tribhuvanamahādāvic-caturvēdimaṅgalam*, named for the king's mother, made up from some 52 villages, covering a total area of 20,305 acres and in this too we get the details of the *śākhās* of brahmins for whom the grant was meant: Āpastaṃba 615; Hiraṇyakeśi 42; Bhāradvāja 11; Āgastya 29; Baudhāyana 54, Āgniveśya 2, Āśvalāyana 154, Ś/Jāmbavya 4; Drāhyāyaṇa 77; Jaiminīya 41; Kātyāyana 50.

III. The present position of Vedic Śākhās and Vedic recitation²

III. 1. According to traditional accounts, in the beginning, there seem to have been one thousand and one hundred and thirty one branches (*R̥gveda* – 21 branches of which two are still current; *Yajurveda* – 101, of which six are alive; *Sāmaveda* – 1000 branches, only three in existence, *Atharvaveda* – with nine branches, only two surviving) of the Vedas, but now, it seems only thirteen are available today.

Veda Śākhās

ṚGVEDA	YAJURVEDA	SĀMAVEDA	ATHARVAVEDA
1. Śākala	I. Kṛṣṇayajurveda: - Three recensions -Kaṭha (Kapisthala) -Maitrāyaṇīya -Taittirīya	Kauthuma	Paippalāda
2. Bāṣkala	2. Śuklayajurveda -Mādhyandina -Kaṇva	Rāṇāyaṇīya	Śaunaka
		Jaiminīya	

At present the most widely spread *śākhā* in Tamil Nadu is the Kṛṣṇa-Yajurveda, followed with the *R̥gveda*, *Sāmaveda* and lastly the *Śuklayajurveda*. Even though we have seen in some epigraphs that the *Atharvaveda* was taught earlier in Tamil Nadu, now *Atharvaveda* is extant in Tamil Nadu or even in the south.

In Tanjore and Tirunelveli villages we find the Coḷiyas, who are Pūrvaśikhābrahmins, or who wear their tuft on the front of their heads, followers of *R̥gveda* (*Śākalaśākhā*). Ālaṅguḍi, Rādhamaṅgalam, Kunniyūr, Tiruvaīyāru are the villages in Tanjore having *R̥gvedins*. They are also to be found in Vallanāḍu (in Śrīvaikuṅṭham taluq) in the Tirunelveli and Vemabttur near Śivagaṅga. The Mukkāṇis of Tiruccendūr too are followers of *R̥gveda*.

Since Kṛṣṇa-Yajurveda is widely spread in the Tamil land we may look into the present position of *Śukla-Yajurveda* in its Kāṇva school. They are found in Iṅjikkollai, Alivalam, Śedinīpuram and Tiruvārūr in Tanjore district, Śiruhāmaṇi and Pruhāmaṇi in Trichy district and near Śermādevi in Tirunelveli district. In Trichy there are around fifty *Śukla-Yajurvedins* at Vaihanallūr and there is a *pāṭhaśālā* too for *Śukla-Yajurveda*. We also find the representation of this *śākhā* among the temple *arcakas* of Kāñcī, Śrīrangam etc.

It is worth to note here that in Tamil Nadu, in Cidambaram, there is one Parameśvara Dikṣitar who studied four Vedas under different gurus. While the *Yajurveda-Maitrāyaṇīya śākhā* was known

² For a detailed study on the present position of Veda śākhās, see WITZEL, Michael, Forthcoming.

only to two members in Nasik, during 1976, Parameśvara Dikṣitar along with one Kalyana Rama Sarma learned the entire *Yajurveda-Maitrayaṇīya śākhā* from one Nana Joshi of Nasik. Parameśvara Dikṣitar so far taught the *Maitrāyaṇīya śākhā* to nearly thirty members and made it a living tradition, but sadly now in Nasik, where it was prevalent once upon a time, now has lost its tradition.

Let us now turn to the Sāman traditions of Tamil Nadu. The most prevalent school of Sāmaveda now in Tamil Nadu is the Kauthuma also known as Chandoga Sāman in inscriptions. There are two styles known in Tamil Nadu of the Sāma recitation. In Mullandram and other places in the northern parts of tamil country, there is the Sāman-singing representing an older form. In this style, letters like Ka, Ca, Ta which were used in manuscripts as notation symbols intruded into the text and the singing, as integral parts of the recital. Thus this style is also known as *Kacaṭa* or *Kāttāyi Sāman*. Two vedic scholars who were dissatisfied with the employment of these notational syllables and their intrusion into the text went to Poona and brought with them manuscripts of Saman and a style of singing in which the consonantal symbols and their intrusion into the text were not found and numerals 1, 2, 3, were used for notation.³

Apart from Mullandram, we find Sāmaveda families in Aḍayappalam, Anakkāvūr, Panayūr and Paranūr. In this, the Panayūr-style is a mixed one.

