

Religious Beliefs among ancient Tamils as portrayed in Patirruppattu

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Caṅkam Literature, withstanding the test of time, is the pride and privilege of the Tamils and it shows the highly esteemed culture and grandeur of the people. It specialises in depicting the *akavāḷkkai* (internal life) which deals with the aspects of ideal love and the *puravāḷkkai* (external life) which deals with heroism, social aspects, political conditions, economic thoughts, cultural features and religious beliefs.

Pattuppāṭṭu (Ten Idylls) and *Etṭutokai* (Eight Anthologies) are collections of ancient Tamil Literature known as *Cankam* Literature. Most of the scholars agree that the *Caṅkam* works have been written between 200 B.C. - 200 A.D. (Chidambaranathan 1958:56). Dr. M. Varadarajan is of the opinion that the *Caṅkam* period might have ranged between 1000 B.C. or earlier and 200 A.D. (1957:1). This shows the antiquity of the *Caṅkam* Literature. These two collections contain songs written by poets belonging to nearly ten generations (Singaravelu 1966:1). The *Caṅkam* works were written by poets over a period of four or five centuries (Nadarajah 1966:1-2).

Patirruppattu is one of the famous eight anthologies (*Etṭutokai*) of the *Caṅkam* Literature. Scholars are not sure of its editor(s) or compiler(s). It is opined that the Cera King *Yānaikkaṅ Cēy Māntarañcēral Irumporai* might have compiled it himself or had it compiled by others (Agathiyalingam 1983:94). Though it is not possible to substantiate it, this opinion deserves consideration and closer study. It is to be noted that *Patirruppattu* is eminent among the *Cankam* works.

The Name of *Patirruppattu*

The word *Patirruppattu* literally means 'Ten into Ten' (10 x 10) or 'Tens of Ten'. When it denotes the anthology, it means the ten decades, imposed by ten poets in praise of ten *Cēra* kings. Scholars are also of the opinion that it is so called because it contains ten decades with ten poems each written in the metre called *akavarpā*. *Patirruppattu* originally had hundred verses in total. They sing about the valour and social values cherished by the ancient Tamils, styled as '*puram*'.

The Subject Matter of *Patirruppattu*

Information about some of the *Cēra* kings could be obtained from other *Caṅkam* works like the *Puranānūru*. But the complete details about the history and fame of those Cera kings could not be derived from them. On the other hand, *Patirruppattu* remains as an esteemed work on the history and fame of the Cera kings. *Patirruppattu* is also a work totally dedicated to singing the *purapporuḷ* (external life).

All the verses in the work belong to the Tamil literary subdivision called *pātān tinai* or poems devoted to singing the heroism and other virtues of worthy men.

An attempt is being made in this article to study the religious beliefs among ancient Tamils as depicted in *Patirrupattu*. Deity worship was very common among ancient Tamils. It was believed that these deities resided in hills, water fronts, trees and sometimes appeared in human form. All these had religious impact on the people. These concepts could be illustrated by four exemplary deities namely *Murukan*, *Korravai*, *Tirumāl*, *Tirumakaḷ* and a few minor deities.

Murukan

Murukan is worshipped and praised as the deity of the Dravidians (Vidhyanandhan 1954:116). He is the God of the Kurinci region (Tol. porul. 5). He is also called *cēyōṅ*. *Patirrupattu* has two references (11:6; 26:12) about *Murukan* but does not have any description of his appearance. The episode of *Murukan* cutting down the mango tree of *Cūrapanmā* is explained in *Patirrupattu*. *Tirumurukārruppaṭai* also refers to the episode of *Murukan* entering the sea and destroying *Cūrapanmā* who lived along with his fellow demons (45-46;59-61). To indicate that the sword of the Cera king stopped the enemies by cutting their bodies into two halves, the poet uses the episode of *Murukan* splitting the mango tree of *Cūrapanmā* as a comparison.

