AGASTYA IN THE TAMIL LAND

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AGASTYA IN THE TAMIL LAND

No tradition is so widespread throughout the length and breadth of the Tamil country as that concerning sage Agastya and his numerous exploits. Of all the mythic, semi-historic and historic personages of the Aryan annals, who have figured in South Indian History, Agastya has occupied the foremost place and secured the largest homage of the cultured and the masses alike. He meets us from the very start of Aryan History, being a composer of certain hymns of the earliest of the Vēdas, the Ṛg Vēda. Still he seems to have been not included amongst the seven holy sages, the Prajāpalis, or the progenitors of the human race. These were Gōtama, Bharadvāja, Viśvāmitra, Jama-dagni, Vasiṣṭha, Kāśyapa and Atri. Even later Purāṇas, like the Vāyu and the Viṣṇu, which have amplified the list of the primitive sages by including Bhṛgu and Dakṣa, have only quietly passed Agastya over. This circumstance may lend some colour of support to the doubt whether Agastya is not after all the sage of a later day. However that be, posterity has made ample amends for this omission by raising him to a still higher position and assigning him a place among the Stars. The Star Canopus, which sheds its brilliance in the Southern heavens, is believed to be none other than the austere Sage Agastya, the semi-divine benefactor of the human race, who has been thus honoured by a grateful posterity.
It is no wonder that this famous figure should have become the centre of multifarious mythic accretions. His advent into this world, equally with his translation to the starry heavens, falls beyond human belief and even conception. He is known as Kalaśaja, Kalaśisuta, Kumbhayōni, Kumbhasamabhava, Ghatōdbhava (the pot-born), from the fact that he was born from the seed of Mitra received and preserved in a pot. The story runs that once upon a time both Mitra and Varuṇa had a sort of love contest in respect of the heavenly damsels Urvasī and that they could not do anything more than depositing their fertile seed, one in a pot and the other in the sea. In time, Agastya was born from the pot and Vasiṣṭha, one of the reputed Saptarṣis, started his life from the sea. From this divine parentage Agastya is called also Maitra-Vāruṇi and Ourvāsiya. There are variations of this story in later traditions; but it serves no purpose to recount them here. One fact is plain enough from Agastya’s biography, that to ordinary mortals his birth is as mysterious as his translation to a star. From the trend of the primitive Aryan mind to revel in the supernatural, one should be inclined to be cautious, to the extent of even scepticism, in seeking to reach a nucleus of truth in an overgrowth of materials legendary to the core. Still one may be allowed the consolation that even after discounting the value of the miraculous and mythical chaff in the life of this sage, there may yet remain certain solid grains of human history which could be garnered into the historic store of the ancient Aryans. How far and in what manner that can be effected without doing violence to the demands of normal human reason remains a problem to this day.

The myths that have gathered round this Aryan sage fall into two broad classes, the earlier and the later. His so-called Exodus to
the South from Āryāvarta serves to divide the incidents into the Aryan and the Dravidian group of myths. From the point of view of the historical investigator, there is hardly any ground for distinctive choice between them. Both run on parallel lines and are steeped in the miraculous through and through. The Himalaya mountain of the northern myth is replaced by the Pothiyil of the South; Agastya's composition of many Rg Vedic hymns and medical works in Sanscrit is answered by his numerous mystic and medical treatises in Tamil; his effort in bringing down the Ganges with the consent of Śiva (vide Kāśi Kāṇḍam) finds an echo in his getting Tāmrāparṇi from Śiva and his bargaining with God Gaṇēśa for Kāvēri; his seat in Benares seems to be replaced by his abode in Badāmi, known as Dakṣiṇa Kāśi; his marriage with Lopāmudrā, the daughter of a Vidarbha King, has also a parallel in his wedding of Kāvēri, the daughter of King Kavēra; and taking into consideration the curses, which had issued from his spiritual armoury in the north, his curse of Tolkāppiyar, his own student, shows unmistakably how the dwarf sage—for on account of his diminutive size he was known as Kuṟumṇuṟi also—kept true to his old habits, in the far-away South. This parallelism is sufficient to establish that the southern myths are largely mere echoes of the northern and may be presumed to have been due either to a pure Aryan source in the South or to a Dravidian origin borrowing its motif and whole inspiration from the Aryan. Incidentally, it may be interesting to refer to some recent attempts to make out of this far-famed Aryan protagonist an indigenous saint of blue Dravidian blood. The fanciful theorizers, who have been led to do this, have been driven, in the absence of sober grounds, to invoke to their aid Philology—a frail reed to lean upon. They connect Agastya, or Akattīyan
in Tamil, with Akalli (அகல்லி) tree and elaborate for the occasion a fable that the Saint being a physician himself was very fond of Akalli and had it planted round his hermitage. Here we find myth opposing myth and the ends of natural justice more than satisfied. But, apart from any dialectical victory, the question for us to consider is whether Agastya could be made to claim a Dravidian parentage. If Agastya were a Dravidian by birth, one might justifiably ask what necessity there was in the Southerner to duplicate the incidents which had befallen the life of his northern compeer. Mere accident can scarcely be supposed to explain away so many points of contact as we find in the life-history of this interesting couple.

Taking the myths as a whole, a few points strike us as worthy of mention here. Naturally enough the name of this antique figure has been intertwined to a large extent with nature-myths of the remotest antiquity. His coming down to the South to equalise the Southern Hemisphere with the Northern in the tilted scale of the heavenly balance, his suppression of the Vindhya mountains and his drinking up the ocean dry may be connected with certain astronomical and geological phenomena (of which we have no knowledge at present), coming as cataclysms once in a way to disturb the otherwise uniform flow of natural events. Setting these aside, we find that by far the greater number of the miraculous incidents which fill his life fall under the class of curses of unerring potency. Indeed so free was he with his curses and so deep-rooted was the instinct of cursing in him that one might be tempted to dub him the Cursing Saint par excellence. He was born a dwarf and what he lacked in stature he seems to have more than made up by his acquisition of extraordinary powers bordering on the miraculous. His temper
was at no time balanced and under the slightest provocation would rush into an irate mood of destructive proclivity. Indra, Nahuṣa, Ürvaśi, Gṝtācī, Madiyanandai, Tāṭakā, Sunda, Krauṅca, Maṇimanda, Lōpāmudrā, and Tholkāppiyar had all to pay heavy penalties, one way or another, for provoking him. A beneficent mood too he seems to have had; but very rarely could the saint be prevailed upon to dole out his benedictions to this sinful world. It may be charitable to suppose that a reforming saint, as our sage was reputed to have been, must have been under special necessities at that remote period to whip a wicked world into some sort of acceptable moral order. A good deal, however, could be forgiven in one who had become the centre of light and leading by sitting at the feet of God himself—Śiva, Muruga, the Sun-God, all had a hand in his instruction and training—and imbibing knowledge for the guidance of erring humanity. His very mediation between God and Man may be urged as a ground for measuring him by a standard other than what we adopt in the judgment of ordinary mortals. Let alone his activities in Northern India, the events which mark his progress towards the South have an interest all their own for the student of South Indian History. Hence these deserve to be studied in greater detail.

Geographically his exodus to the Peninsular India divides itself into three distinct strata. The earliest finds him lodged in the Agastyāśrama, a few miles north of Nāsik, the ancient Pañcavaṭi, on the northern borders of the Daṇḍakāraṇya Forest. His marriage of Lopāmudrā, the daughter of the Vidarbha King and Rama's first interview with him take place here. The second stratum begins with his residence at Malakūṭa, three miles east of Badāmi (the ancient Vātāpipura) otherwise known as Dakṣiṇakāśi, in the Kaladgi District of the Bombay
Presidency. We must remember that this new residence is about three hundred miles down south from his Nāśik Āśrama of the first period. Agastya's eating up Vātāpi and his destruction of Ilvala (known also as Vilvala) may be referred to this period of his sojourn in the South. The third stratum of stories gathers round him at Pothiyil, known also as Malaya, one of the southernmost promontories of the Western Ghats, in the Pāṇḍya country. With such a residence in the very centre of the foremost Tamil Nāṭu of those days, he is credited with having founded the first Tamil Academy and having presided over it, besides writing an Extensive Tamil Grammar and sundry other works on medicine, mysticism, and even magic. Tradition, however, does not leave him here in his southernmost home, about eight hundred miles away from his Nāśik Āśrama. Two more strata of legends are added by making him cross the seas. In the fourth epoch, we find him landed in the Indonesian Islands in the East, where he is said to have visited Barhiṇadvīpa (Borneo), Kuśa Dvīpa, and Varāha Dvīpa. Here too he appears to have taken up his abode in the Mahā Malaya Hill in Malaya Dvīpa. The fifth and last stage is reached when he is made to cross over to the mainland and enter Siam and Cambodia. It was here, at the end of his ever-lengthening journey eastwards, he had to marry a local beauty, Yaśomati by name, and leave by her a royal progeny among whom King Yaśovarmā was an outstanding personage. Leaving out of account the exploits of his trans-Indian tour, which happily many of his Indian followers in the mainland are unaware of to this day, the other layers of tradition, which cling to his achievements on the Indian soil, have all been laid one over another in the course of a few centuries and have thus grown into a vast pile by themselves. To make
this ‘confusion worse confounded’, the later Paurānic writers also have spun all sorts of amazing tales of mystery and imagination round this Aryan sage without an eye to smooth away inconsistencies and escape contradictions. Probably they may have thought that the sage was too great a man to sink under the weight of their legendary lore.

As a first step in the so-called Aryanisation\(^1\) of Dakṣiṇāpatha (Southern India) and Further India, the northern tradition which has gathered round his hermitage near Daṇḍakāranya gives us a valuable clue.

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1. If by ‘civilization’ one means the possession of a body of literature, religion and philosophy, as is too often done by certain Sanskritists, then Dravidian India could be truly spoken of as aryанизed. If, on the other hand, the term signified, as it should, very much more than these very late accomplishments, as for instance man’s control of Nature by wrestling from it not only the necessities but the comforts and conveniences of life by a well-developed and well-ordered system of arts in almost every department of human pursuit, and the consequent amelioration of man’s estate both in his individual and corporate existence in society by all the devices at his command and by all the efforts he is capable of, then more than three-fourths of the belongings of the present-day life must go to the credit of an indigenous civilization the Dravidian has inherited from his ancestors. Take for instance, two of the prime arts of life, Agriculture and Architecture. Where is the Aryanisation in them? To speak still of the Aryanisation of Dravidian India, in the extremely limited sense, is to lose the right historical perspective and growing even unfair to the substantial contributions of the Dravidians to the stock of the present-day South Indian civilization. Even in the field of letters, religion and philosophy, no student of history will be inclined to discount the characteristic share of the Dravidians, although it may not compare in quantity favourably with that of the Aryan nation.
As at present, even at that early time, secular movements, of which colonisation of countries may be taken as a type, went in the wake of missionary enterprise and Agastya's trying to plant the Aryan religious rites, amongst the alien tribes of the South, only furnished the opportunity for the later expansion of the Aryans into the Southern region. It would not be true to say that Agastya himself was conscious, at the time, of the far-reaching consequences of his acts pursued for other purposes than land occupation. Nevertheless, being the first man who had pioneered the race into a new country of unmeasured potentiality, he should naturally come to be looked upon as a benefactor of his race, deserving their highest homage and worship. There is absolutely little or no difficulty from the Aryan point of view in explaining away the high veneration in which Agastya's name is still held. But the real problem begins only when we try to approach the subject from the Dravidian side. It is inconceivable how a whole race could be brought round to extol a foreign leader of men as the type of perfection in learning, wisdom, and saintliness and accept him as their own spiritual overlord and guide. Here, at any rate, we find the extraordinary phenomenon of almost the entire Tamil race of the present dayenthroning Agastya, an Aryan Rśi, in a rank little removed from that of divinity and paying him homage as to one of their own kith and kin. Is it possible, one may ask, for a race to exhibit such utter lack of race-consciousness as is here displayed? It may be doubted whether the attempt to make a Dravidian out of the Aryan sage has not been done with a view to cut the Gordian knot, here presented. However much race-consciousness may feel flattered by this daring feat, it is a foregone conclusion that no scholar of any standing will be found to stake his reputation on the acceptance of this new-fangled theory.
After all, the problem is not so hopeless as it appears at first sight. In fact, it serves the great purpose of driving us to revalue the data on which the Agastya legend has been built up in the Tamil land.