The Jaiminīya-Sāman transmission can be classified into three groups:

1. Namputiri Jaiminīyas of the Central Kerala
2. Coḷiya Jaiminīs of Koṭuntirappali, Palakkad.
3. Coliya Jaiminīs in Tamil Nadu (Tokur, Trichy Dist.);

The Koṭuntirappalli also is known for its Jaiminīya-Sāma brahmins, who are of Tamil Nadu. At present there are three senior scholars who teach Jaiminīya Sāman, as well lead role in the performances of the *grhya* rituals, the senior being, Sri. K. R. Tiruveṅkaṭanātha Sarma.⁴

It is worth to note that for the indication of the palm and fingers of the musical notation during the recitation, it seems the Koṭuntirappalli brahmins follow a manual named, the *Pāṇīkriyātantra* or *Dhāraṇa* of Sabhāpati and the movements of the palm and fingers they follow are quite different from the Kauthuma reciters.

In Tamil Nadu, we find the Jaiminīya-Sāman brahmins in Tōkūr village situated outside Trichy on the banks of the river Kaveri. In late 1960's with the support from the Kanchi Mutt, Sri. T. Rajagopala Aiyankar founded a Jaiminīya *pāṭhaśāla* to shore up the Tamil chanting traditions of the Jaiminīya-Sāma. At present one Makarabhusanam Aiyankar, who hails from Tentirupperai (Tirunelveli) is the teacher in this *pāṭhaśāla*.

As we have seen earlier some inscriptions refer to the Talavakāra-Sāman school. According to scholars Talavakāra is only older or alternative name for the Jaiminīya. We still find the Talavakāra *śākhā* in some parts of Tamil Nadu, Viz. At Kiḍāṁangalam, Iḷayāttangudi, Śeṣamūlai etc. in Tanjore District and also in some location of Trichy. Some of them are found to be Vaiṣṇavas. In 1923 there was a move to setting up of a school for teaching Talavakāra Sāman at Śrīrangam.

IV. Vedic affiliations of those serving as priests or *arcakas* in Temples

The Dikṣitas of Cidambaram Naṭarāja temple represents the *Ṛgveda* and *Kṛṣṇayajurveda*. While all the *Kṛṣṇayajurveda* priests are of Bodhāyana the *Ṛgveda* are of Āśvalāyana. While the *archakas* of

³ cf. RAGHAVAN 1962.

⁴ cf. FINNIAN Forthcoming.

the Govindarāja shrine in the Cidambaram temple complex are Vaikhānasas following *Kṛṣṇayajurveda*, in Śrīraṅgam all the temple *arcakas* are Kāṇva-Śukla-Yajurvedins. In Kāñcī, those of the Varadarāja temple are Śukla-Yajurvedins, while in the Triplicane temple Madars, are Kṛṣṇa Yajurvedins.

IV. 1. Āgniveśya Brahmins of Avudaiyar Kovil

Special mention needs towards the Āgniveśya school of *Kṛṣṇayajurveda*. The brahmins of the Avudaiyar Kovil, are *Pūrvaśikhā* brahmins of the *Taittirīyaśākhā* of the *Kṛṣṇa-Yajurveda* School, who belong to the Śōḷīya Śaiva group of brahmins. The brahmin families settled in the area around the Avudaiyar temple seem to be the only ones following the *Āgniveśyagr̥hyasūtra* today. In fact, at present there are only eleven such families and all of them are in one way or other affiliated to the Avudaiyar temple. It is said that only Āgniveśyas are authorised to worship in this temple:

आग्निवेश्यकुलात्⁵ अन्यगोत्रसम्भूतमानवः त्रिमूर्तिदेशिकं देवं स्पृशेत्, स्नपनमाचरेत्।
सद्योजातादिमन्त्रैश्च शतं हुनेत्। (Ms. A, p. 5)

In fact, most of the manuscripts used for the Trivandrum edition of *Āgniveśyagr̥hyasūtra*⁶, which is the only available edition of this text, were collected from members of the Āgniveśya families settled around the Avudaiyar temple. I was able to procure two *prayogas* on the *Āgniveśyagr̥hyasūtra* which had not previously been known to scholars and these *prayogas* also seem to have originated from the Avudaiyar Kovil area.

