



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

## A Descriptive Study on the History and Role of Women in Tamil Nadu

**Beulah E.**, Research Scholar, Department of Social Sciences (English) Himalayan University, Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh, India.

**Dr. Vinay Tripathi**, Research Guide, Department of Social Sciences (English) Himalayan University, Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh, India.

### ABSTRACT

*The scenarios of Indian literature has never been equally for both men and women, it is always dominating by men's perspective. While there are very less women poets who broke the myths and leaves a permanent mark to Tamil literature. From the various and different literary works in entire history since beginning to medieval period until middle of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Curiously, there are quiet dissimilarities in the recent period of Tamil poetry at the time of Sangam period. Poetry is mainly considered as the popular literary genre. It has been highly loved and appreciated by women as it is a way of showing the feeling and emotions of the women. The article also speaks related with the historical thoughts of women from the Sangam period age to 21<sup>st</sup> century and role of women in the Tamil literature.*

**Keywords:** Sangam Age, Tamil Literature, Tamil poetry, Women

### I. INTRODUCTION

The common growths can be thoughts by the standard of the education level and dominance level of women. Every woman has their own place in the Tamil society. Tamil and is mainly considered as the birth place of culture and traditions which is specific in giving importance to the women in field of the education. Freedom and right to consent property, right to concentrates on eh religious rituals and standard various centuries from Sangam age. Most of the women held very essential places in ancient society of Tamil. They have played an authoritative role in the society and in fact assumed with high appreciation. Additionally, they are identified as the custodian of the family rituals. In the period of the Sangam age between 300 BCE to 300 CE, most of the women had explained and exhibit their cultures, rituals and identified with Politics, Military and Business. 3sangams thrived

under the royal support of the Pandyas, Cholas and Cheras which is happened between BC 300 to AD 300 years which is called as Sangam age in the history of the Tamil. Several literary works thrived at the times of this age [1].

1. The first Sangam which was held at the Madurai and was attended by legendary sages and gods but none of the literary work of this Sangam was attainable at that time.
2. The second Sangam basically held at Kapadapuram but the entire literary works had freezing except Thokappiyam.
3. The third Sangam was basically held at Madurai was founded by Mudathirumaran and was attended by the various number of poets who produced capacious literature but only a few had existed.

There are several numbers of pieces in the Sangam literature like Tholkappiam, Aganaanuru, Kurunthogai, Pura-Nanuru, Madurai Kanji, Nartrinai, Nedunelvadai, Tirukural, Naladiyar and Silapathikaram [2].

## II. STATUS OF WOMEN IN SANGAM AGE

As per the Pillai (1968), there was lots of responsibility on the women of Sangam age. While, the husband earned money and it was the duty and responsibility of women to reserve it for the future requirements and maintenance of her family. They have also represented a clear and fine image related to the women of Sangam age and their standard. There was clear partiality between men and women in both legally and socially. The medical care of women known for their shyness, love and implicit acceptance and gratification of elder's advice without any query", were the fundamental feminine attributes [3]. It has been cited in Tholkapiam that terrifying, comprehending, speaking good words also comprised in this list. Most of the Society in Tamil has been highlighting that the most essential feature of women. Women are completely free to attend the functions of public that took place in their towns or villages and involve in the communication taken place. As per the theory of Aganaanuru, most of the women of Sangam age enjoyed the freedom with better education and learning. For example, Sangam literature says that there were near about 26 poetesses in that period. Several women poetess are Avvaiyar, Kavar Pentu (Purananuru), Velliveedhiyar and Ponmudiyar. "Avvaiyar" was the popular poetess of this age. There were about 58 poems written by Avvaiyar in the literature of Sangam. MAndodri and sita are the wives of the rivals, who were praised for their purity. Gargi Vachkanvi was cited for the education and learning of the women form the ancient period of time. She was also invited to join the assembly of scholars to discuss philosophical subject. The women were included in the warrior group that was mentioned in the Purananuru, as Mudinmahlir. Several women due to their participation in the multifarious social and religious facilities placed at the greatest pedestal in the ladder of eh social standard [4].