In all societies, Tradition stands as the natural background of history. Authentic history can scarcely be said to arise before the invention of writing and the vast period in which man had been evolving from a primitive state of existence is one of haze, if not darkness, from the standpoint of recorded history. The indefatigable labours of Anthropologists and Archaeologists have doubtless resulted in marshalling other records than those in writing, which throw fairly good light on the life of man in prehistoric times; but these unfortunately do not cover the whole extent of man's spiritual evolution. Except the fitful glimpses afforded by the artifacts left behind by the primitive man into some aspects of his inner life, we have scarcely anything to enable us to read the whole extent and colour of it. Many chapters in the spiritual evolution of man must thus remain sealed for ever. Scientific approach becoming impracticable here, at least Tradition may be expected to step in to throw a few rays into the dark corridors of by-gone times. And as a matter of fact, the primitive history of every race and tribe is found to consist entirely of Traditions whose value may vary according to circumstances. The scientific historian is bound not to throw them overboard en masse but to sift them carefully and scrupulously, to arrive at whatever modicum of truth they may contain. The task of separating the ore from the dross is, however, a difficult one and few indeed can hope to succeed in it who does not bring with him an irreproachable scientific temper and method and a sympathetic imagination withal. In valuing traditions generally, one
has to see first, whether they satisfy the most important pre-requisite absence of internal inconsistencies and contradictions and secondly, whether they can claim an unbroken continuity with the remote past. Let us see how the Agastya tradition fares judged as it should be by these fundamental tests.

However ancient this tradition has been made to look like in later times, certainly it cannot be anterior to the founding of the earliest settlement of the Aryans beyond the Vindhya mountains, which for a long time stood as an impenetrable barrier in their way to the South. The north-eastern and south-western ends of this chain of mountains were known to the inhabitants of Āryāvarta as Pāriyātra, because they marked the boundary of their yātra or range of communication. The tide of Aryan Migration which was thus stemmed in, towards the south, flowed on in an easterly direction along the course of the Ganges up to its very mouth in the Bay of Bengal. Later on, it seems to have overflowed in this corner taking a south-westerly course as far as Utkala—the modern Orissa. Reference is made in Aitarêya Brāhmaṇa to the Sage Viśvāmitra having condemned by a curse the progeny of fifty of his sons to live on the borders of the Aryan settlement and these were “the Āndhras, Puṇḍras, Śabaras, Pulīndas, and Mutibâs and the descendants of Viśvāmitra formed a large proportion of the Dasyus.”


cf. Prof. Max Muller’s conclusion in pp. 334–335 of his History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature.

“At all events the Taittiriya Āryanyaka represents the latest period in the development of the Vedic religion, and shows a strong admixture of post-vedic ideas and names. The same applies also to several parts of the Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa, the last part of which does not belong to Taittiri, but is
These tribes are referred to in the later epics and the Purāṇas as occupying the country to the south of the Vindhyas, beginning from a little to the north of the mouth of the Godāvari in the east to the mouth of the Narmadā in the west. But this knowledge of a few tribes to the South-east of the Vindhyas range on the part of the author of the Aitarīya Brāhmaṇa hymn does not count for much. For, Pāṇini, whose date on the most liberal calculation1 of Dr. R. G. Bhandarkar is taken to be 700 B.C., makes mention in his sūtras of Kacca, Avanti, Kōsala, Karuṣa, and Kaliṅga as the farthest countries in the South. Dr. Bhandarkar writes “Supposing that the non-occurrence of the name of any country farther south in Pāṇini’s work is due to his not having known it, a circumstance, which looking to the many names of places in the North that he gives appears probable, the conclusion follows that in his time the Aryans were confined to the north of the Vindhyas but

ascribed to Kaṭha, the same Muni to whom the beginning of the Āryanyaka is said to have been revealed. There are some traces which would lead to the supposition that the Taittiriya Veda had been studied particularly in the South of India, and even among people which are still considered as un-Aryan in the Brāhmaṇa of the Rg Veda. In the Taittiriya Āraṇyaka different readings are mentioned which are no longer ascribed to different ṛkṣas but to certain countries in the South of India, like the Drāvidas, Āndhras and Karnāṭakas. This would throw some doubt on the antiquity and genuineness of the class of Vedic writings at least in that form in which we possess them.”

1. For instance, Dr. Washburn Hopkins of the Yale University tries to ascribe Pāṇini to the 3rd century B.C. He writes: “But no evidence has yet been brought forward to show conclusively that Pāṇini lived before the 3rd century B.C.” Vide The Great Epic of India, p. 391.
did not proceed or communicate with the northern-most portion of the Eastern Coast, not by crossing that range, but by avoiding it by taking an easterly course."1 Thus then Agastya piercing the Vindhya in his colonising expedition to the South cannot be dated earlier than 700 B.C. Taking next the references made to Vidarbha, the Berars, in both the Epics, the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata, Dr. Bhandarkar gives out as his considered opinion that this State was the oldest Aryan province in the southern country.2 He does not tell us whether it was founded by the Aryans who came from the East or by the followers of Agastya who cut across the Vindhya from the North. It may, however, be presumed from the tradition that Agastya gave the girl Lōpāmudrā to a king of Vidarbha to be brought up by him and afterwards claimed her for his wife, that that kingdom must have existed sometime before Agastya’s entering into a marital alliance with one of its Kings. Even supposing that the two epics began their existence at about 500 B.C.—and there are scholars who bring down the dates of the composition of these Epics much lower—the Kingdom of Vidarbha must have started into existence sometime between 700 and 500 B.C. And in this interval also Agastya’s meeting of the Vidarbha King must be placed. We shall not be far wrong then if we date the beginning of Agastya’s colonising career somewhere about 600 B.C. If, on the other hand, we give weight to the arguments of scholars that till 100 B.C. these celebrated epics have been undergoing material additions in successive recensions—and in fact the force of these arguments cannot be lightly set aside—we may have to revise the date to a still lower level.

2. Dr. Bhandarkar’s Early History of Deccan, p. 7.
Thus 600 B.C. is a fairly early enough date. It was about this period that the hero of the Ramāyaṇa met Agastya, in his Āśram near Nāsik, the ancient Pañca-
vaṭi. The country to the south of Vidarbha, the site of the modern Mahārāṣṭra, was then an impenetrable forest known as Daṇḍakāranya infested by fierce animals and wild tribes.\(^1\) If, however, a higher antiquity is claimed for the epics, we have to simply leave them aside as incapable of being brought into relationship with the historical incidents of Aryan immigration into South India. However unserviceable these epics may be for chronological purposes of a positive historic character, an unexpected light is thrown upon this tract of time by the early Greek writers. I shall refer only to two of the earliest of them, Ktesias of Knidos and Megasthenes, both of the 4th century B.C. The India of these writers was only India north of the Vindhyas. Had they received any information about the southern peninsula, certainly they would have included it in their otherwise elaborate accounts. Not only this, the impression they seem to have formed is that from Pāṭalī at the mouth of the Indus in the West to Gangē at the mouth of the Ganges in the East there ran an almost straight coast-line washed by the Southern Ocean. This ignorance on the part of the early writers, including Ktesias, may have been due to various reasons and need not concern us here; but when we find it pervading the writing of so careful a writer as Megasthenes, who lived at the court of Pāṭaliputra and had at his command all the sources of informa-

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1. Compare with this the observations of such late writers as the author of the ‘Periplus of the Erythrean Sea’ and the Chinese Travellers of the 5th and the 7th Centuries after Christ. They refer to the extreme difficulty of getting by land into S. India.
tion available at the time, his omission of South India becomes truly significant. It could be ascribed to no other reason than the patent one, that peninsular India was then an unknown region in the North and hence the sources Megasthenes must have tapped for his account could not have furnished him with any information regarding the South. Even Kātyāyana’s reference to Pāṇḍya, and Cōla in his Vārtika marks only the first faint glimmerings of an imperfect acquaintance with South India about 350 B. C. which broadens subsequently into clear knowledge sometime about 150 B. C., the time of Patañjali. Thus then the testimony of Sanskrit Literature and the early Greek writers places beyond a doubt that Southern India about 400 B. C. was almost a terra incognita to the Northern Aryans¹. Viewed in this

1. This conclusion is more than clinched by the finding of Prof. A. A. Macdonell in his History of Sanskrit Literature: pp. 89.

“The History of Ancient Indian Literature naturally falls into two main periods. The first is the Vedic, which beginning perhaps as early as 1,500 B. C. extends in its latest phase to about 200 B. C. In the former half of the Vedic Age the character of its literature was creative and poetical while the centre of culture lay in the territory of the Indus and its tributaries, the modern Punjab; in the latter half, Literature was theologically speculative in matter and prosaic in form, while the centre of intellectual life had shifted to the valley of the Ganges. Thus in the course of the Vedic Age Aryan civilization had overspread the whole of Hindustan proper, the vast tract extending from the mouths of the Indus to those of the Ganges, bounded on the North by the Himalayas, and on the South by the Vindhya range. The second period concurrent with the final off-shoots of Vedic Literature and closing with the Mahammadan conquest after 1,000 A. D. is the Sanskrit period strictly speaking. In a certain sense, owing to the continued literary use of Sanskrit mainly for the composition
light the very detailed and elaborate references to the South that we find in the two epics should be taken as nothing better than subsequent interpolations.

Next, let us see whether there is anything in the later Greek writers or Tamil Classical Literature, coming about the first two centuries after Christ. There is absolutely nothing about this sage in any of the writings we have now taken up for consideration. Ptolemy makes mention of Bettigo,¹ the Pothigai, a variant of Pothiyil, but passes on without any allusion to the resident sage. His silence is striking and suggestive if considered with the silence of the Tamil Classical Literature taken as a whole.

Except Paripādal², which belongs very likely to the sixth or the seventh century A. D., not a single work is there among the Śaṅgam works—works shorn of course of the legendary embellishments of later commentators—which makes any mention direct or indirect or gives us any clue by name or implication to the life of this sage, his works or even his very existence. In Pattupāṭtu of commentaries, this period may be regarded as coming down to the present day. During this second epoch Brahman culture was introduced and overspread the Southern portion of the continent called the Dekkhan or the “South.”

¹. Vide Appendix I.

². Judged by the style and sentiments of the poems contained in this work, few critics, I believe, will contend for its high antiquity. The opinion is common amongst Tamil scholars that this late production was included in the Sangam collection of writings to do duty for the missing genuine Paripādals of old. Mr. R. S. Narayanaswami Aiyar, B. A., B. L., from certain astronomical calculations, suggests 372 A. D., as the probable date of the composition of this Poem. Vide Chentamil, Vol. 19, p. 384.
(The Ten Idylls) no poet has referred to Agastya or his civilising activity in behalf of the Tamil race. Nor is there any reference to Pothiyil as the seat of Agastya in the very heart of the Tamil country. No doubt the word (அப்பிர) Pothiyil occurs in Tirumurugāṟṟuppaṭai, Māturaiṅkaṅci, etc., but in all of them it means a common place of meeting. Likewise, excepting Paripāṭal as already stated, in none of the works composing Ēṭṭutokai (The Eight Collections) is there any reference to Agastya. In places where the Pothiyil hill is mentioned in Puranānūṟu (vide stanzas 2 and 128) or in Nāṟṟinai (vide stanza 379) Agastya’s name does not appear. In certain texts a connection between the hill and the Pāṇḍya King and not the sage is all that is brought about. It is worthy of note in this connection how Nacchiṅarkkinīyar, a late commentator, tries to popularise the Agastya cult by twisting a few lines of verse in Maduraṅkaṅci from their most obvious and natural meaning, and thereby almost manufacturing a reference to the sage Agastya. Here are the lines:

"அப்பிரவு பம்பி காலந்த அம்பு அரங்க சுடுவ பகுதி பசுவர்."

Its translation is as follows:—Oh! War-like Prince, lord of the hill resounding with waterfalls, and known as the ‘Southern King’ (by pre-eminence) and, in point of unapproachable prowess, standing second only to that ancient primal Being (Śiva) himself. The adjectival phrase அப்பிரவு பம்பி may also be taken as qualifying எம்பூருக்கைல் and interpreted as the god who subdued by his might Yama, the Lord of the South. The term Mutukatavul முதுகாதுவன் is herein used to distinguish Śiva from Muruga or Kumāra, the youthful deity, his son. Nacchiṅarkkinīyar makes ‘Mutukatavul’ denote Agastya and ‘Thenṉaṉ’ Rāvaṇā, and imports into the lines the
legend of Agastya overcoming Rāvaṇā in a musical duel and bundling him bag and baggage out of the Tamil country. The intrinsic improbabilities of this tradition apart, Nachchiniyar’s interpretation of the text is altogether far-fetched and fanciful. Two familiar words have been made to shed their ordinary significations and stand for Rāvaṇā and Agastya to suit a pre-conceived theory of the commentator. Some may praise this ingenuity on the part of the commentator, but I am sure no scholar who goes direct to the original verse, will fail to catch its natural import. The solitary reference in the line ‘அன்னந்துர்க்கு காளமன் பென்கடைக்குத் தான்’, which occurs in the 11th Paripātal and refers to the Star Canopus, receives its adequate explanation by the comparative lateness of the period of composition of that work. Barring this one intrusive instance, for which the lack of a chronological sense on the part of the redactor of the Sangam works was responsible, the whole extent of Tamil Classical Literature has not a word to say about Agastya, or his literary labours. If it is urged that a negative testimony of this sort, an argumentum ex silentio, is scarcely conclusive, there is the reply that the absence of reference to Agastya is certainly more than negative in the special circumstances of this case. If a reference to the Sage were to be expected anywhere at all, undoubtedly it must be in connection with the description of the Pothiyil, his mountain residence. Popular belief to this day runs on the line that the immortal Rishi is even now living in the southernmost peak of the Western Ghats. Such being the case, a poet who thinks of describing this particular hill or range should naturally be expected to allude to its saintly occupant on some occasion or another. This absence of reference to the Sage has occurred in the stanzas not of one poet only, but of many of them. Their silence seems almost inspired and is accordingly
arresting. One and all of them compose their verses in utter unconsciousness of the existence of the Saint or his exploits. The only possible explanation for this phenomenon of general silence is that at that time there did not exist even a scrap of the Agastya tradition. It was all a manufacture of later days and any attempt to look for it in the pages of these early records must turn out fruitless. Thus, about the early centuries after Christ, the seed of the Agastya tradition had not yet been sown in the Tamil land. From the following three lines of a stanza of Poet Eñissēri Muñamōsiyār (Puranānūru, 128), one can only conclude that the Pothiyil had not then secured the austere associations due to Agastya's saintly presence.