There are three different *sūtra* traditions among the *Pūrvaśikhās* of *Taittirīyaśākhā* of the *Kṛṣṇa-Yajurveda* School, namely the *Baudhāyana* (both *Śrauta* and *Gr̥hya*), the *Vādhūla* (both *Śrauta* and *Gr̥hya*) and the *Āgniveśya* (only *Gr̥hya*). As discussed above, the priests of the Avudaiyar Kovil belong to this third group of Āgniveśya⁷. It is significant that all three groups share a tradition of performing temple rituals. While the Baudhāyana brahmins in Tamil Nadu, who are chiefly temple priests known as Gurukkals, adhere to the Śaivāgama praxis and undergo Śaiva initiation, the priests of the Avudaiyar Kovil do not undergo Śaiva initiation and follow Vedic liturgies for their temple rituals. The Vādhūla Nambudiri brahmins of Kerala⁸, especially the Taraṇanallūr family of Nedumpally Mana⁹, settled in Irinjālikuda area, are the chief priests of ten famous Viṣṇu

⁵ आग्निवेश्यकुलात् conj: आग्नेयवेश्यकुलात् Ms.

⁶ Five manuscripts are used for the Trivandrum edition. Among these, three manuscripts are from Avudaiyar Kovil, one from Arantangi (Tanjore District) and another from Kadiramangalam (Tanjore District). The chief priest of Avudaiyar temple is in possession of one manuscript of the *Āgniveśyagr̥hyasūtra*, but it is not clear whether this manuscript is used for the edition or not.

⁷ The brahmins settled in Avudaiyar Kovil belongs to the Chozia category of brahmins. The Chozia brahmins are divided into several groups, namely Tirukattur, Madalur, Visalur, Puthalur, Senganur, and Avudaiyar Kovil. Among these only the Avudaiyar Kovil brahmins follow the *Āgniveśyagr̥hyasūtra*.

⁸ Today there exist sixteen Vādhūla families in Kerala, of which the Kiṭāṇṇaśseri and Neṭumpalli seem to be the prominent ones and they hold several manuscript copies of the *Vādhūlagr̥hyasūtra*. cf. MIEKO KAJIHARA (2008-2009; 27-28).

⁹ It is said that the first group of temple priests to come to Kerala were the Taraṇanallūr family. The Taraṇanallūr family claims that they arrived in Kerala from the Nellūr area of Andhra Pradesh (as may be confirmed by their family name). The descendants of this family are presently settled in *Iriṅjālikuda* near Trichur. One of the inscriptions found in *Iriṅjālikuda* dates to 855 A. D (cf. S.A.S. SARMA, 2009:319-320) and this may indicate that the Taraṇanallūr family were settled in the area by this time.

According to the editor of the *Āgniveśyagr̥hyasūtra*, there were followers of *Āgniveśyagr̥hyasūtra* in certain villages on the banks of the Uttara Pinakini (modern Pennar), in Nellore District, but he later found this to

shrines in Kerala, whose temple rituals are based on the Kerala ritual manuals, which incorporate several Vedic passages in their ritual process and are quite different from the late South Indian *śaiva* manuals being used by the previously mentioned Gurukkals of Tamil Nadu.¹⁰

V. Eightfold techniques to preserve the Vedic texts

For the perfection of memorization and preservation of the Vedic text in its purity, eightfold techniques are devised:

*jaṭā mālā śikhā rekhā dhvajo daṇḍo ratho ghaṇaḥ /
aṣṭau vikṛtayaḥ proktāḥ kramapūrvā manīṣibhiḥ //*
(Vedavikṛtilakṣaṇasaṃgraha.h (BORI, Pune, 1978), Vyādikṛtā Vikṛtavallī 5) //

The *Aṣṭavikṛtilakṣaṇāni*, a text that deals on the eight *vikṛtis*, salutes the brahmins who recite the *jaṭā-pāṭha* etc.

*jaṭādivikṛtīnām ye pārāyaṇaparāyaṇāḥ /
mahātmāno dvijaśreṣṭhāste jñeyāḥ paṅktipāvanāḥ //* (*Aṣṭavikṛtilakṣaṇāni*)

These are devised for the perfection of memorization and preservation of the Vedic text in purity. There are even now a large number of Vedic scholars in Tamil Nadu proficient in *Pada*, *Krama*, *Jaṭa* and *Ghana*, but only a few who could recite the other forms *Mālā*, *Ratha* etc. The *Varṇakrama* is interesting as it gives a complete phonetic description of each sound and shows the keen and accurate phonetic sense and knowledge of the ancient Indian Vedic scholar, and there are some even today being trained or capable of reciting this *Varṇakrama* in Tamil Nadu, in Maṇṇārkuḍi and in Maṇakkāl.