### III. WOMEN'S LITERARY INNATE AND VIRTUES IN SANGAM LITERATURE

Many times the literature has witnessed the roles of women developing from Sangam ages in earlier times. Tamil literatures of Sangam have the greatest number of women poets in the world that had potential to compose poems and also joined assemblies. Sangam literature Purananuru provides proofs related to the ultimate courage exhibit by women at the times of war or fight. In 10527 BC, Pandya King Kaisina Vazhudhi was founded the first Tamil Sangam in which near about 4449 poets gathered in this Sangam. Some of the works like Mudhunarai, Mudukuru, and Kalariyavilai were written in this time period. Some of the outstanding poets were Anji Attai Makaḷ Nakaiyar, Allur Nan Mullaiyar, Adi mandiyar, Uttiyar, Unpittaiyar, Okkur Masattiyar, Avvaiyar, Nannakaiyar, Kakkaiyattaiyar, Nachellaiyar, Kavarpendu, Kuramakal Ilaveyṇiyar Nakkaṇṇaiyar, Nettimaiyar, Nedumpalliyattai, Pari Makalir, Puncan Uttiraiyar, Budappaṇḍiyan Devi, Perunkoppeṇḍu, Peymakaḷ Ilaveyini, Pottiyar, Pondaippasalaiyar, Marokkattu Nappasalaiyar, Varumulaiyaritti, Veṇṇikkuyattiyar, Vellividiyar, Veri patiya Kamakkaṇṇaiyar [5].

### IV. SEVEN STAGES OF WOMEN IN SANGAM AGE

This Sangam literature classifies the life of women in 7 phases. The 7 stages of women form their childhood to suitable old age. The Elu paruva makalir and those phases are the following:

- 1) Petai Stage (innocent child) from the age 5 to 7 (3 years)
- 2) Petumpai Stage (young girl) 8 to 11 (4 years)
- 3) Mankai Stage (adolescent) 12 and 13 (2 years)
- 4) Matantai Stage (nubile girl) 14 to 19 (6 years)
- 5) Arivai Stage (Maiden) 20 to 25 (6 years)
- 6) Terivai Stage (womanhood) 26 to 32 (7 years) and
- 7) Perilampen Stage (more matured woman) 32 to 40 (9 years)

### V. WOMEN IN VEDIC PERIOD

The times of Vedic period between 1500-1200 BCE, women were essence of the mystical and intellectual achievements. The Vedas have explained about these women who were both supplemented and loyal to their male partners. The rig Veda speaks related to the women at the time of the Vedic age, near about 3000 years ago women were also allotted a high place in the front of the society. They have also treated equally to men folk and enjoyed types of liberty that absolutely had societal sanctions. The basic concept of ancient Hindu Philosophy of "Shakti", the feminine principle of energy was also a byproduct in this period [6]. The forms of feminine of the absolute and the famous Hindu goddesses are known to have taken outlining in the Vedic era period. All these females' forms came to shows the various feminine types of qualities and energies of the Brahman. Goddess Kali depicts the destructive energy, Goddess Durga portrays the protective energy, and Goddess Lakshmi depicts the Nourishing image whereas Goddess Saraswati depicts the creative energy. The mention of the female academics and sages of the Vedic age like Ambhrniu, Romasa, Khona, Gargi and Vac in the Vedic lore corroborates this

view. All these highly intelligent and highly learned women, who select the path of the Vedic analysis were called 'brahmavadinis', and most of the women who have decided to continue the education after the married life were called as 'sadyovadhush'. Co-ed form perhaps existed in that period and both male and females got equal attention from the teacher [7].

## **VI. GREAT WOMEN POETESS OF SHAIIVAM, VAISHNAVAM & BUDDHISM LITERATURE**

### ***A. Shaivism Literature and Women Poetess***

There have been numerous extraordinary women who stood impressive in the Shaivism. Beginning from the mother of Universe Goddess Shakthi appeared to the whole world the genuine embodiment of devotion. It was karaikkal ammaiyar who sang the main Thiruppadhikam, which is likewise referred to as Muththa Thiruppadhikam and the holy people and lovers followed this with extraordinary adoration to this holy person. These women are brilliant in numerous points of view. They had a virtuous existence dedicating their lives totally in the profound pursuit. Mangayarkkarasiyar (50th Naayanmar), Isaiganiyar (63rd Naayanmar), and Karaikkal Ammaiyar (24th Naayanmar) were surprising women naayanmars who contributed for shaivism literature. The devotion of Mangayarkkarasiyar to Lord Shiva is described in the hagiographic sonnet Periyapuram ordered by Sekkizhar just as in the Tiruththondar Thogai composed by the artist holy person Sundarar. Karaikkal Ammaiyar is respected as a Tamil Shiva-bhakti holy person by Tamil people in south India and somewhere else who are Shaivas. She composed 143 stanzas communicating her recognition of and devotion (bhakti) to the Hindu divinity Shiva (Śiva). The 101-stanza sonnet entitled Arputat Tiruvantati, the twenty-refrain sonnet entitled Tiru Irattai Manimalai and two hymns set up with a good soundtrack in eleven stanzas entitled Tiruvalankattut Tiruppatikam. She is one of just three female named holy people in the legitimate Tamil Shiva-bhakti devotional custom (Siva-bhakti; devotional cooperation committed to the god Shiva), and the lone lady among those holy people to have wrote devotional works [8].