Naturaly the question will arise that myths being the coinage of the earliest times why

Agastya tradition
its post-classical origin.

the Tamil country alone should show a reverse process. Any satisfactory answer to this legitimate query forces on us the necessity of glancing a little at the racial characteristics of the Dravidians and the Aryans taken as a whole. I trust I shall not be wrong in calling the Aryans predominantly a nation of thinkers and the Dravidians characteristically a nation of doers. Not that the Aryans had not great men of action amongst them nor the Dravidians great men of thought in their ranks. But the forte of the national character of the two races, taken in the lump, lay one in thought and the other in action. Although the speculative and practical tendencies of a man lie mixed up beyond the possibility of a definite

1. The term classical period used in this paper refers to the period to which the extant 'Sangam works' are ascribed, i.e., the few early centuries of the Christian Era.
separation, yet from almost all the biographies of individual men we learn that for one individual who shows a balanced mental make-up there are hundred others in whom either the speculative or the practical tendencies assert themselves in a more or less decisive way. This individual characteristic runs through the race also. The ancient history of the Dravidians gleaned from their earliest records and their later lives and achievements lead us to infer that they were from the beginning a highly practical race which had given itself over to sustained action in many fields of practical pursuit. They seem to have had no special aptitude for pure theorizing in any direction. They were never dreamers and builders of castles in the air. They were earnestly and intensely practical and the pragmatic success, which had crowned their activities in Agriculture, Commerce, War and Politics, could hardly have favoured anything savouring of theoretic doubt and speculation. The fabric of civilisation that they thus built up is indeed a massive one, though it may not show to any great extent the glitter of certain cultural accomplishments. The Aryans who came amidst them from the North were however cast in a different mould. Their restlessness from the dawn of their history leaned towards speculation. It would be a mistake to suppose that the tendency to speculate and theorize developed in them *per saltum* at the time of the Upamishads. The Rig Vedic hymns, though addressed to numerous deities or forces of Nature for meeting the every day wants and necessities of the race, for in short helping it in the various practical concerns in this world, bear marks, it must be admitted, of a peculiar theoretic strain in their composers. Its assiduous care in getting by rote those hymns and handing them down to the remotest posterity and its unfailing

1. *Vide Appendix II.*
performance of the rites and rituals laid down in the sacred books are certainly not the ways which will appeal to the hard matter-of-fact man wedded to the practical concerns of life. If such a people could be called practical, they were practical in a manner entirely novel, not to say unique, in the history of nations. Such a race addicted to pure thought and theorizing, in their southern wandering, had to meet with a race entirely alien in modes of thought and life. Here it had to bend an intensely practical race to its own standard of perfect civilization or adapt itself to the new type. And how could even this adaptation be effected? Not certainly by meeting the Dravidians in their own ground and achieving greater success therein—an alternative they could scarcely even think of, in the case of so well-equipped a nation as the Tamils who could give them points in all Arts of peace and war. There was another and a surer way of approach. With all his achievements the Dravidian was not strong in speculation. That was the Achilles' heel, which was readily caught hold of by the incoming Aryans and their grip of it was indeed tight. Whatever be the achievements of the practical man in any field of activity, he has to bow down his head before knowledge and theory or what passed for such, which came in handy to rationalize and even illuminate practice.

This is what Ihering says about the Aryans in his profoundly interesting work "The Evolution of the Aryans," p. 62.

"This also denotes the character of the people. It was a people without the least practical aptitude—the diametrical opposite of the Romans. Highly gifted intellectually they turned their tastes and thoughts to the inner-world—to speech, religion, poetry and in later times also with great results to philosophy—without feeling the necessity of applying their knowledge to the amelioration of their external conditions."
The adage ‘the world is ruled by thought’ appears to have been more than verified in the matter of the Dravidian-Aryan contact and the present-day mixed civilization of Southern India is the result of a healthy blend of the two fundamental elements of human nature, brought into the common stock by two different races.

It will now be clear why the earliest history of the Dravidians should bear very little trace of any mythopoetic tendencies which lie at the bottom of all myths in general. Pre-Aryan Southern India was comparatively free from myths and with the advent of the Aryans in the South—Hindus, Buddhists and Jains,—a vast mass of mythic lore began to make its way into the land. Starting from the sectarian controversies and schisms of the various religious factions in South India, the Hindu, the Jain and the Buddhist, the Saivite, the Vaishnavite, and the Lingayet, and the many subdivisions of these, the mythic rill seems, in a few centuries, to have swollen into a formidable torrent and literally submerged the land in the Purānic period which comes very close to our own times.

It was the late Mr. Venkayya, I think, who drew the attention of scholars to the existence of a Buddhist tradition that Avalokiteśvara, a Buddhist Sage was residing in “Podalaga” or Pothiyil mountain. In fact, that tradition goes much farther than this and holds that Agastya owed to Avalokiteśvara his initiation into knowledge as will be seen from the following stanza, appearing in the Pāyiram (Introduction) of Virasoliyar, a Tamil grammatical work.

" அப்பி தொலகும் உடன் கோட்டை வைத்திருந்தது பதின் மற்றும் சிங்கமுடைய தொய்க்குண்டு கோட்டை வைத்திருந்தது நம்மே பாதுகாப்பு பொருளாதாரச் சொல்லி சொல்லியோ."

"At that place where the goatherd was pasturing he had a lion and a tiger."

Agastya tradition—its post-Jainistic origin.
In settling the rival claims of Agastya and Avalokitesvara for priority in the occupation of the Pothiyil mountain and composing the first grammar of the Tamil Language, we are thrown into the very thick of the religious warfare which raged in the Tamil land just after a few centuries from the dawn of the Christian Era. From a reading of the Tamil Literature of the earliest period, it is not possible to say that one sect even before another had set foot in Tamilagam. Quite probably the Buddhists and the Jains may have preceded the Hindu Aryans in their arrival in the Tamil land in the first two centuries preceding the Christian Era. The picture afforded by the early Tamil Literature, however, is that of a few Brahmans, orthodox and heretic, leading isolated lives and first feeling their way amongst an alien population. In stanza 166 of Puranamur the Poet Avur Mulumkilar praises one Puniyar Pappan Kaniyan Vinnantayyan for performing the twenty-one yagas, not being misled therein by the false preachings of the heretical sectaries. Evidently the poet seems to have had the Buddhist and the Jaina Sramans in his mind as the commentator himself makes it plain. Here are the lines:

1. This supposition receives some support from the Jain traditions and the Sravana Belgola Inscriptions, published as Volume II of the Epigraphia Carnatica of the Mysore State. If by 69 A. D. Buddhism can travel to China, Peninsular India down to the South may in all likelihood have been reached by that time by the zealous missionaries of these reforming sects. Jaina traditions as testified to by the Mysore Inscriptions make it clear that on account of a Twelve Years' famine in North India, Srutakvalu Bhadrabahu, an eminent Jain monk, and his disciple, the monarch Chandragupta, led a large company of Jaina monks to the South. From Sravana Belgola they seem to have sent a party under one Visakacharya to the Chola and the Pandya countries.
"இசைய சாதம் சுருக்கம் சமையல்
மாலைக்கு முறையிட்டது
முசைக்கா மயில்களில்
மும்பியார் மயில்களில்
ஏனைய முழு ஒளிச்சது மார்."

If this is so, the attempt to ante-date the incoming of the Hindu Aryan to the exclusion of the heretic can hardly find any support from the earliest stratum of Tamil Literature known to us. We have to infer from the circumstances of that early time that the Aryans first came into the land neither as colonists nor as guests but as missionaries to propagate their different religions and religious practices. Since the Brahmans, unlike their opponents the Buddhists and the Jains, were not at all propagandistic, one may reasonably hold that the heretics had preceded them in the South to spread the light of the new faith in countries far beyond the confines of the Aryan settlements. Whoever be the first batch of the Aryan immigrants who came to the South, they appear to have been quickly followed by others of a different religious persuasion. But they were very few in number¹ and hence could not have engaged themselves in any religious contest on a large scale. Nor were the social and political conditions of the Tamil country at that time favourable for carrying on any sort of religious propagandism. The Tamil Muvendars or Triumvirs (the Chēra, the Chōla and the Pāṇḍya Kings), from about a century perhaps earlier than the Christian era, entered on a policy of aggrandisement and were engaged in wiping out the

1. "The Brahmans of the South India appear in those days to have consisted of a number of isolated communities that were settled in separate parts of the country and that were independent each of the other."—Ptolemy's Geography of India and Southern Asia (Mccrindle's Translation, p. 5.)
communal chieftaincies then existing and adding their territories to their own dominions. Tamilagam then was actually studded with a large number of village communities under their respective elders, headmen or chiefs called Kilârs and of tribes or congeries of such communities ruled over by their kings known as Vēlîrs or Kōs. These petty chieftaincies and kingships were, in the course of three or four centuries, swept out of existence and this involved incessant fighting and interminable forays among the many Tamil rulers concerned. Such a period could scarcely have been propitious for any religious work among the people.

More favourable conditions, however, ensued later on by the consolidation of the Tamil monarchies and by the stability of the social conditions it gave rise to. The schismatic warfare of the North was then waged with redoubled fury in the distant South and thence it spread also to the Indonesian Islands in the Eastern Ocean. It is but natural that in this fight, both parties, the orthodox and the heretical, must have resorted to every weapon in their respective armouries for gaining a victory over their opponents. Apart from the bid for political power, which both had been trying to make from the beginning, the scholars too of the warring sects appear to have fed the mind of the people with all sorts of myths and miracles, as another powerful means to secure the support of the masses. Of the many expedients resorted to conciliate the Tamil population and to win them over to the Hindu fold, the Agastya tradition was one and it served its purpose admirably indeed. The Tamil people were treated to stories of social, religious and spiritual kinship with the more advanced Hindu Aryans of the North and were thus brought over to view the Jaina and the Buddhistic sectaries as absolutely beyond the pale of Hindu orthodoxy. The Tamil kings too were raised under priestly auspices
to a position almost near godhood¹ and were given the
unique privilege of tracing their descent from the Sun and
Moon and counting themselves as connected with the
Solar and Lunar lines of kings of the Purānas and the
Itiḥāsās—people with whom they had no kinship what-
soever. Their names² and titles, by and by, assumed
a portentous length by the adoption of sonorous Sanskrit
appellations in which the hand of the family priest could
be traced to have been at work. The vanity and self-im-
portance of the rulers concerned must indeed have been
considerably tickled! Methods like these employed to

1. "நினைவறுத்து வருகிறது தீர்த்த பெருநூறு மூன்று பெருநூறு பொருளோது செய் முன்னோர் பெருநூறு பொருளோது செய் முன்னோர் பெருநூறு பொருளோது செய் முன்னோர் பெருநூறு பொருளோது செய் முன்னோர் பெருநூறு பொருளோது செய் முன்னோர் பெருநூறு பொருளோது செய் முன்னோர் பெருநூறு பொருளோது செய் முன்னோர் பெருநூறு பொருளோது செய் முன்னோர் பெருநூறு பொருளோது செய் முன்னோர் பெருநூறு பொருளோது செய் முன்னோர் பெருநூறு பொருளோது செய் முன்னோர் பெருநூறு பொருளோது செய் முன்னோர் பெருநூறு பொருளோது செய் முன்னோர் பெருநூறு பொருளோது செய் முன்னோர் பெருநூறு பொருளோது செய் முன்னோர் பெருநூறு பொருளோது செய் முன்னோர் பெருநூறு பொருளோது செய் முன்னோர் பெருநூறு பொருளோது செய் முன்னோர் பெருநூறு பொருளோது செய் முன்னோர் பெருநூறு பொருளோது செய் முன்னோர் பெருநூறு பொருளோது செய் முன்னோர் பெருநூறு பொருளோது செய் முன்னோர் பெருநூறு பொருளோது செய் முன்னோர் பெருநூறு பொருளோது செய் முன்னோர் பெருநூறு பொருளோது செய் முன்னோர் பெருநூறு பொருளோது செய் முன்னோர் பெருநூறு பொருளோது செய் முன்னோர் பெருநூறு பொருளோது செய் முன்னோர் பெருநூறு பொருளோது செய் முன்னோர் பெருநூறு பொருளோது செய் முன்னோர் பெருநூறு பொருளோது செய் முன்னோர் பெருநூறு பொருளோது செய் முன்னோர் பெருநூறு பொருளோது செய் முன்னோர் பெருநூறு பொருளோது செய் முன்னோர் பெருநூறு பொருளோது செய் முன்னோர் பெருநூறு பொருளோது செய் முன்னோர் பெருநூறு பொருளோது செய் முன்னோர் பெருநூறு பொருளோது செய் முன்னோர் பெருநூறு பொருளோது செய் முன்னோர் பெருநூறு பொருளோது செய் முன்னோர் பெருநூறு பொருளோது செய் முன்னோர் பெருநூறு பொருளோது செய் முன்னோர் பெருநூறு பொருளோது செய் முன்னோர் பெருநூறு பொருளோது செய் முன்னோர் பெருநூறு பொருளோது செய் முன்னோர் பெருநூறு பொருளோது செய் முன்னோர் பெருநூறு பொருளோது செய் முன்னோர் பெருநூறு பொருளோது செய் மு

2. The names of half a dozen Pāṇḍyās of the Purā-
nāṇūru period and those of an equal number of them taken
from Mr. V. Venkayya’s list compiled from the Vēlvikuḍi
grant of the 8th Century A. D. and the Madras Museum
and Sīnmanāṉūr plates, are appended here for comparison.
They afford an interesting illustration of one of the many
methods employed to utilize political power in furtherance of religion.