“*cūruṭai muḷumutal taṭinta pēricaik*
kaṭuñcina viṛal vēḷ kaḷiru
cevvāi ekkam vilaṅkunar aruppa” (Patir. 11:5-7)

(O *Cēralātā!*

Like the famous , angry and courageous *Murukan* who, having entered the broad, deep sea and cut at its root the mango tree of *Cūran* guarded by the distressing demons, rides the elephant, you cut those who oppose you with the red-edged steel (weapon))

To do this, *Patirrupattu* says that *Murukan* rode an elephant. The elephant ridden by *Murukan* is called *piṇimukam* (Tiru. 247). Other works also talk about *Murukan* riding on the elephant called *piṇimukam* (Pari. 5:2, 17:49; Puram. 56:8). Further, *piṇimukam* would also mean peacock (Pattu. 70). In the above verse *Murukan* is called *viṛal vēḷ*. From this it is clear that *Murukan* was valorous.

Murukan was fond of wars. The ancient cities which fell to and were destroyed by the wrath of *Murukavēḷ* are taken as analogises to describe the countries that fell to and were destroyed by the anger of the warriors of the *Cēra* King. *Patirrupattu* describes this as:

“*murukutaṅṅru kaṛutta kaliyaḷi mūṭūr*
urumpil kaṛrat taṅṅa niṅ
tiruntu toḷil vayavar cēriya nāṭē” (26:12-14)

(the districts destroyed during war by your warriors who are like undefeatable

death resemble the old towns that have lost their prosperity because *Murukan*, becoming angry had attacked them)

It may be deduced that the *mūtūr* of *Cūrapanmā* lost its prosperity due to the wrath of *Murukavēl*. In this verse *Murukan* is called *Muruku*. In *Caṅkam* literature, *Murukan* is often called *Muruku* (Maturai. 181; Kurun. 362; Ainkuru. 245, 247, 249). *Muruku* means Divine auspiciousness and it is an adjectival name for *Murukan* (Pattu. 357).

Further, reference about the ways in which *Murukan* was worshipped are not available in *Patirruppattu*. *Puṛaṇānūru* informs that the ancient Tamils had constructed temples for *Murukan* (299:6). From this it can be inferred that *Murukan* was worshipped and temples were constructed for Him.

Korravai

Korravai is another deity worshipped by the ancient Tamils. It is said that *Korravai* was the Victory-deity of the Dravidians. From *Patirruppattu* and other *Caṅkam* works it may be understood that *Korravai* was worshipped with sacrifice. S. Vidhyanandan is also of the same opinion (1954:125). *Korravai* is also considered as the Mother of *Murukan* (Pattin. 250). A verse in *Patirruppattu* says:

“*tumpai cāṅra meytayaṅku uyakkattu
nirampatu kuruti puṛampaṭiṅ allatu
maṭai etir koḷḷā aṅcuvaru marapiṅ
kaṭavuḷ ayiraiyiṅ nilaik
kēṭilavāka perumaṅiṅ pukaḷc*” (79:15-19)

(May your fame last like the *Ayirai* Hill of the feared deity (*Korravai*) who will not accept offerings unless sprinkled with the blood oozing out from the chest of the weary, suffering warriors (who are defeated) wearing *tumpai* flowers)

The above lines depict that *Korravai* was ceremonially fed with sacrifices after attaining victory in a war. It might have been a compulsory custom to worship *Korravai* with sacrifices. This conclusion is arrived at because of the information given by the above verse that *Korravai* would not accept the pali if it was not sprinkled with the blood running out of the wounds of the defeated heroes.

It is not certain whether the Deity was served with animal sacrifice. *Patirruppattu* or other works do not have evidence about animal sacrifice for her. A verse in *Patirruppattu* praises a *Cera* king saying,

“*cūtarvī vākai nannan tēyattuk
kuruti vitirṭta kuvavuc corruk kunrōtu
urukelu marapiṅ Ayirai parai*” (88:10-12)

(Destroying *Nannan* and his *vākai* tree with bright flowers, (you) worshipped the fearful deity at *Ayirai* with rice heaped like hills and sprinkled with his blood).