### ***B. Vaishnavism Literature and Women Poetess***

Andal nachiyar is the just alwar who composed sonnets about ruler Krishna and vaishnavism. She has composed Nachiar Thirumozhi and Thirupavai. Nachiar Tirumozhi is a bunch of 143 refrains composed by Andal, one of the twelve Azhwars in Vaishnavite convention. These 143 refrains are a piece of the 4000 celestial hymns of Nalayira Divya Prabandham. The sections are grouped into fourteen decades specifically, supplication to Kama, not to devastate sand château, Vastapraharana, protecting union with Lord, mentioning cuckoo to call her Lord, Kothai's marriage, lauding Vishnu's conch, Megha Sandesa, prangs of partition from Lord, looking for help to accomplish Lord and in recognition of Ranganatha. The Tiruppavai is an assortment of thirty verses (paasurams) written in Tamil by Andal (otherwise called Nachiyar), in recognition of the Lord Perumal, (Vishnu). It is essential for Divya Prabandha, a work of the twelve Alvars, and is significant piece of Tamil literature. Tiruppavai is

supposed to be 'Vedam Anaithukkum Vithagum', which means it is the seed of the vedam. As the whole tree and the trees coming from it are covered up in the inconspicuous seed, so is the whole substance of vedam covered up in Tiruppavai which can be uncovered uniquely under the direction of an acharya or a master who is knowledgeable in Vedic sacred writings [9].

### ***C. Buddhism Literature and Women Poetess***

Buddhism likewise made important commitment to the field of literature. A huge and differed nature of literature was delivered in the well-known language of the people. The Tripitakas and Jataka the main artistic works of the Buddhist are held in high regard and have been converted into different unknown dialects. Initially these works were written in Pali, the language of the majority. They are given a similar regarded position by the Buddhist which is given to the Vedas by the Brahmanas. These works are of much recorded significance since they help us in connecting additionally early history of old India. When of the Buddha, women were consistently losing the strict and instructive advantages as they were losing their privileges for upanayana. The affirmation of women to the Buddhist request gave an extraordinary impulse to the reason for female instruction among the ladies in commercial and aristocratic families. Like the Brahnavadanis in Brahmanical circles, a few ladies, in Buddhist families, used to lead an existence of chastity with the point of understanding and following the everlasting truths of religion and reasoning. Some of them like Sanghamitra went even to outside nations like Ceylon and got acclaimed as educators of the Holy Scriptures. Among the creators of the Therigatha, who were totally accepted to have gotten the salvation, 32 were unmarried women and ten married ones. Among the previous Subha, Anopama and Sumedha had a place with rich families who are said to have been charmed by rulers and rich shippers. At the point when an enormous level of young ladies were driving an existence of abstinence in pursuit of religion and theory it is nevertheless normal to assume that training among them probably been high [10].

### ***D. Jainism Literature and Women Poetess***

Parts of the Sangam literature in Tamil are ascribed to Jaina creators. The legitimacy and insertions are dubious, on the grounds that the Sangam literature presents Hindu thoughts. A few researchers express that the Jain bits of the Sangam literature were added about or after the eighth century CE, and they are not the old layer. The Sittannavasal sinkhole kept on being the Holy Sramana Abode until the seventh and eighth hundreds of years. Engravings over the leftover stone beds name beggars, for example, Tol kunrattu Kadavulan, Tirunilan, Tiruppuranan, Tittaicharanan, Sri Purnacandran, Thiruchatthan, Ilangowthaman, Sri Ulagathithan, and Nityakaran Pattakali as priests. Tamil Jain messages, for example, the Cīvaka Cintāmaṇi and Nālatiyār are credited to Digambara Jain creators. The Tamil Jain literature, as per Dundas, has been "affectionately read and remarked upon for quite a long time by Hindus just as Jains" (Tukol, 1980). The subjects of two of the Tamil stories, including the Silapadikkaram, have an inserted impact of Jainism. Jain literature is accepted to have been sent by an oral custom. It could be called attention to that the custom of woman researchers is referred to Puranas too. Bhagavata, for example, alludes to two little girls of Dakshayana as specialists in religious philosophy and theory.

The Jaina male instructor was called Bhatara and at times Acharya, which implies that he was an incredible researcher. The woman instructor was known by the term Kuratti. The male understudies were called Manakkar. The women understudies were called Manankkiyar and Pillaikal [11].

### ***E. Women Tamil Poetess in Current Century***

From antiquated period, Tamil literature has the most elevated number of women writers on the planet. It is astonishing to see they had the option to create sonnets and go to gatherings of artists. They express their sentiments differently. Despite the fact that women have progressed significantly, they actually face segregation in the general public, there are still people who don't care for a lady having voice and there are horrible violations against them. Malathi Maithri, Suganthi Subramanian, Thamizhachchi Thangapandian, Balabharathi, Bharathi Krishnan, Kanimozhi, Thamizhnadhi, Fahima Jahan, Geethanjali Priyadarshini and Sugirtharani were significant artists of Tamil in this current century.