The Puranāṇūru Pāṇḍyās.
1. Ilavantikaippallī thuṅchiya
   Nanmāran.
2. Kūṭākārathū thuṅchiya
   Māṇav Valuti.
3. Chittira Māṭathu thuṅ-
   chiya Nanmāran.
4. Talaiyālāṅkānattu cheṟu
   venṭa Neṭumcheḷiyan.
5. Velliyampalattu thuṅchiya
   Peru Valuti.

The Later Pāṇḍyās.
1. Māṭavarman Arikēsari
   Asamasaman.
2. Kōchchaḍyayan Raṇadhī-
   rān.
3. Arikēsari Parāṅkusa
   Māṭavarman Tērmāran.
4. Jaṭila Neṭunchaṭṭaya Parān-
   taka.
5. Srimāṭa Srivallabha
   Ēkavīra Parachakra Kōḷa-
   hala, Pallavabhanjana.
6. Rājasimha Mandanagu-
   rava Abhimānamēru.
conciliate the kings and the masses alike proved, along
with other causes like the advent of the religious devotees,
the Nāyanmārs and the Ālvārs, a powerful means of
stamping out the Jaina and Buddhist heterodoxy from the
Tamil land in the course of the next few centuries.
Among such devices of a later religious warfare, the
Agastya tradition, as already observed, appears to be one.
But it may still be asked why that tradition could not be
given its face value and taken for one of the authentic
race-lore of the Dravidians themselves. There is hardly
any a priori necessity to dismiss such a supposition as
unentertainable. Still the absolute silence of the entire
Tamil Literature of the earliest period precludes us from
considering it even as a reasonable historical hypothesis.

The most potent cause which appears to have pre-
disposed the people to a ready accep-
tance of this foreign tradition was its
appeal to the sense of racial dignity, or
vanity perhaps, from which few races
of antiquity are found to be free. If a sense of racial
superiority is seen to persist even to this day among many
enlightened people, one will not go wrong in positing its
existence in those bygone times. At the beginning, the
systematization, if not the creation, of the language of a
people by some Divine agency or semi-divine sage must
have evoked from them the greatest admiration and
respect. And all the more powerful should be the in-
fluence of that doctrine when it puts their own language
in a position of co-ordinate authority and odour of sancti-
ty with the divine language of the North, the Sanskrit.
Later literature is filled with allusions which express
unfeigned gratification at the ennoblement of Tamil, to
stand on a par with the sacred language of the Vēdas.
Here are a few stanzas culled at random from some
leading works:

Predisposing causes for the acceptance of the Agastya tradi-
tion.
1. "ஏனையது வரலாறுக் குறிப்பிட்டு நகரத்தை வர்த்தது”

2. “கருங்குளே சூரியனே விழாவா”
   —புராணகுற்றத் தொகுப்பு.

3. “மனித பெருமைகள் கரை புழைகள் போற்றுவதற்றை உரைந்து
ஏனையது மக்களை முன்று வந்து போற்றுவதற்றை உரைந்து”
   —புராணகுற்றத் தொகுப்பு.

4. “வெளியாறு காளம் பராட்டியது நகரின்
சீராய்த்து தான் வந்துவந்து போற்றுவதற்றை
சீராய்த்து தான் வந்துவந்து
சீராய்த்து தான் வந்து
சீராய்த்து தான் வந்து
சீராய்த்து தான் வந்து
சீராய்த்து தான் வந்து.”
   —புராணகுற்றத் தொகுப்பு.

5. “உறுப்பினருக்கு பராட்டிக்கு அவர்களுக்குப்
சீராய்த்து தான் வந்து
சீராய்த்து தான் வந்து
சீராய்த்து தான் வந்து
சீராய்த்து தான் வந்து
சீராய்த்து தான் வந்து.”
   —காதலுரை.

6. “திருமாலின் கத்தை உட்கருத்து சிவன்
திருமாலின் கத்தை உட்கருத்து சிவன்
திருமாலின் கத்தை உட்கருத்து சிவன்
திருமாலின் கத்தை உட்கருத்து சிவன்
திருமாலின் கத்தை உட்கருத்து சிவன்.”
   —காதலுரை.

7. “நூற்றும் காவல் மகரசன் மகிழ்ச்சியும் செய்தது
செய்தது
செய்தது
செய்தது
செய்தது
செய்தது”
   —புராணகுற்றத் தொகுப்பு.
These extracts, though made mostly from later authors, give us a valuable clue for correctly arriving at the motives that must have swayed the Tamil people in the ready acceptance of the Agastya legend.

Another predisposing cause might be drawn from the high character and religious sanctity of the few early Brahman settlers in the Tamil land. The arrival of the Aryans here must, in the ordinary course of events, have taken place only after the Mahārāṣṭra, Āndhra and Karnāṭaka countries had been fairly occupied by them. This penetration into the last two border countries of Tamiḻagam may require, at the lowest, two to three centuries from 350 B.C. So the first or the second century before Christ may reasonably be fixed as the terminus a quo beyond which the Aryan immigration into Tamiḻagam could not be pushed. That the Hindu Aryāṅs who set foot in the Tamil land a little later hailed from these border countries receives some support from two subsequent traditions. One of this refers to Agastya bringing with him eighteen families of kings, Vēḻirs and Aruvāḷars from Tuvarāpati, the
modern Dwārasamudram in the Mysore State, and the other to Paraśurāma peopling Kērāḷa with colonists from the banks of the Godāvari and the Krishṇā. The Travancore State Manual in page 213 refers to the latter tradition thus: “The new land was not fit for habitation; the settling down had not been completed. The quaking did not cease, so the Purāṇa says: hence Paraśurāma sprinkled some gold dust and buried coins and thus formed a treasure-trove which stopped the quaking of the land. He prepared a great yāgam (Sacrifice) at Varkala for the same purpose. Thereafter Paraśurāma brought colonies of Brahmins from the north, from the banks of the Krishṇā, the Godāvari, the Narmadā, the Kāveri and from Madura, Mysore and Māhārāṣṭra and from many other places and peopled Keralam. The Brahmin colonists so brought belonged to eight gotrams or families.” Presumably this is a very late tradition. Still we may infer that what occurred in Kērāḷa has had its analogue in the Tamil land to the east of the ghats. Larger and larger colonies of the Aryan immigrants must have come into the country from

1. Mr. Logan is of opinion that the Vedic Brahmans must have arrived at Malabar in the early part of the 8th Century A. D., and not earlier and that they must have come from the coast of the Tuḷu country.

2. Is it not a little curious that identical methods have been adopted by the Āryan immigrants or their immediate descendants, in Peninsular India both in the East Coast and in the West? Agastya was brought into the Tamil country on the East Coast and Paraśurāma was planted on the West. Just as Paraśurāma created the whole Kērāḷam from out of the bed of the Arabian Sea and became its virtual proprietor, his Eastern companion seems to have got the whole Tamil country from God Skanda at Tiruvēṅkaṭam and handed it over to his Śishya, the first Pāṇḍya king. Again as Paraśurāma had to people his new country by bringing down families of royalty and commonalty from the banks of the Godāvari and the Krishṇā,
the watershed of the Krishṇā and the Godāvari rivers, the Mahāraṣṭra and the Karnāṭaka in the West and of the Andhra in the East. The picture presented by the earliest body of Tamil Literature, viz., Puranānūṟu, Akaṇṇūṟu, Pattuppāṭṭu etc., only tends to confirm the conclusion otherwise arrived at here. A few Brahman priests seem to have taken up their abode here and there and assisted the kings and chieftains in the performance of yāgas and other religious rites. Though they were very few in number, they had acquired by their learning, peaceful character and by their life of self-denial and high-aspiring spirituality an unbounded influence with the rulers and the ruled alike. The following quotations from Puranānūṟu will establish beyond doubt the sanctity that had already begun to hedge round the Brahman teachers of those days.¹

Agastya had to take 18 families of kings, Vēḷirs and Aruvalars from Tuvarāpati (Dwārasamudram). The parallelism is not yet ended. Even as the West Coast owes its very rudiments of civilized life to Parasurāma, Agastya had also to perform his civilizing work by systematizing the Tamil Language and founding the first Academy whence all culture flowed for the benefit of later generations. After their labours for the spread of knowledge and culture, Parasurāma is said to have betaken himself to the Mahēndra Hill in Orissa, and Agastya, likewise, had to retire to the Pothiyil mount of the South. Just as Parasurāma who first reclaimed Śūrparaka country about Bombay in the North was later on shifted to the South to reclaim Kērāḷa, Agastya had to quit his Malakēḷa residence, in the Kanarese country, and take up his quarters in the Pothiyil mount in the heart of the Tamil country in the South. The inference from this close parallelism of traditions is obvious.

1. Mr. F. F. Pargiter, in his Ancient Indian Historical Tradition, p. 62, writes as follows: "There have been broadly speaking, three classes among Brahmins throughout Indian History, viz., (1) The ascetic devotee and teacher, the rṣi or the
This high respect, which the early Brahman priests won, naturally ripened in a few centuries into a blind belief on the part of the Tamilians in all the myths and legends which the ingenuity of the priestly order could coin for success in a life-and-death grapple with the heretics.

muni; (2) priest and the spiritual guide of Kings, nobles and people; and (3) the minister of State, Royal Officer and those who followed secular employments. The first was the Brahman par excellence, the Saint; the second the priest and the preceptor; and the third the semi-secular Brahman and sometimes wholly a layman.” In the Tamil country the earliest Brahman settlers as testified to by literature seem to have belonged to the second class mentioned by Mr. Pargiter. Except Agastya, Tamil land cannot boast of a single Aryan Rishi as having had his hermitage within its borders. Living secluded in their forest hermitages, and cut off from the current of secular life, those Aryan Rishis did not come to the South. The later Tamil Puranic writers, for their own purposes, had to draw their Rishis from the Naimisa and other forests in North India. This total absence of the Aryan Rishi or his hermitage in the Tamil land renders Agastya’s connection with the South highly problematical, being a solitary exception which does not fit in with historic conditions and chronology. Aryan immigration into the Tamil land in any considerable scale having begun in the Post-Christian centuries, the attempt to import therein a Rishi belonging to the Pre-Christian period is nothing less than crude anachronism.
And a third predisposing cause arises from the decadence which the Tamilians fell into after attaining the elements of a material civilization so clearly reflected in what is admittedly the classical portion of Tamil Literature. A period of repose, as in the case of other nations, followed in the wake of one of constructive and creative activity and the national mind then appears to have fallen into a torpor. Here too, as elsewhere, idle minds fell a prey to superstition—for a serious active life and superstition never go together—and when this superstition entered into alliance with religion, human nature could not but succumb.

The mystery of the religion of Navagrai, the four sealed arcana, and the miracles of devotees and religious preachers will, as a matter of course, make a powerful appeal to the masses whose minds have already grown vacant by a life of enervating ease and inactivity. It is difficult to imagine how the successors of the early Tamilians who had achieved such wonderful success in many of the arts of civilized life at so early an age could have allowed themselves to be thus hopelessly bound by the mythologic cobwebs of a later time. The mystery of this will vanish the moment we realise that human nature—even the best cultivated—can in no way be developed all-round. Its strength in one direction spells weakness in another. This is the Nemesis that always dogs the footsteps of every specialist. If he is great in one field, he must pay the penalty by his weakness in another. The practical Tamil intellect, when it had accomplished its work of building up a material civilization and felt itself flagged, was only too ready to receive its spiritual pabulum and mythologic luxuries from the Aryans of the North.

Agastya tradition in the Ramayana.