The above lines mean that the *Cēra* killed a king called *Nannan* and sprinkled his blood on a heap of rice meant for *Korravai*. Hence, it may be concluded that the *pali* (the sacrifice) meant only the mixing of the rice with the blood of the defeated and other food offered to *Korravai*. The lines of the *Patikam* which read,

“*irukatal nīrum orupakal āti
ayirai parai*” (3:7-8)

(Bathing in the vast, dark sea during the day (you) worshipped *Ayirai*)

show that the ancient Tamils took a bath before they worshipped *Korravai* who was considered as the mother of *Murukan* (Tiru.258). *Korravai* according to *Patirrupattu* dwelt in *Ayirai malai* (*Ayirai* hills). As *Murukan* and *Korravai* were deities of the *Kurinci* region and as they were considered as the deities of valour and victory, the idea that *Murukan* is the son of *Korravai* is strengthened. *Korravai* was worshipped for other purposes also in addition to war and victory.

Tirumāl and Tirumakal

Patirrupattu mentions that the ancient Tamils also worshipped the deity called *Tirumāl*. *Caṅkam* works refer to him as *Māl*, *Māyōn* and *Neṭiyōn* (Mullai.3;Maturai.591:Patir.15:39). The poet sings in praise of the *Cēra* king as follows:

“*maṇṇutai nālattu maṇṇuyirkku eñcā
tūtukkai taṇṭāk kaikaṭum tuppīn
puraivayīn puraivayīn periya nalki
ēmam ākiya cīrkelu viḷaviṇ
neṭiyōn aṇṇa nallicai
oṭiyā mainta*” (Patir. 15:35-40)

(Your hands are generous and strong because they give bounteous gifts continuously to the living beings of this earth.

So, your fame resembles that to *Neṭiyōn* who grants great gifts to the virtuous and is celebrated in happy festivals).

Here *Tirumāl* is called *Neṭiyōn*. *Cilappatikāram* also addresses *Tirumāl* as *Neṭiyōn* (22:60). A *Patikam* in *Patirrupattu* refers to *Tirumāl* as *Māyavannan* (7:8). This means His colour is black. The influence of the Aryans gave the name *Vishṇu* (*Vīṭṭumu*) to *Tirumāl*. The absence of the word *Vishṇu* in *Patirrupattu* and other *Caṅkam* works

show that the influence of the Aryans was negligible in the days when the *Caṅkam* works were written.

Tirumāl is the god of protection and preservation. The act of preservation of *Tirumāl* is not directly referred to in *Patirrupattu*. In the above reference *Tirumāl* is used as an analogy to the king who protected his subjects by providing them with materials required for sustaining themselves. Hence, it may be inferred that *Tirumāl*'s act of preservation is indirectly indicated here. As it was the practice to mention *Tirumāl*'s fame as a standard of comparison the poet uses it here to indicate the fame of the *Cēra* king.

Another verse of *Patirrupattu* talks about the ornaments of *Tirumāl*.

“vaṅṭūtu politārt tiruñemar akalattuk
kaṅporu tikirik kamaḷ kural tulāi
alaṅkal celvan cēvaṭi paravi” (31:7-9)

(praising the red feet of the deity who wears on his chest where *Lakshmi* resides, the beautiful garland of basil on which bees hum and holds the (*cakkaram*) discus that strikes the eyes).