## **VII. WOMEN STATUS IN TAMIL NADU**

Tamil Nadu has an incredible custom of legacy and culture that has created more than 2000 years and still keeps on thriving. This extraordinary social legacy of the province of Tamil Nadu developed through the standard of dynastic that governed the state during different periods of history. During the Sangam time frame three kinds of relationships were received. The primary was surreptitious love and romance which prompted marriage, the second was getting span through a bull battle and third one was organized marriage. The act of the spouse paying a specific measure of cash to the guardians of the young lady had come in to the vogue. There is no reference with respect to the marriage image of tying of the "Thali" at the same time, later it turns into a significant piece of the wedding service [12].

Man centric culture was there in Sangam Age. The Sangam literature says that women had the status not equivalent to men; they needed to observe Lots of rules, which were not intended to men. There was no proof for rebuffing man who left his better half and went to prostitute. There were proofs, which show that the Sangam age women were dealt with most noticeably awful, for instance, in Naladiyar a Tamil ruler named Nannan detained his adversary's spouses in a war. He shaved their hair and made it as a rope to tie the elephant. Ancient Tamil society accepted that the self-immolation of a 'Sati' would lead her universe of the Devas however the word 'Sati' isn't there it was known as bouncing in to the fire. Such women were known as Nallal. The strategies for sati were performed by the techniques for Sahamarana and Anumarana [13].

The situation of women in Tamil Nadu in the middle age time frame is concerned; women were not excluded from the delight in rights. They were under no limitations in their political, social, strict and financial exercises however modesty was considered the most elevated among their graces. This high ideal of womanhood and female excellences could be found in a portion of the hymns of the Alvars, for example, Tirumangai Alvar, a contemporary of Nandivarman, The women of Tiruvallikeni, in Madras were reflected as the peerless of earth, probably noted for their magnificence and virtues.

The introduction of female kid was considered as a distress in the archaic period. Since the guardians needed to pay share for the kid's marriage and furthermore they needed to look through groom in their equivalent position. There was a custom that the young lady youngsters ought to get married before 10 years. So the female child murder occurred. At the point when the female infant was conceived, they killed the kid by giving alcohol or spurge milk, paddy with milk, dumpling bovine dunk in the youngster's mouth and covering them alive. Anyway they attempted to control this evil in the middle age period yet fizzled. After freedom likewise this social underhanded was regular in specific spots like Usilam Patti in Madurai District, Dharmapuri, Namakkal and Salem of Tamil Nadu [14].

The Translation of the Tamil word 'Devaradiyal' in Sanskrit is Devadasi. The significance of the word is 'slave to God'. It is likewise deciphered as the slave worker of God, handmaiden of God, consecrated slave young lady, sanctuary young lady, sanctuary artist and sanctuary mistress. Devadasis were a class of women who should have been committed to the administration of sanctuaries. Emblematically they were joined in marriage with some God. During the basic function called 'Pottukattu or Trinket tying', the young lady was married to the God in the sanctuary; she ought to give herself to the administration of God. After the hallowed marriage, they were not permitted to have any further marriage with any human being.

The Self - Respect development in Tamil Nadu under the administration of Periyar E.V.R. had unequivocally pushed the need in between standing marriage and widow relationships. The development has unequivocally against to the shades of malice of kid marriage and Devadasi framework. It began promulgation for empowering relationships of widows. Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy was begun in Avvai Home. She was the first Women Legislator in Quite a while. What's more, she presented Devadasi Act was passed in 1947. Suhbulakshmi Ammal, the youngster widow of Tamil Nadu took an interest in the mission of kid relationships and different wrongs. She established the Sarada Ladies Union, the widows Home and the Sarada Vidyalyaya. The antiquated Tamil sources tell about the unmistakably women status in Tamil Nadu [15].

## VIII. CONCLUSION

At present time, most of the women had faced their opportunities in various sector of literature and are separated with regard that they are women. Deep preferences and severe poverty against women produced a merciless process of judgement that completely keeps them satisfying their entire potential. 21<sup>st</sup> century is known as the century for entire change. This globe is ready for “the shift of the ages”. In this era, love and compassion will rule the roost and all the women with her natural traits of concern will scatter the seeds of worldwide transformation. All these modifications have already begun and soon they will gain an extraordinary momentum. In the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it does not require to look at the historical injustices done to her. Now its time to put all that behind her and look onward to her to empower the role in this “Aquarian age”. Nonetheless, it has been showed by different literatures that women association and welfare programmes in Tamil Nadu growth of the standard of women poetess mainly in the field of literature.

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