Not only is the Agastya tradition a late one in the Tamil land, its earliest reference in the Ramayana of Valmiki:
comes to us with a clear impress of an inherent contradiction. Rāma first meets Agastya, as I stated before, at his āśram near Nāsik and under the direction of the latter takes up his residence at Pañcavaṭī. It was here that the abduction of Sītā by Rāvaṇa takes place and thereafter Rāma moves southward to Kiśkindhā and enters into an alliance with Sugrīva, the monkey-chief. In the course of the instructions to the search-parties despatched by Sugrīva for finding out Sītā, a somewhat minute geographical description of South India is given to Hanumān, who had been chosen with Āṅgada to lead the southern party. In this occurs a reference to the sandalwooded Malaya to the south of the river Kāverī as the seat of the famous Saint Agastya. A modern reader of the Rāmāyaṇa must feel considerable perplexity in reconciling the existence of the sage just a few yojanas to the north of the Pañcavaṭī with his residence at Pothiyil, a distance of more than 800 miles to the south. This obvious inconsistency could be got over only by assuming that the mention of Agastya’s residence in the southern mountain was a subsequent interpolation made by one who had more knowledge of South India, especially of the Tamil Kingdoms in the south, than Vālmiki himself who mentions the southern ocean as lying just a few yojanas off from the foot of the Vindhya mountains. Supernaturalists may credit the sage with powers of swift locomotion through the air and may not feel puzzled how the sage could live about the Vindhya mountains in the north and in a short time find himself seated in the Malaya Hills of the far-distant south.

But that hypothesis will not suit the demands of sober history. Hence we have to conclude that the testimony of the Rāmāyaṇa which has been undergoing numerous redactions till the first century B.C. or even
later, does in no way enable us to argue for a high antiquity for this tradition in Tamilagam.

Taking along with this the complete silence of the Tamil classical literature spread about the first three centuries of the Christian Era, the conclusion appears highly probable that the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries after Christ, which mark the keenest struggle with the heretical sects in the Tamil Land, may also have been the period when the first seeds of the Agastya tradition were sown in the South. How entirely incorrect is the surmise of Dr. Caldwell who claimed for the tradition an antiquity going back to 700 B.C. needs therefore no further elucidation.

Conceding for the present that the poets who composed the works which are generally known as "Sangam Literature" may have omitted to make mention of Agastya for various reasons of their own, still we shall be precluded from making such a concession in the case of Tolkāppiyar, his leading disciple, and the author of the first and foremost Grammar of the Tamil Language. It is quite reasonable to expect that at least he, considering his relationship with the sage and by the special fact of his composing a grammar to compete with the monumental work of his master, should have given us some information regarding his reputed predecessor. Has he done anything of the kind? Not a line is there in all that extent of his great grammar which may be construed even as an indirect reference to the Sage.1 Tradition, whose

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1. For instance, Dr. Washburne Hopkins in his work, the Great Epic of India fixes 400 A.D. as the latest date.
2. It is true that Nachchinārkkiniyar interprets certain sūtras of Tolkāppiam ending in தென்பே, தேரையுடன், etc., whose reference is not at all specific as a reference by implication to Agastya, the author’s guru. But the correct method of interpreting these indefinite statements of Tolkāppiyar is to be drawn...
origin though late remains obscure, is no doubt responsible for creating twelve disciples who had to sit at the feet of Agastya for their learning. They were (1) Tiranadhūmāk-
kini alias Tolkāppiyar; (2) Chempūṭchēy; (3) Ataṅkōṭṭā-
cān; (4) Turāllīṅkaṇ; (5) Vāiyāppikaṇ; (6) Vāyppīyān;
(7) Paṅampāraṇ; (8) Kaḷārambaṇ; (9) Avinayaṇ;
(10) Kakkaipāṭiniyaṇ; (11) Naṛṛataṇ and Vāmanaran.
Sometimes Sikanṭi is seen interpolated in the list. It is
worthy of note that Paṅampāraṇar, one of the co-
students who studied with Tolkāppiyar at the Agastya
Academy, is credited with composing an introductory
stanza for his mate's work Tolkāppiyam. Here a refer-
ence is made to Ataṅkōṭṭācān, another class-mate of
theirs, and also to Tolkāppiyar's proficiency in the Aindra
School of Sanskrit Grammar. Here too, Agastya has been
passed over in studied silence. Even assuming that Tol-
kāppiyar's relationship with Agastya was a trifle strained—
as Tradition assures us—there is not the slightest ground
why Paṅampāraṇar should forget his guru in this recom-
mendatory stanza. Not only has the sage been severely left
out in the cold, but to add insult to injury Paṅampāraṇar
makes another of their co-students, Ataṅkōṭṭācān, pre-
side over the assembly which had gathered to hear the ex-
position of Tolkāppiyar's great work and set on it its seal of
approval. Is it conceivable that these three students of
Agastya would have behaved so indecorously as they seem
to have done, if they had actually acknowledged the great
sage as their preceptor? The conduct of this student-
triumvirate is explicable only on the assumption that none
of them had anything to do with Agastya and might be
from certain other sûtras of that author which contain word.
ings like 'भाग्यमेवः', 'तत्स्यं', 'तत्रादि', 'ते सत्त
तिक्षुवानि', 'ते मात्रायः', 'ते गुणमितिभवति',
Explicitly and quite decisively these refer only to previous
grammarians in general and not to Agastya in particular.
supposed to have been even ignorant of his very existence 
at the time. The perversity, which undoubtedly seems to 
cling to their conduct in this matter, is entirely due to our 
trying to foist on them a later day legend, for which they 
could hardly be called to account. If, however, we dis-
miss the Agastya legend as a piece of chronological ir-
relevancy, the conduct of Tolkāppiyar, Panampāraṇār 
and Ataṅkōṭṭācāṅ assumes quite a natural character.

Agastya's 
works.

Tradition credits Agastya with 
found ing the first Sangam and presiding 
over it. He is also represented as hav-
ing composed the first Grammar of the Tamil Language. 
The Sangam tradition, as it stands, is too indefinite and 
etherial to be made the subject-matter of any historical 
investigation; for it does not afford us anywhere any foot-
hold, any solid verifiable fact, from which to start. Nearly 
the whole body of it hangs in cloudland and few will be 
disposed to tamper with that beautiful aerial structure with 
prosaic confrontation with facts and historical deductions. 
Scientific criticism must feel a little nonplussed when 
vast periods of geological time are allowed to step into 
the limited field of a nation's literary history. Nor do 
the later Noachian Deluge and Manu's flood offer us a 
surer ground to plant ourselves on.¹ So, the Sangam

1. Regarding such deluges Mr. L. W. King writes thus 
in page 121 of his work Babylonian Religion and Mythology. 

"In the tradition of many races scattered in various parts 
of the world is to be found a story, under many different 
forms and with many variations, of a great flood or deluge 
which in former times inundated and laid waste the land in 
which they dwell. The explanation that such traditions refer 
to a universal deluge which took place in the early ages of the 
world, is now generally regarded as inadmissible, inasmuch as 
there is no trace of such a catastrophe in the earth's geological 
formation. Moreover Science has shown that in the present 
physical condition of the world such a universal deluge would 
be impossible."
question may be left undisturbed for the present.\(^1\)

Agastya’s composition of the first Tamil Grammar, however, stands on a different footing. It opens for us an avenue of approach. Though here also, according to tradition, the major portion of his work is said to have fallen into the maws of a far-distant time, still some stray sūtras of his have escaped that fate and come down to us. These, then, should give us some interesting materials for judging, however imperfectly, the nature of Agastya’s extensive grammar of twelve thousand sūtras.

1. It is worthy of note, in this connection, that no champion of the Sangam has yet come forward to seriously refute any of the arguments contained in the searching criticism of the late Prof. Seshagiri Sastri on the subject. The attempt of the late Prof. P. Sundaram Pillai, who ingeniously put forward the best defence the question admitted of, that the Sangam poets though belonging to various times and places were brought together in a group because in the historical perspective of a distant posterity they appeared to hang together, is really giving away the whole case. No doubt, it is a poetic way of defending the Sangam; but the historic authenticity of the latter must be built upon more solid materials than figurative language. So the arguments of Prof. Seshagiri Sastri still hold the field. The mistaken impression that the antiquity of Tamil Literature has to be surrendered in the absence of a Sangam to support it from behind has been at the root of this tradition being carefully preserved, tended and made to persist even now. The earliest Tamil works—the Sangam literature—have undoubted intrinsic merits of their own and carry with them their own credentials for the grateful acceptance of the present-day Tamilian. Instead of establishing their antiquity on these intrinsic historic grounds, as I think we can very well do, some are engaged in propping it up on such extrinsic and almost legendary data as the three Sangams. In my view, it is certainly spoiling a strong case by unnecessary mythologizing.
and of the grain and temper of scholarship that characterised its author.

Before we proceed to value the fragments of Agastya's Grammar which have been handed down by the Tamil commentators and collected by a recent editor, it will not be out of place to glance incidentally at the huge body of miscellaneous writings which has since been ascribed to him. They range over a wide field from Medicine and Mysticism to Magic and Witchcraft and bear eloquent testimony to their author having been an unabashed charlatan. The reputed systematiser of the Tamil Language could scarcely have descended so low as to produce such senseless and dismal drivel as the extant Agastya literature, which has absolutely nothing in either matter or form to commend it to a cultured society. This is what Professor Mahāmahopādhyāya S. Kuppuswami Sastrīr, M. A., says in the introduction to Part II of Vol. II of the Descriptive Catalogue of the Oriental Manuscripts Library, Madras: “The name of Agastya or Āhātiyar in Tamil has to be specially mentioned as the most prolific writer on these subjects (Alchemy, Medicine, Yogam of the Siddhars). Who this Agastiyar is, to whom so many works are attributed, cannot be stated. He does not seem to be the same as the well-known Agastiyar, who is said to have systematized the Tamil Language and wrote the First Tamil Grammar. In all probability works written by

1. The Catalogue of the Madras Oriental Manuscripts Library gives, in all, details of about 96 Agastya works. May be this collection just touches only the fringe of a body of literature not yet fully explored. If the cavernous profundity of that author could gush forth in such numbers as

"弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弭弥
different persons at different periods of time seem to have been attributed to Ahattiyar to invest them with dignity and antiquity, but the language used in many of these works is very commonplace and betrays them in their true colour as later compositions." To call the language of this trashy collection—for literature is too dignified a name to be used for it—'commonplace' is to err on the side of moderation. Let me extract a few lines of verse for the judgment of the reader.

"இத்தொல்லங்கார் கருணையில் கருட்சியாக வருக
சுத்தநோக்கியில் குத்துவது கருத்தே வாசனை" —கோமாதராசாநிறை தீர்த்தம்

"லிங்கவதை வழிகாட்டவும் வடை வெள்ளி வடை வழிகாட்டவும் வணங்கிய பிறந்தவும் வணங்கும் மாடு" —கோமாதராசாநிறை தீர்த்தம்

"குரு கையில் இருந்தால் வாழ்வு தூப்பது துணை
நீதிகள் ரூபாயிட்டு மேனு கைகள்" —கோமாதராசாநிறை தீர்த்தம்

Is this 'commonplace' language or the language of puny minds absolutely devoid of learning, culture, and
moral elevation? The Professor is again a little cautious and hesitating to draw the conclusion that the whole lot bears the impress of the popular mint of quite recent times. Such lines as:

"அக்ந்தாம் விசை வருகின்ற மானையும்
மஞ்சர் தின்புலம் அயக்து சக்தியா.."

"என்மீ குருவியால் நீர்ப்பகல் தமிழ் தொல்லை
பஞ்சர் தின்புலம் வருகின்றன தொன்வென
அழகாய்"

-அர்த்தத்தில் கவனியறியும்

occurring in some of the works themselves give the lie direct to their ever having been written by the sage himself. But why waste time in exploring the back alleys and slums of Tamil Literature?

In retracing his steps to the grammatical sūtras of Agastya, the reader may expect that perhaps in these the reputed sage might be seen at his best. But I fear blank disappointment must greet him here also. First, a few specimens of the sūtras of this far-famed originator of the first Tamil Grammar. His definitions of Eluthu (எழுது) Moli (மொலி) and Kūrū (குரு) are illuminating to the last degree and we feel that without his critical guidance in a region so recondite we would be left in the lurch for ever.

எழுது "ஏழும் பொிருந் ஒளி மேல் ஏழும் பொிருந்."

மொலி "மொலிலும் ஏழும் மேல் ஏழும் னலி மேல்."

குரு "குரு பொிருந் மெல் குரு பொிருந்."

Then he gives the lead to future grammarians how they should distinguish between the sexes of letters:

"நிலவென பள்ள வையாயவென பக்தநென"

"ஆகற்பு வையாய வையாயம் வையாய."