It shows that *Tirumāl* wearing a garland of *tuḷaci* (basil) and bearing the *ālippatai* (the chakra or wheel) which was dazzling to the extent of blinding one's eyes. *Tiruñyemar akalam* indicates that *Tirumakaḷ* or *Lakshmi* is seated in the chest (heart) of *Tirumāl*. *Tirumakaḷ* residing in His chest is also supported by *Paripātal* (1:8). Further, *Patirrupattu* also says that the chest of the *Cēra* king was desired by *Tirumakaḷ* (40:13). This is mentioned merely to show the fame of the *Cēra*.

The deity of prosperity, *Tirumakaḷ* is addressed here as *Tiru*. *Patirrupattu* does not have any other information about *Tirumakaḷ*. In ancient days *Tirumakaḷ* was also considered as the guarding deity (Pattin. 291).

Further, *Patirrupattu* describes the ways in which *Tirumāl* was worshipped. This information is gathered from the following lines.

“maṅkeḷu ṅālattu māntar arāṅkuk
kaicumantu alaṅṅum pūcal mātirattu
nālvēru nanantalai oruṅkeḷuntu olippat
teḷḷuyar vaṭimaṇi eriyunar kallena
uṅṅāp paiṅṅi lam panitturai maṅṅi” (31:2-6)

(The united cry of the devotees of the earth with their up-stretched arms spreads simultaneously in all the four directions; men ring the tall bells with clear sound; those observing fast bathe in the cold bathing ghats).

The above verse shows the way in which prayer was offered to *Tirumāl*. Those who came to worship *Tirumāl* observed fast. *Patirrupattu* does not give the reasons for

fasting. Those who prayed to ask for favours would have to fast to get their wishes fulfilled. They bathed in holy waters. They raised their hands above their heads and prayed. Such an act was called *alarum pūcal*. It is explained by Avvai .S. Duraisamy Pillai as follows: "They raised their hands; they were in groups; they vociferously declared their wishes. Hence, it was called *alarum pūcal*. As one burst into tears when vociferously crying to the Lord it was called *alarum pūcal* (p.163)."

From *Patirruppattu* it can be known that the fasting devotees used to ring clear-sounding bells to indicate to others the time of their bath. Scholars are of the opinion that they would take bath by sounding their bells in addition to ringing them all the way.

Those who prayed to Lord *Tirumāl* with folded and raised hands also paid their obeisance by praising His feet. It is known from the line of the verse: *alaṅkar celvaṅ cēvaṭi paravi* (Maturai. 31:9). *Patirruppattu* does not have any other information about the worship of *Tirumāl*. *Maturaikkāñci* shows that *Tirumāl* was worshipped with flower and incense (466).

Minor Deities and Beliefs

The ancient Tamils believed in the existence of minor deities. They believed that these deities occupied places like hills, waterfronts and trees. From the expression, *Aṅaṅkuṭaik kaṭampu* (Patir. 88:6), it may be presumed that the *Cērā* people believed that a deity resided in a *kaṭampu* tree. Others also state that deities resided in trees (Puram. 199:1,260:5). *Porunarāruppatai* would call the deities residing in forests as *kāturaik katavuḷ* (52). These deities who were malevolent were called *Aṅaṅku* and *Īr* (Patir.31:35-36:21:12).

It is understood from the following line that the *Aṅaṅkus* used to disturb those whom they considered opposed them.

"*amaiyārt tēyṭta aṅaṅkuṭai nōṅrāl*" (Patir. Patikam, 2:12)

(the strong feet that destroyed the enemies and in which *Aṅaṅku* resides)

The people believed that the *Aṅaṅku* would destroy them and their belongings if they invited its wrath. The *Cera* king destroys the guards of the *Mōkūr* king. The poet likens the destruction caused by the wrath of the deity and it is referred to in the following lines.