VI. Contribution of Tanjore for the Vedic Tradition in Tamil Nadu

It seems that the *śrauta* tradition of present-day Tamil Nadu has largely spread from the Tanjore District and that its flourishing there is largely due to the patronage of the Nayak of the 15th century, (especially of the then Chancellor Govinda Dikṣitar) and during this period, in 1542 the Raja Veda Pathasala in Kumbakonam for the study of *Rg*, *Yajur* and *Sāmaveda* was established. This institution is still functioning. It is noteworthy that there are still more than fifty *āhitāgnis* in this district. Sengalipuram is a big center of Vedic ritual and Sri Anantharama Dikshitar of this village propagated the cause of *śrauta* religion.

It is also essential to mention here the great contributions of Sri Candrasekharasarasvati Swamigal of Kachipuram Mutt, who has been instrumental in spreading the Vedic education in Tamil Nadu in the recent years, and especially in promoting the *śākhās* that were at the edge of extinction, such as the *Maitrāyaṇīya-śākhā* of the Kṛṣṇa-Yajurveda.

be incorrect (Ravi Varma, 1940:vi). But since the above mentioned Vādhūla family, the Taraṇanallūr family, claim that they are from Nellur, Andhra Pradesh, there may be a chance that the *Āgniveśyagrhyasūtra* brahmins as well as the Vādhūla brahmins come from this area and there might have been a settlement of these two groups there or it may be that they both came from the area before they accepted their present *grhyasūtras*.

¹⁰ According to the Taraṇanallūr family they have a ritual manual known as *Anuṣṭhānagrantham* (also known as *Paraśurāmapaddhati*) meant exclusively for them. This is not a complete ritual manual, but contains only certain do's and don'ts. It looks as though they also make use of other ritual manuals which are generally used in the temples of Kerala. For a detailed study of ritual manuals of Kerala, see S.A.S. SARMA (2009:320-339).

VII. Bhavatrāta's (author of *Jaiminīyaśrautasūtravṛtti*) ancestors belong to Tamil Nadu.

As we have noticed in the Tribhuvanai inscription, we see that in the Pāṭhaśāla there, the Satyāśāda or the *Hiraṇyakeśīyasūtra* of the Kṛṣṇayajurveda was taught. The existence of Satyāśāda brahmin in this area is further confirmed by the commentaries by Māṭṛdatta on the Satyāśāda Śrauta Sūtra and Gṛhya Sūtra, whose family belonged to Tiṭṭaṅguḍi in Tamil Nadu. Bhavatrāta, son of Māṭṛdatta who wrote commentaries on Kauṣītakīgṛhyasūtra and Jaiminīyaśrautasūtra confirms that their families are from Tiṭṭaṅguḍi, in Tamil Nadu:

tasmin samjajñirē vaṁśē sāmagā guṇaśālinah /
simhā iva suvarṇādrau dhiṣṇyāgnaya ivādhvare //
sa vasiṣṭhakuṭim nāma grāmaṃ coleşv_avekṣitam /
(Bhavatrāta, *Jaiminīyaśrautasūtravṛtti*)

VIII. Conclusion

As Prof. Rajendran in his concluding speech of the seminar (RAJENDRAN: 2014:1) held in Kadavallur in 2014 observed (in which the present paper too was presented), though “South India is far removed from the geographical area in which most of the Vedic hymns were composed, it has been a safe haven of the Vedic culture for centuries, preserving, reviving and enriching the tradition with institutional support, pedagogic tools, explanatory texts, as well as ritualistic and textual performances.” The royal patronage provided to the Vedic learning in Tamil Nadu is quite visible from the several inscriptions of Tamil Nadu. It is also noteworthy that among the different recitation styles that are known to exist, the one followed in Tamil Nadu seems to be the easily accessible one.

The role of the Vedic scholars of Tamil Nadu in keeping alive the vedic tradition even today calls for a special attention and it is necessary to bring-out a comprehensive survey of Vedic scholars and Vedic institutions of Tamil Nadu. As Prof. Raghavan observed, “as south India is the nursery-bed from which the Vedic saplings could be transplanted to other parts of India, efforts should be taken to see that South India and the Tamil Land which its national poet Subramanya Bharati described as “the Tamil land full of Veda” (Vedam nirainda Tamilnadu) does not lose its precious Vedic heritage.” (RAGHAVAN 1956: 24)

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