-தொட்டை வையாய.
His medical knowledge is perhaps responsible for another peculiar classification of letters or sounds into Amirtaveluttu (அமிர்சவுறு) and Naiceluttu (நடேசுறு). His intuitive apprehension of the individuality of the Tamil Language comes out in the Sūtra:

“இன்னுள் சதுபதியோ சதுக்கூறு தொண்டு”

This solitary Sūtra is enough to blow up the patriotic pretensions of the so-called Tamil Muni? Probably, Agastya, a foreigner in the Tamil land, had a better justification for claiming the ownership of even primary human sounds to the Sanskrit Language, than the bigot-ed author of Ilakkanakkottu (இலக்கணக்கோட்டு) of modern days in perpetrating that absurd violation of the most elementary conceptions of linguistic science. The tell-tale sūtras, I here extract, from the published volume of Rao Saheb Bhavanandam Pillai’s edition of Pērakātiya Tiraṭṭu, will not fail to impress the reader with their brand-new modernity. If the words, style and thoughts of a literary composition can furnish the critic with any standard for fixing its date with some approach to tolerable accuracy, the following sūtras can lead but to one conclusion. They are all post-Tolkāppiyam in origin and bear evident marks of pedantry in some and of grammatical dilettantism in others. Here are the Sūtras:

Sūtra:

4. கொட்டான உியையார் பிள்ளாய்க்கவும் சிட்டியார்.
10. சாதல் கட்டமுன் சுமையின் சிட்டியார்.
13. குற்றாள் குடியிரு சுமையின் சிட்டியார்.
15. பசுப்பு பசுலியான் பிள்ளாய்க்கவும்.
27. மலர்ம வருவவான அண்மையின் சிட்டியார்.
31. குற்றாள் காட்சையான பிள்ளாய்க்கவும்.
61. சுமையின் தாண்டம் சிட்டीயான பிள்ளாய்
பசுப்பு பசுலியான் பிள்ளாய்
வங்கள் பக்தவான் பிள்ளாய்.
78. பசுலியான் பிள்ளாய் பக்தவான் கோபுரே.
It is hardly doubtful whether the author or authors of such miscellanea had any clear notions of the function and scope of Grammar and Lexicology. The conceptions of these two disciplines are so hopelessly mixed up in these. Next, the style and phraseology of the Sūtras have neither simplicity nor ancientness about them. Both point unmistakably to the very latest period in the growth of grammatical terminology. In the third place, the attempt to squeeze the classification and nomenclature of the Sanskrit Grammarians into the facts of an alien language is only too patent throughout. The author of Tolkāppiyam, in spite of his Sanskrit erudition, had at least the sound instinct of a born grammarian to respect

1. This clearly referring to Pāṇini, Agastya must be considered as having lived after him. How could the Rg Vedic Agastya come after Pāṇini?
the linguistic phenomena of a foreign tongue and to carefully avoid tampering with their peculiarities in his classical grammar. Later-day scholars, in their admiration of Sanskrit, seem to have been engaged in importing wholesale the conceptions and terminology of the Sanskrit Grammarians in the form of stray sūtras composed for the nonce and fathering them on the great saint Agastya with a view to secure for their productions an authority more ancient and compelling than what belongs to Tolkāppiyam.

In the light of the exuberance of this orthodox Tamil Literature, the hypothesis of Tolkāppiyam being the work of an early Jaina author can scarcely be lightly brushed aside. The difficulty, however, of coming to any

1. The identification of Tolkāppiyar with Trṣadhumāgni, the son of Jamadagni, the Vedic Rṣi, is due to a later tradition and is absolutely indefensible on historical grounds. To assign Tolkāppiyam to the fourth century A. D. is indeed a reasonable working hypothesis and this receives extraneous support from the facts of Tamil Literary development also. If however, the Vedic Rṣi, Jamadagni, the father of Parasurāma and of Trṣadhumāgni, is imported into the story of this work, the whole ends in a chronological dislocation of no ordinary kind. That Jamadagni lived towards the close of the Kṛta Age is the view of the Purāṇas. Summing up their conclusions, Mr. F. E. Pargiter writes, in page 315 of his Ancient Indian Historical Tradition thus:—“According to that reckoning Viswāmitra and his sons (with whom began the real Vedic Age, as mentioned above) lived towards the close of the Kṛta Age and so also Jamadagni etc.” The following observations of Dr. Burnell are apposite in this connection: “It is possible to show historically how the Brahman gradually supplanted the old Buddhist-Jaina civilization of the Peninsula, the earliest historical civilization of which there is any record in that part of India; and the fact that the Vedas of the South are the same as those of the North proves conclusively that this was done at a time when the Brāhmaṇas and the Sūtras had been definitely reduced to
definite conclusion on that question arises from the fact that the theological conceptions and cosmogonic legends of the Jainas show a family likeness to those of the orthodox Hindus except in a few abstract doctrinal points. There is reason for believing that the Agastya mint was opened and kept going for sometime solely to bring down the authority of Tolkāppiyam and belittle its importance. Viewed in its historical setting, Agastya tradition appears as little else than an orthodox counter-blast to Tolkāppiyam. But the superior merits of that work could not thus be extinguished. It stood its ground and even at this distance of time while a number of grammatical works have in the interim succeeded it, its broadly-laid foundations have not been touched nor the classic brilliance of its superstructure surpassed. Thus their present form or at all events not before the Christian Era." — Elements of South Indian Palaeography, pp. 11—12.

Prof. E. J. Rapson in page 65 of his work Ancient India says "They (the Jains) have also played a notable part in the civilization of Southern India, where the early literary development of the Kanarese and Tamil Languages was due, in a great measure, to the labours of Jain monks."

1. This may be also due to the wonderful assimilative capacity of the Hindu Religion, which has always received into its bosom alien doctrines, admitted into its pantheon alien gods and thrown open the doors of its hagiology to alien religious teachers. The admission of Buddha, the stoutest and the most formidable opponent of Brahmanism, into the Hindu circle of Avatārs is alone sufficient to establish the great catholicity of Hinduism. The remarkable strength of this religion is no doubt partly due to this.

That the same tendency was powerfully at work in the heterodox sects too need not be doubted. The following observation of Mr. Vincent A. Smith applies with double force to the Jaina sect: "The newer form of Buddhism had much in common with older Hinduism and the relation is so close that even an expert often feels a difficulty in deciding to which
there is ample justification for concluding that the Agastya tradition is decidedly posterior to the early Jaina period of Tamil Literature, and must be ascribed to the age which succeeded the composition of Tolkāppiyam. Another ground of improbability of the so-called Agastyam being anterior to Tolkāppiyam may also be adverted to here. If the original grammar, Agastyam, had really treated of the three kinds of Tamil, viz., Iyal, Icai, and Nāṭakam, there was hardly any reason for Tolkāppiyar to omit the treatment of Icai and Nāṭakam in his great work. He too would have followed his predecessor and given his grammar an all-comprehensiveness which, at present, it lacks. His failure to do so was due simply to the fact that the tripartite classification of Tamil into Iyal, Icai and Nāṭakam did not exist in his time. It was introduced only at a later stage of the growth of the Tamil Language and stamps Agastyam as a work of that period.

The time and circumstances of the origin of Agastya sutras, no less than their language and import, are such as will warrant only one conclusion, that the whole mass of them is a bare-faced forgery—not, of course, committed by a single writer at a single period of time but the result of different authors at diverse times contributing their share to the pile, whose sundry fragments challenge our system a particular image should be assigned.”—Early History of India, p. 319.

Compare also Mr. Vincent A. Smith’s views in the same work re the absorption of foreign elements into the Hindu Society, given in pages 340 and 341 and the decay of Buddhism in India, in p. 382.

1. The age of Tiruvannasambandha and Tirunāvukkarasu, about the beginning of the 7th century A. D. may be taken as the dividing line which marks the earlier and the later periods of the Jain History in Tamilagam.
attention to-day and create a problem in the linguistic and literary history of Tamil for solution. That this is not mere idle theorizing will come home to the reader if he has the patience to scrutinize a little the language of the following Agastya sūtras extracted from the commentaries of Naccinārkkiniyār on Jivaka-Cintāmani and of Atiyārk-kunallār on Cilappatikāram.

1. “காசிகு கௌலம் விசாரே குடம்பன்
பிர்கும் குளிரு காவினாக சென்று.”

2. “நமன கௌல பிர்கும் பர்வதி
பாக குளிரு காவினாக சென்று.”

3. காசிகு கௌலம் விசாரே குடம்பன்
கூருக்கும் பாசுக்கு காவினாக
புக்கிரமம் பாசுக்கு காவினாக சென்று.”

Is it unfair to suppose that these late commentators, who quote such sūtras without letting us know whence they drew them, should have really intended that they should be taken for Agastya sūtras? If Agastya were the real author, why should he have referred to himself at all and that also in the third person? Surely, one will find it difficult to ascribe such vanity, as this language pre-supposes, to a Sage of Agastya’s saintliness and eminence. The only way then of explaining away what to us looks like effrontery is to conclude that these are not the genuine writings of Agastya but only forgeries perpetrated by the later devotees of the Agastya cult. The reference to these sūtras in the commentaries does in no way establish their authenticity. On the other hand, they are rendered doubly suspicious, first by the suppression of the names of their authors and secondly by the absence of the original Agastya sūtras on which these later ones might be supposed to have been based. Hence this floatsam and jetsam of Agastya Literature deserves only to be stored away in—
a special niche reserved for literary forgeries until their authenticity is vouched for by extraneous evidence of an incontrovertible kind.

Human mind loves the marvellous. Even now it has not clean outgrown that habit. When once the Agastya Tradition was planted in the Tamil soil, it burst into a rank and over-abundant growth. The following quotations from certain later Tamil works will bear this out.

**Pannirupatalam** has the following in its **Pāyiram**:

“அந்தன் தேசம் விளைக்கும் தருமணத்தில் பேராற்ற முனையோரின் முன்பாட்டில் பரிவடிநம் பாதுகாப்பு அருமை ராமேஸ் வங்கை வந்த வனாஞ்சியை பெரும்பலர் தெரிய அதிகரித்தது கொண்டங்களின் வருமான்பாவை.”

The **Pāyiram** of **Purapporu! Venpā Mālai** contains this:

“உறை குப்பை வாயில் தென்கான் நன்கால் விருத்தம் மட்டும் இன்னிருக்கும் பரிவடிநாமத் பாதுகாப்பு வங்கை வந்த வனாஞ்சியை கொண்டங்களின் வருமான்பாவை.”

The **Pāyiram** of **Akapporu! Vilakkam** runs thus:

“மூளை வாழ்க மலர்கள் எழுள்ள பாதுகாப்பு விளைக்கும் கொரல்லி வெளி வருமானின் பெருமானால் வங்கை வந்த வனாஞ்சியை பெரும்பலர் தெரிய அதிகரித்தது கொண்டங்களின் வருமான்பாவை.”

The **Divākaram** has the following:

“அந்தன் தேசம் விளைக்கும் பெருமானின் பெருமானால் வழிபட்டு வருமான் கிளை வங்கையுடன்”
These references are enough to establish how the Agastya tradition first began in the upper stratum of Tamil Literature before trickling down to its lower or the popular level.

Leaving these, if we turn to Tamil Purānic Literature of still later times, the Agastya legend will be found to have grown in extent and elaborateness, which the earlier writers could hardly have even imagined. The first promulgators of the Purānas in the Tamil land being Poets, the characters and incidents of North Indian Traditions were imported bodily into their works and handled with a freedom which the imaginative children of Poetry alone possess. Kanta-
purāṇam (a), Kācikāntam (b), Tirukkurṟalppurāṇam (c), Tiruvēnkatāttalappurāṇam (d), Tirunelvēlittalappurāṇam (e), Kuṟantaippurāṇam (f), Mayilaippurāṇam (g), Vēṭā-
raṇiyappurāṇam (h), ¹ to mention only a few, have each something to say about the saint and his miraculous performances. The array of the Purānic battalion is indeed tremendous, but its arms are loaded with only blank cartridges. It may envelop itself in vast volumes of smoke and rattle; but for hitting at one fact of history it has not the means. Still some people feel a sort

1. (a) vide ஊர்கமோகம்.
(b) " எதர்நந்தத்தாயம்.
(c) " சஞ்சை ஊர்கமோகம் கதையும்.
(d) " ஊர்கமோகம் திருநெல்வெளினாரூணம் ஊர்கமோகம்.
(e) " தேவாரகம் கதையும்.
(f) p. 198.
(g) " மயிலைப்பூணம் கதையும்; வேறு ஊர்கமோகம்
(h) " வெளிப்போகம் கதையும்.
of unctuous over-scrupulousness of spirit and refrain
from rejecting these myths of the poets as utterly
worthless for historic purposes. Emulating the
example of historians who try to extract some grains of
truth from ancient traditions, they go on to argue
whether the testimony of such a goodly company
of Purānic poets should not after all have some bed-
rock of truth underneath. This is entirely misconceiving
the problem that has been set forth in this paper and the
method adopted for its solution. Inductive methods,
which, when applied to facts, are a fruitful source of
truth, will yield only fictitious generalizations when ap-
plied to fictions. There is no intrinsic merit in these
scientific methods to impart to the materials to which
they are applied the validity of truth that they may
otherwise lack. It is surprising that this commonplace
of scientific doctrine and practice is forgotten by those
who want to appeal to the testimony of numbers, where
each number counted is little better than a zero. Surely,
the false concurrent statement of a hundred unveracious
witnesses will not make that statement true simply be-
cause their number happens to be hundred. On the
method of inductive reasoning these adopt, almost every
character of every poet and mythologist must be credited
with real existence. Would Shakespeare have treated the
history of Falstaff in three successive plays of his; if there
had not been some real Falstaff to become the hero of so
many exploits and escapades? How, for instance, could
the numerous adventures and hairbreadth escapes of the
great detective hero, Sherlock Holmes, be made consis-
tent with his assumed non-existence? The numerous
exploits of those two heroes should force us to conclude
that, discounting much as due to poetic fancy or a novel-
list's imagination, there must still remain a nucleus of
solid fact at the core. A reasoning like this is not at all
different in essentials from that which guides certain investigators in their work of constructing history with the help of the Purānic poets. The attempts of these remind us of the venerable Professors of the University of Lagado, who were engaged in grim earnest in extracting sunbeams from cucumbers.