"*araṅkaṭā urī aṅaṅku nikaḷntanna*" (Patir. 44:13)

(destroying forts as though (they were destroyed) by *Aṅaṅku*)

In another place the poet praises the *Cērā* king as:

"*cūr nikaḷntarru nin tānai*" (Patir. 31:35)

(Your army instils fear in the enemies, as if it were a fearful deity)

This means that the soldiers of the *Cērā* king appeared as the deities in their wrath. Here the dreadful deity is called *Cūr*. *Cūr* and *Aṇāṅku* are synonyms. The ancient people feared the wrath of these malignant deities and the resultant destruction thereof. Hence, they had worshipped them to avoid the malevolence that might be caused by the deities. *Patirrupattu* refers to this as:

“*meipani kūrā aṇāṅkenap parāval*” (71:22)

(their bodies shivering, they praise you as they praise the *Aṇāṅku*)

The enemies of the *Cērā* king obeyed him fearing the destruction that might be caused by his anger. This condition is compared by the poet to the obeisance of the people who feared the anger of the deity.

It is known from *Patirrupattu* that the ancient Tamils believed that the *Anankus* were naturally prone to cause disturbances to others. Those *Avuṇar* (demons) who guarded *Cūrapanmā* were malevolent by nature. As *Patirrupattu* refers them to as *Aṇāṅkuṭai* *Avuṇar* (11:4), i.e. demons that cause distress, it is possible to know the nature of the *Anankus*.

The things and articles used in the worship of deities were also considered to be sacred and holy. *Patirrupattu* refers to a seat used by a *Cērā* king in the worship of *Korravai* in the *Ayirai* hill:

“*aracuvā alaippak kōtaruttuī yariya*
aṇāṅkuṭai marapin kaṭṭil” (79:13-14)

(Your rightful seat where *Aṇāṅku* resides and made from tusks obtained by cutting the tusks of the screaming royal elephants belonging to your enemies)

The beauty of young damsels is described by the poet as beauty that distresses *Aṇāṅkelil* as it aroused the feelings of the others and disturbed them (*Patir*. 68:19). From this it may be understood that it was the custom of the ancient people to compare and relate all disturbing activities and things to the disturbing attitude of the minor deity, *Aṇāṅku*.

It was believed that *Cūr* liked the *Kāntal* flower. It is known from the following lines of *Patirrupattu*.

“*malarnta kāntal mārātu ūṭiya*
kaṭumparait tumpi cīrnacait tūi
parai paṇṇaliyum” (67:19)

(the bee with wings that can fly fast lost that ability because it sucked long the honey from the blossoming gloriosa flower liked by the *Cūr* deity)

Paraipannaliyūm means that the power of the wings of the bees drinking honey from *Kāntal* flowers dwindled. According to Avvai S. Duraisamy Pillai, the bees called *tumpi* would not take honey from the flowers like *Kāntal*, *Vēṅkai* and *Cenpakam* because if they did their wings would fall off (P. 320). *Tirumurukārruppatai* also states that the bees would not go to the *Kāntal* flower for honey because they are the favourite flowers of the deities (43). From all the above references, the place occupied by the deities among the Tamils including the *Cērā* people, may be understood.

Ghosts

The ancient Tamils believed in the existence of ghosts (Patir. 71:23; Puram. 23:4; Maturai. 632). They believed that the ghosts lived in graveyards and would harm them. *Puraṇānūru* states that the birds like vultures, *pokivals*, crows and owls were found along with the wandering ghosts near the urns in which the dead were buried (231:1-5). The ancient Tamils held that the ghosts also resided in trees besides graveyards.

A verse in *Patirrupattu* refers to the dance of the ghosts in the battlefields red with blood as:

“*cēñcutar koṅṭa kuruti maṅrattup
pēy āṭum*” (35:8-9)

(the ghost dances in the centre (of the battlefield) that shines red with blood and resembling the sky at set)

These ghosts only accepted the sacrificial meat offered to them and did not take the life of those whom they attacked.

“*palikoṅṭu peyarum pācam pōlat
tirai koṅṭu peyarti vāḷkanin ūli*” (Patir. 71:23-24)

(Like the ghost that accepts the sacrifice offered and goes away (not harming the sacrificer) you accept the tributes offered (by your enemies) and return (without killing them))

This means ‘Hails to the *Cērā* king who accepted ransom from the enemies and left them without killing’ (as the ghosts who accepted the sacrificial meat and did not kill those whom they attacked). We do not find any more references in *Patirrupattu*. A verse from *Maturaikkāñci* informs that the small deities and ghosts wandered along with vultures at midnight (631-633). This reveals that the ancient Tamils believed the ghosts roamed in the midnight. Even today we hold the same belief.

***Pēymakaḷ* (Ghost Woman)**

The verses in *Caṅkam* literature speak about the belief of the existence of *pēymakaḷ* literally meaning ghost woman. (Puram. 62:4, 159:4, 356:3, 369:15, 370:25, 371:26; Maturai. 25, 163; Cīrupan. 197). It is to be studied whether such ghosts were really there or if they were only believed in or imagined. S. Vidhyanandhan is of the opinion that "The Tamils believed that a tribe of cannibals lived either in the *Caṅkam* period or earlier" (P. 167). It may be concluded from this that certain barbarians who were cannibals might have lived long before the pre-*Caṅkam* period. The aborigines believed that they would receive the valour of the heroes whom they had killed and had eaten their flesh (Kailasabathy 1991:65-66).

Maturaikkāñci has a reference which states that a male ghost *pēymakan* made fire-place of the heads of the beheaded enemies, boiled their blood; and cooked using the cut arms as ladle cooked (28-36). From this it seems possible that a certain barbaric tribe who took human flesh had lived in those days. There are other references also to this effect. Ghosts do not have a certain form. *Maturaikkāñci* states that the formless ghosts sometimes took forms (632). Unlike the ghost, the *pēymakaḷ* had forms. It is understood from the *Paṭṭinappālai* which speaks of the *yākkaiḥ pēymakaḷ* (260) meaning the ghost-woman with a body.

Porunarāruppatai informs that the *pēymakaḷ* gave some proverbs or riddles to the goddess (459). If the *pēymakaḷ* had human forms she would have narrated them to the goddess. *Peruṅkatai* informs that false *noti* were narrated to frightened men (1:33:72). Hence, it may be said that *noti* was false information given to misguide someone. *Caṅkam* literature does not have any reference to the fact that the *pēymakaḷ* delivered *noti* in a state of being possessed by deities. Hence, it may be concluded that *pēymakaḷ* lived in those days. *Maturaikkāñci* says that these *pēymakaḷiṅ* danced the *tuṅṅai* (24-26). As it is possible only for the humans to dance the *tuṅṅai*, the idea that there lived certain uncivilised people and they were called *pēymakaḷiṅ* is strengthened. As this group of the people differed from human ways and feelings and live like ghosts, eating human flesh they could have appeared ghostly, and so they were called *pēymakkaḷ*. It is known that in the ancient days, women were well-versed in magical rituals and performance. Such wild women differed in their appearance and activities from the ordinary women folk and hence they were called *pēymakaḷiṅ* (Ghostly women).

Paṭṭiruppatu contains the description of the appearance of these ghostly women. The ghost-woman is described as ugly and holding the headless trunks of the manly heroes killed in battle .

"*talaitumintu eñciya vāṅmali yūpamoṭu*
uruvil pēymakaḷ kavalai kavarrā" (67:10-11)

(the ghost-woman with an ugly form and having the manly trunks (of heroes) whose heads have been severed, are frightening)

Patirrupattu does not mention whether the *pēymakaḷ* ate the flesh of the body she carried. But a verse from *Puranānūru* says that the *pēymakaḷ* ate the flesh of the corpse she carried (359: 4-8). From this, it may be believed that the *pēymakaḷ* of *Patirrupattu* would have also eaten such flesh. Avvai. S. Duraisamy Pillai calls the *pēymakaḷ* as *cavam tinnum pentu* (P.317).