When Agastya passed from the hands of the Poets to the care of the masses, his saintliness came to be immediately surrounded with a halo of divinity. In all countries and at all times, group psychology has been characterised by one feature—its tendency to occupy extremes either way. Hence, measured judgments, appreciation within limits, are not of the people. They must make of the persons brought to their bar either a god or a devil. Naturally, therefore, the popular Agastya was raised at once to the rank of a divinity and their worshipful homage flowed towards him in an unceasing stream. A temple too, known as Agastisvaram, was raised in his honour and it stands to this day some four or five miles to the north of Cape Comorin. Though this temple has now fallen into neglect, it must have at one time attracted a large concourse of votaries and been an important

1. "It is the lack of the conditions necessary to collective resolution and volition that renders a crowd so fickle and so inconsistent; so capable of passing from one extreme of action to another, of hurrying to death the man whom it glorified at an earlier moment, or of turning from savage butchery to tender and tearful solicitude."—William McDougall's, 'Group Mind,' p. 45. Just as the lack of the conditions necessary to collective resolution leads to the fickleness of the crowd, so also the want of facilities for collective deliberation and judgment of the populace precludes the application of the necessary corrective and brings about the extremist character of popular judgments in general.
place of pilgrimage. That Agastīśvaram may have once enjoyed its heyday of prosperity is rendered probable by the fact that the Taluq or revenue division in which it is located is even now known as Agastīśvaram Taluq in South Travancore.¹ Not only this, there are certain communities in that part of the country, the weaving class for instance, who consider the saint as their own tribal deity and offer him regular daily worship.

Another religious cult also later on seems to have mingled itself with the Agastya. When the Śaivite religious philosophers appeared and began to spiritualize still more the religious conceptions of the earlier Nāyaṇmārs in South India, they depicted God as the spiritual guru who would present himself before devout and ripe souls and free them from the coils of Karma and rebirth by bestowing mukti on them. This special grace on the part of Śiva, the Supreme Lord, became one of the cardinal doctrines of the Śaiva Siddhānta School of Philosophy, which even now claims the largest number of adherents in South India. That Śaivism, at least in its latest phase, emphasising as it did Guru-Bhakti as the foremost virtue amongst its three types of spiritual devotion, powerfully reacted on the Agastya cult and helped its spread amongst the masses goes without saying. An ācārya of the type of Agastya, hovering midway between Divinity and man, could very easily be taken for Śiva. Guru or the divine teacher himself. And in fact no orthodox Śaivite could afford to treat a religious guru with indifferent feelings lest he should thereby lose the chance of salvation, which would be vouchsafed to him.

¹ There is a village known as Tiru-Agattiyānpalli, about two miles to the south of Tirumaraikkāṭu, in the Tanjore District. The Saint is said to have performed penance here for some time. This place comes within the itinerary of the Śaiva devotee Tīruṇānasambandha and is found mentioned in one of his hymns.
by Śiva himself appearing in the form of a human teacher, at some time or other. Thus, in the identification of the Saint with Śiva Guru Mūrttam, brought about by the exigencies of Śaivite religious development, the apotheosis of Agastya reaches its finale in the Tamil land.

The following details given in Mr. Gangoly’s article in the Journal of the Mythic Society throw a fresh light on an earlier phase of the same religious tendency working itself out in the Malay islands in the East. In Java certain images called “Śiva Guru” or “Trīṣūla” images are found in many places and are worshipped as those of Agastya, who is believed to have been the first missionary of Śaivism in that country. This, in a way, explains how in the mainland of India Agastya cult received a fresh impetus by its alliance with the Śaiva revivalism, especially during its later stages when its doctrines and rituals were elaborated and codified by Meykaṇṭa Tēva and the other religious philosophers who followed him. That of all teachers Agastya should be brought in to collect and arrange the Tēvāra hymns lets in some light on the religious tendencies of that time. In the distant Java too, Agastya’s name became intertwined with that of Śiva or Śiva Guru and assumed a sectarian importance of its own. The disillusion in the matter of the people worshipping the Śiva Guru images as the Agastya came, however, from an unexpected, but authoritative quarter. Dr. Vogel, the eminent Dutch Archaeologist, to whom the photographs of the Śiva Guru images were sent for inspection and identification, came to the correct conclusion that the images, all of which bore the Trīṣūla or the trident in their hands, were those of Śiva and not of Agastya. From my own inspection of the photos I was satisfied that all the images were Śiva’s and that Dr. Vogel had given the correct verdict in the matter. Further, from the
extract in page 55 of this paper from Bergaine’s Sanskrit Inscriptions of Champa, it will be seen that Agastya journeyed to Cambodia to preach the worship of Śiva-liṅgam known as Śrī Bhadreśvara. The Śiva Guru images of Java are also known as Bhaṭṭāraka Guru images. Bhadreśvara of Cambodia and Bhaṭṭāraka of Java bear a close resemblance and may be variant forms of probably one name.* However, this is a matter for Sanskritists to decide.

Having been thus deified, Agastya has come to evoke the greatest veneration among the people. This wave of piety led to a fresh recrudescence of myths and miracles which have now literally buried the original figure “ten thousand fathoms deep.” One need not wonder at the fecundity of the imagination, from the most cultivated to the most ignorant, thus piling on the devoted head of Agastya layer after layer of legends of every description and colour. Almost every century had its quota to add and if the mass of tradition will in any manner supply a standard for determining the period of its growth and accumulation, at least a thousand years may fairly be allowed for the Agastya cult for its development to its present dimensions. Still in the field of psychology of a race, we cannot absolutely be sure of the validity of such surmises.¹ When a Geologist calculates

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*These words are given the following meanings in Sir Monier William’s Dictionary.

Bhadreśvara = Various Statues or Liṅgas of Śiva.
Bhaṭṭāraka = Buddhist teachers and Śaiva monks.

¹. Though the lore-dimension and quality of a tradition may give us an idea of its age, it is not at all possible to reach a correct standard for its age-determination. Judged either by quantity or quality of the materials that have gathered round certain popular heroes of recent dates handed down in ballad poetry of the day, such as Muttu Bhaṭṭan and Mānurai Vīran of later myths, as Jai Singh and Khan Sahib
the age of a river by the successive layers of its alluvial
deposit, he can positively be sure of his ground and con-
clusions for he is only dealing with unvarying physical
forces that have at no point of time ceased working.
Not so in the present case, where the thought and life of
a nation are dealt with. There may be centuries of stag-
nation to be succeeded by others of unusual productivity
and progress. The concatenation of circumstances which
brings this about will defy the analysis of even the most
accomplished historian. Yet with all these uncertainties
which affect the later stages in the development of the
Agastya cult, the tradition itself, according to the testi-
mony of the early literature examined, cannot be taken
behind the 5th Century A.D.

Intrinsic Improbabilities.

Viewing the Agastya tradition as a whole from its
inception to its most recent develop-
ment, it strikes us as an imaginative
structure of magnificent proportions.

In the first place, the reason assigned for the Agastya
exodus is too mythical for ordinary human belief. It is
stated that he was sent to the South by God Śiva himself
to equalize the balance of the southern half of the Globe
with the northern. This primitive conception of the one
portion of the earth tilting up and another sinking down—
not certainly by any geological catastrophe—but by the
sheer weight of the heavenly hosts gathered on the
Himalayan top—is too puerile for serious criticism.

probably of the Carnatic Wars, as Katta Bommu and Úmai Durai
of the Poligar Wars of Tinnevelly, these recent legends seem
to vie with the older, both in their elaborate character and in
their mythic ingredients. So the massiveness of a tradition by
itself is not a safe guide for the determination of its age.
Secondly, his residences in the South are too numerous and far distant one from another to be received as historical facts. He had his residence first on the southern outskirts of the Vindhyâ Mountains, next on the Mount Vaiḍûrya in the Satpura range, then on the Malakûta near Badâmi, then on the Pothiyil in the Pândya country, and lastly he appears to have migrated beyond the sea to the Malaya Hill in Sumatra and thence moved on to Siam and Cambodia. Is it possible for one man to have displayed such catholicity of taste for a series of hill residences scattered throughout the Peninsular India and the numerous Indonesian Islands in the East?

Thirdly, a like improbability arises from Agastya officiating as the family priest of the Câlukya King

1. The following is found quoted by Mr. Gangoly in his article on Agastya published in the Journal of the Mythic Society, Vol. XVIII “That Brahmin Agastya, born in the land of the Aryans, devoted to the worship of Shiva, having come by his psychic powers in the land of the Cambodians for the purpose of worshipping the Shiva Lingam known as Shri Bhadreswara and having worshipped the God for a long time attained beatitude.”—Bergaine’s Sanscrit Inscriptions of Champa, 1893, LXV, p. 360.

2. Certainly a feeling of monotony will creep on the reader when he tries to run through the list of the Agastya residences in the various countries. The Mahâmalaya hill in the Malaya-Dvipa and the Malayam Hill in Sumatra come to him merely as the second or third editions of Malakûta and Malaya of South India. In short, the principle followed appears to be that wherever a mountain or hill raised its head to the sky Agastya should be brought forthwith and located there. A hill without a Rishi of his eminence, in the view of the myth-makers, is almost a contradiction in terms.
Kirtirāja of Lāṭa, N. Guzerat,1 and of the Pāṇḍya King of the far away South.2 Is it probable that in the conditions of South India in that early time when roads and other conveniences of travel did not exist that Agastya could have had such a large clientele of royalty to minister to?

Fourthly, judged by our ordinary standards, his exploits are mostly superhuman. Here human credulity is taxed a little too much. These performances hardly serve the purpose of establishing his historical character. Their cumulative effect after all seems to be the reverse.

Fifthly, his labours as the pioneer of Aryan civilization in the South and in the East have to surmount serious historical difficulties, before they are finally accepted. The aryisation of the Mahārāṣṭra, then of the Karnāṭaka, then of the Tamil country, then of the Malay islands and lastly of Siam and Cambodia must each be assigned a few centuries at the least. No ordinary human being with a limited span of life of a hundred years or thereabouts could have coped with this gigantic task on a scale so colossal. Nor can it be pretended with due respect for the facts of history that the aryisation of these various countries was simultaneous and could be compressed into the limited space of one identical century. These are a few of the difficulties presented to us by the Agastya tradition.

Thus we find that judged by the two fundamental tests referred to at the beginning viz., (i) unbroken continuity of tradition with the past and (ii) absence of inherent

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2. Vide Sinnamanūr plate where Sundara Pāṇḍya is referred to as Agastya Śiṣya.
contradictions, the Agastya tradition breaks down completely.

Yet attempts have not been wanting to rescue the sage from the atmosphere of pure myth and invest him with a sort of historic personality as that of Alexander the Great for instance. Mr. O. C. Gangoly in an article contributed to the *Journal of the Mythic Society*, calls him the leader of the Aryans in the great task of the aryannisation of Dakśināpatha. The Aryan immigration into Europe, into Iran, into North India, all appear to have been accomplished without a personal leader to direct the hosts. In the case of South India alone a leader was found necessary. Probably this last migration being the latest, the leader's name here has not fallen into oblivion. Whatever it be, the fiction of ascribing the origin and source of national movements and extensive social phenomena to single persons has unhappily not yet expired. In fact, national migrations are the results of social conditions and forces existing and working at the time and could in no way be ascribed to the thoughts and desires of individual men, however great they may be. In such movements communal or national leaders may arise and take a prominent part; when they do so, we should view them as acting under some sort of social necessity and compulsion and not as free agents drawing humanity after them as mere pawns or automata. Even the masterful Alexander the Great could not push his expedition further into the heart of India because of the opposition of his troops. He had to retrace his steps. The correct reading of the great characters of history is not to view them as isolated figures, standing on a pinnacle of their own and moulding the destinies of millions as it pleased them, but as the highest embodiments of the spirit of their times, the recognised channels through
which the social forces had to work their way out for the accomplishment of their task set by the communal or national will. The ancient history of almost every country is filled with heroes. But to understand such heroes aright depends largely on the way in which their life-history is approached and studied. The appearance of the scientific method in history, superseding the ancient artistic one, introduces a new angle of vision and with it a new valuation of historical data. Where the pre-scientific recorder of facts laid too much stress on one human spirit embodied in a hero, as descending upon humanity from a sphere of its own, the scientific historian, grown perhaps a little impervious to the promptings of hero-worship, tries to dissect that spirit and read therein the reactions to its environment, to the peculiar stresses and pulls which had played about it and helped it on towards its development into a full-blown personality.  