The appearance of the *pēymakaḷ* was dreadful. *Patirrupattu* says that their eyes were big and black: *karuṅkaṅ peymakaḷ* (22:37, 30:36). There is a description of her head *kavai talaip pēymakaḷ* meaning that she had dry, brownish hair which stood straight. As the poet describes her as *uruvil pēymakaḷ* it may be understood that she was ugly to look at. "As she had *ulaṟiya talai* (dry hair), *piral pal* (uneven teeth), *pēḷ vāi* (wide open mouth), *cuḷal vīḷi* (rotating eyes), *cūrta nōkku* (frightening look) and *piṅar vayiru* (big tummy), she was called *uruvil pēymakaḷ*. *Puranānūru* also has a similar description of the *pēymakaḷ* (356: 3-4)

Further, *Maturaikkāñci* (162) and *Cirupāṇārruppaṭai* (197) inform that the *pēymakaḷir* had split feet (*aṭi*). The ghosts were said to possess uninhabited ruins as shown by the following lines:

"*kavalai veṅṅari kūmuṟai payiṟṟik*
Kalalakaṅ kūkai kuḷaru kural pāṇik
karuṅkaṅ pēymakaḷ vaḷaṅkum
perumpāl ākumaṅ aḷiya tāme" (Patir. 22:36-38)

(the enemy lands) are to be pitied for they will be ruined and there, hungry white foxes will howl like the sound of drums; owls with protruding eyes hoot and dark-eyed ghost-women will dance to their beat)

The fertile (agricultural) fields of the opponents were destroyed by the *Cērā* King, in those places the jackals call like the small drums. The owls cry like the trembling voices. The *pēymakaḷ* dances to these sounds. From these references it may be understood that these ghostly people lived away from the abodes of the common people. The forsaken battlefields where the corpses lay were perhaps, suitable places for them to reside. In such deserted places the *pēymakaḷ* rode on vulture's back; this is substantiated by the following words of the poet.

"*kavaitalaip pēymakaḷ kalutūrn tiyaṅka*" (Patir. 13:15)

(the ghost-women with hair like a forest moves about riding the kalutu)

Kalutu also means a variety of ghosts. The *pēymakaḷir* ate corpses and there is no indication that any sacrifice was offered fearing their anger. The following lines confirm this.

“.....*mudaiṅku mantirat
taruntiraṅ marapir̄ katavut̄ pēṅiyar
uyarntō neṅṅiya varumperar̄ piṅṅam
karuṅkat̄ pēymakal̄ kaiputaiyū natuṅka*” (Patir. 30:33-36)

(The noble worshipper, uttering mantras prays to the deity that grants victory and makes food offerings, hard to get. The ghost-woman with black eyes afraid to touch it, shivers beating her hands)

Arumperarpiṅṅam also means the sacrificial meal that was not meant for any other than the deity to whom it was served. As the *pēymakal̄* could not get it she stands clapping her hands and trembling in fear. It is not known whether the *pēymakal̄* received the sacrificial meals for herself.

***Kūrruvan* (the God of Death)**

It may be inferred from the verses of *Patirrupattu* that among the ancient Tamils there was a belief about the existence of *yama*, the God of Death, called *Kūrruvan* or *Kūrram*. *Kūrruvan* had an uncompromising anger and had a big black form.

“*māṅṅarūṅ cīṅṅattu māyirūṅ kūrram
valaivirit̄ tanna nōkkalai*” (51:35-36)

(O *Cērā*) your look resembles the net spread by the big, dark *Kūrram* with unceasing anger.

Some other lines from *Patirrupattu* also show the anger and the strength of *kūrruvan* (14:10, 39:8). The ancient Tamils believed that he was the Lord of Death. Hence in the above reference it is meant that nobody could escape because His eyes and His look is compared to a net.

There is no life on earth unconquered by Him. The body subjected to His attack would become useless for it becomes lifeless. People of those days believed that the *Kūrruvan* had an incomparable power. The *Kūrruvan* who could not be overcome or tortured by anybody else is referred to by the poet as *urumpil̄ Kūrram* (Patir. 26:13). *Puranānūru* also talks about the unbearable killing of the *Kūrram* for which there is no antidote or appeasement (3:12).

***Viṅṅulakam* (Heaven)**

In those days people believed that there was another world above this earth and souls lived there. The following lines of *Patirrupattu* show that there was such a belief:

“*vāṅṅurai makal̄ir̄ nalan̄ ikal̄ koḷḷum
vayaṅkilaī karanta van̄ṅupaṅṅu katuppin̄
oṅṅik̄r̄ oṅṅik̄ koṅṅukulaī kaṅava*” (14:13-15)

(O husband of the beautiful lady -
wearing head ornaments that hide
the tresses attracting bees (because of the flowers)
and bent earrings -
who makes the women of the heavens compete to become as beautiful as she is)

They believed that the women of the other world were beautiful. The above lines mean that the women of the other world were ashamed of their beauty when compared to the beauty of the *Cērā* queen. As only equal qualities could be compared, it may be understood that the women of the other world were believed beautiful. The following lines of *Patirrupattu* show the belief of the ancient people that the stars in the sky were also beautiful women of the other world.

“*vicumpu valāṅkum makalirullum cīranta
cemmin anāyanin tolnakarc celvi*” (31:27-28)

(The Queen of your ancient city is like the Red Star (*Aruntati*) among the women who move about in the heaven)

These lines show that the queens were beautiful as *Aruntati* who was the most beautiful and the most reddish of all the stars. They also praise the purity or chastity of the queen. The idea that the queen was as chaste as *Aruntati* is also found in the following lines:

“*vatuvai makalir nōkkinar pcyarntu
vālnāl ariyum vayaṅkucūtar nōkkattu
mūnoṭu puraiyum karpin vāṅṅatal arivai*” (Patir. 89:17-20)

(The lady with a bright forehead and chaste like the shining star (*Aruntati*) who is worshipped by women during their wedding
(for a chaste life united with their husbands) and later for long lives)

The above lines reveal the custom of the newly-wedded brides looking at the star *Aruntati* and pledging their vow of loyalty to their husbands. They also looked at *Aruntati* for a long life. *Kalittokai* also declares that ‘the Day-star’ had the capability to extend the life of those who were wedded on auspicious days (5:1-9). *Perumpanārrippaṭai* also compares the fidelity of the women to that of *Aruntati* (302-304). The belief that there was a castle hanging in the sky was found among the *Caṅkam* Tamils as seen in the following lines from *Patirrupattu*.

“*kaṭavul āñci vāṅṅattu ilaitta
tūṅkeyil kaṭavam kāval koṅṅa
elānivantu aṅṅa parēr erul mulavutōl*” (31:18-20)

(Your shoulders, beautiful and rounded like the *mūlavu* resemble the cross-bars placed as protection for the doors of the hanging for tresses built in the sky, for fear of the gods)

This means that the *Avuṅgar* (demons) had constructed a castle or fort in the sky as they feared the anger of the *Tēvar* (Gods) and on the innerside of the door were installed heavy cross-bars called *kaṇaiyam*. It is also said that the demons had constructed three such castles and that a certain *Colā* king demolished them.

In conclusion, it can be said that *Murukaṇ* and *Korṅṅavai* were the chief deities among the ancient Tamils. They were the deities of the *Kurinci* region, and were worshipped for the purposes of achieving victory in war. *Tirumāl* was worshipped for the purpose of protection and preservation. *Tirumakaḷ* was the deity of prosperity and was also considered as the guardian deity. The ancient people feared the wrath of malignant deities and the resultant destruction thereof. Hence they had worshipped them to avoid the malevolence that might be caused by the deities.

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