1. “As Theodore Merz has so well shown in the fourth volume of his monumental work of the Synthetic mode of regarding organisms, men and institutions, not as single things, self-contained and complete in themselves, but as merely nodes or meeting points of all the forces of the world acting and reacting in unlimited time and space.”—William McDougall’s ‘Group Mind’ p. 2.

“People are always talking about originality; but what do they mean? As soon as we are born, the world begins to work upon us, and this goes on to the end. And, after all, what can we call our own except energy, strength and will? If I could give an account of all that I owe to great predecessors and contemporaries, there would be but a small balance in my favour”—Goethe’s Literary Essays (Spingarn’s translation) pp. 256-257.
removed from ours, no doubt the mind, not being in
possession of the social factors of those by-gone times, is
disposed to catch hold of a hero, real or imaginary, here
and there, and ascribe to him all the events of a particu-
lar epoch, which have to be somehow accounted for. This
hankering after the creation of heroes may be artistically
satisfying and even praiseworthy in its own way but must
impede the growth of a true scientific history in our land.

Applying this principle of criticism to the Agastya
tradition in South India and Further India, we find
that the burden sought to be placed is too vast even
for the Atlantean shoulders of an Agastya to bear.
If he were a historical figure, as some are disposed to
contend, his works should be judged by the ordinary
канons of historic criticism. And what was his work in
South India and outside? As already stated, it is nothing
less than the introduction of Aryan knowledge and cul-
ture, Aryan beliefs and customs, Aryan religion and philo-
osophy, in the Peninsular India from the Vindhyas to Cape
Comorin, in the whole group of Indonesian Islands and
in Siam and Cambodia still farther East. Even on the
supposition that he was only the originator, the initiator
of the movement, in all these countries and not the later
architect of the works in different areas, one has still to
admit that the aryisation of all these countries was
started simultaneously and should be compressed into the
short space of a sage’s life-time, say, a hundred or a
hundred and fifty years at the most. Would any student
of history stand by the implications of this astounding
admission? Even the conversion of the Daṇḍakāranya
into a habitable country for the Aryan colonists should
have taken up two centuries on a moderate calculation.
And another two centuries for the Karnāṭaka countries
to be aryanised before Agastya could think of setting
his foot in the Tamil land. Is it conceivable that
Agastya could ever have come to the Tamil land leaving behind him such a broad belt of territory as the Daṇḍakāranya and the Karṇāṭaka peopled by alien tribes without first thinking of aryansing them and securing therein a firm base for his further progress? If colonisation were his motive, these forest regions offered him larger facilities than the populated area of the Tamil region. If on the other hand, he acted the part of a mere missionary to bring the light of his knowledge to the Tamilians, he might be supposed to have come direct to the Pāṇḍya country. But the tradition that seated him in the Malakūṭa range near Baḍāmi in the Kanarese country contradicts this supposition. Accordingly we have to assume that Agastya moved to the southern region stage by stage. In this scheme, however, his arrival at Pothiyil would be delayed by four or five centuries, at the least. Could Agastya have lived so long? To meet this difficulty, we have to assume either that Agastya was not an ordinary mortal or that there should have been many Agastyas to carry on the work of aryansation. The former assumption removes the question from the pale of history and the latter contradicts tradition. All this difficulty is due to the champions of Agastya trying to mix up two opposing view-points, the mythical and the scientific. In judging of the historicity of Agastya, elementary canons of historic criticism demand that nothing of the impossibilities and improbabilities of mythic characters should be imported therein to vitiate our conclusion.

The upshot of the discussion regarding the historicity of Agastya then comes to this: that the aryansation of the different countries of South India can in no way be ascribed to one common point of time but must be spread over a few centuries and that Agastya, if he were a historic character, could not have lived all that time to see his work...
even begun in those countries. He should have been long ago gathered to his forefathers before the later stages of the aryisation work could be said to have been even started.

Whatever may be his historicity in the Rg Vēdic India of old, *i.e.*, in the Punjab or in North India, his translation to the Pothiyil of the South is a myth pure and simple and cannot be accepted as a fact in the primitive history of the Tamilians. Not only does it not square with the known facts of South Indian Literature and History but it contradicts them in many vital particulars.

It may still be contended that like Romulus of old, who founded Rome, Agastya might be considered as a sort of semi-historic personage. He might be taken as one of the primitive heroes of antiquity, whose features, though dimmed and distorted by tradition, have still a ring of reality about them. If he could not be brought before the foot-lights of history, he might at least be classed with those pre-historic figures who have worked at the foundations of a nation's culture. This, it may be conceded, is a perfectly legitimate hypothesis. On the stage of Aryan history or pre-history the sage fills a part, which no historian would be disposed to deny. If he had been left without disturbance in the Vedic milieu or in the period to which Rāmāyana has a bearing, his character would not have suffered. But later myth-makers, with the strong instinct of hero-worship in them, would not allow him to rest there. He should be resurrected and brought again on another stage and that also at a far subsequent period to act another drama of momentous importance. The only difficulty here is one of chronology—the necessity of squaring the facts of one individual's life-time with those of the cultural periods of many nations in India and outside. The zealous labours...
of the mythologists have only gone to make a primitive historical character, only less and less historical down the ages, to the very verge of his losing that character altogether. Their blind zeal has done the greatest disservice to the ancient sage, whose very existence has thereby come to be doubted. In the limited view of considering literature as the standard for arriving at the civilization of a nation, indeed it is a far cry from the Rg Vedic Literature which clusters about 1,500 B.C., to 2,000 B.C. to Tamil Literature, which gathers round 100 A.D. How could a single character of the primitive history of these nations touch both these ends? This hiatus in chronology can be remedied only by supposing that there were more Agastyas at work than we are aware of. Apart from the Rg Vedic Agastya and the Agastya of the Rāmāyana period, we require at least four more Agastyas to have begun the aryанизation of the Karnātic country, of Tamilakam, of the Indonesian Isles, and of Cambodia. Is it a rational hypothesis to make that one particular family should have specially given birth to a series of descendants on whom alone, of others, the duty of the aryанизation of the southern region devolved? Or were there many families of Agastyas or many individuals with a mere accidental coincidence in their names? Would it not be more rational to ascribe the continuity of the tradition to the unity of the name ‘Agastya’ which had struck root in the popular imagination by the labours of myth-makers and myth-preachers rather than to the unity of the family from which half-a-dozen protagonists of culture should be derived?

We have now arrived at the last stage to which the progress of thought in this subject should inevitably take us. Scholars who feel that the Agastya problem in South Indian History bristles with many insurmountable difficulties have tried to modify the hypothesis not a little to
reconcile it to certain stubborn facts. They realise that a historical Agastya in view of the stupendous volume of work that falls to his lot—not in one country but in many, not in one period but in many—is absolutely indefensible. Still to save the situation they try to read into the events of the aryanising epoch a dominant ideal, a persistent note, running through them all. Thus South Indian aryanisation becomes a beautiful long-drawn-out allegory in their hands and in such a poetic view of the whole process the critic is precluded from demanding the existence of a central historic personality. We have to take Agastya as neither more nor less than the embodiment of the ideal of the Aryan nation in their work of spreading their culture and knowledge to different countries of the South. This new school may urge that the Agastya legend need not be taken as treating of sober facts of history to be thrust into a strict chronological frame-work but must be viewed as the expression of a generalized type of activity which the Aryan colonists had been pursuing in the southern regions. Could not the spirit of Agastya—even after his bodily dissolution—be taken as animating his followers and driving them on to the accomplishment of the great task to which he had first set his hand? Who will ever think of controverting this figurative way of interpreting South Indian History?

It is far from the purpose of this paper to disturb the complacency of those who believe that the sage Agastya lives to this day in the Pothiyil Mount and remains invisible to ordinary mortals; nor does it aim to convert another group which amuses itself by pouring the new wine of scientific history into the old bottles of mythologic tradition and imagines that the cause of both History and Tradition is somehow served thereby. Neither of these is in the least troubled by the oft-repeated taunt of the West that the Indians have no
historical sense and discrimination. But fortunately for the reputation of India there is a numerous and growing band of Indian scholars, who do not flinch from applying the modern critical methods for the construction of a scientific history of their past. To this new and influential class, the positive facts and deductions, I have herein advanced about an ancient chapter in the history of the Tamilians, are commended for its consideration and judgment. The late Mr. Vincent Smith wrote: "Attention has been concentrated too long on the North, on Sanscrit books and on Indo-Aryan notions. It is time that due regard should be paid to the Non-Aryan element." I need scarcely add that the present is an attempt to carry out the wishes of that scholar in a subject wherein independent Non-Aryan testimony is imperative and should make itself heard.
APPENDIX I.

NOTE ON PTOLEMY’S ‘BETTIGO.’

Dr. Caldwell correctly identified this with the Tamil Pothigai or Pothiyil. At the present day, Pothiyil is the name only of the southernmost promontory of the Western Ghats, later known also as Agastyarkūtam. In Ptolemy’s time, however, it appears to have had a larger signification. In Ptolemy’s map, Mount Bettigo stands for the whole of the southern portion of the Western Ghats, i.e., the Ghats running through the Tamil country of those days. It begins from the northern confines of Dimyrike, Tamilakam or the country of the Tamils, and runs down to a distance of nearly 300 miles. This range is also known as the ‘Malayam’ (lit. the mountain in Tamil). If in Ptolemy’s days the term Pothiyil had signified only the southernmost peak, surely he would not have used it to denote the whole range of the mountains occupying some hundred miles. The restriction of the name Pothiyil or Malayam to the southern peak may probably have arisen at a far later day. Consequently, to import into the term ‘Pothiyil’ occurring in such works as Puranānūru, Aganānūru, etc., of the “Sangam” period, our modern restricted meaning is altogether wide of the mark and entirely misleading.* The

*As a glaring instance of this kind of unconscious misinterpretation, the following categorical summary of Poet Māmūlanār’s reference by Dr. S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar in his Beginnings of South Indian History (pp. 90-91) may be quoted here. It runs thus:—“The fact of the invasion of the south by the Mauryas, the southernmost point reached being Podiyil Hill in the S. W. Corner of Madura.” It is superfluous to point out that Dr. S. K. Aiyangar has thus sought to bring the Mauryas down to the present-day Pothiyil, being evidently misled therein by the restricted current denota-
earlier extended signification receives considerable support from the fact that the kingdom of Aioi (Aayi), the Pothiyil chieftain in Ptolemy’s days, comprised not merely the country adjoining the present-day Pothiyil but extended far to the north and west as far as Melkynda (the Nelkynda of the *Periplus*), the Nirkunram or Niramoṇam near Kōttayam in the northern district of Travancore. Mr. Cunningham in his *Geography of Ancient India* (p. 552) states that, in the Chino-Japanese map of India, the alternative name of Malayakūṭa, the southern portion of the Ghats, is given as Hai-anmen, which suggests a connection with Ptolemy's Aioi. Further, this extended earlier signification of the term ‘Pothiyil’ serves to give us the correct derivation of the name, besides shedding some light on the political divisions of Tamilakam in the early centuries. It is clear that it originally meant a common place, lying unappropriated by any one, though latterly it came to mean a place of public resort or meeting as *uṇṭaṟ pūṟ*. It formed probably also the sheep or cattle range of a tribe of shepherds and cowherds known as *Pothuvar*. As this range of hills (Malayam) ran through the heart of the territories of the three Tamil Sovereigns of that period (Chēra, Chōla and Pāṇḍya) and separated their respective spheres of rule, it was considered by them a common belt of hill-region not belonging to any one king exclusively. As Aioi, the chieftain of a hill or forest region, was the earliest occupant

tion of that name. Further, the Mōkūr referred to in one of Māmūlanār’s stanzas (Akam 251) as the capital of the chief whose recalcitrancy is said to have brought about the Mauryan invasion is not different, I should think, from Ptolemy’s ‘Magour’ which is stated to be an inland city in the Parālia of the Sōretai (Chōlas). Mōkūr thus falls outside the Pāṇḍya country. But here also Dr. S. K. Aiyangar seems to have been misled by Mahāmāhāpādhyāya Swaminatha Aiyar’s erroneous identification of the place in his introduction to his *Puranānūra* as a town situate in the Pāṇḍyan territory. Whether the term Pothiyil occurring in this stanza refers to a hill at all is highly doubtful. But that need not be gone into at present.
of the lands on both sides of the Ghats (the village Āykkudi in the Shencottah taluq on the eastern side of the Ghats will testify to Aioi’s connection with the east), he seems to have appropriated the name and called himself the chieftain of Pothiyil and it is more than likely that his tribe was also known as the Pothuvar. This territory was afterwards merged in the Pāṇḍya kingdom and the Pāṇḍyas then came to be distinguished in literature as the ‘lords of the Pothiyil’. At that time the Pāṇḍya country covered almost the whole of Travancore and Tinnevelly and Madura. But subsequent historical vicissitudes have brought about a shrinkage in their dominions and led to a corresponding restriction in the signification of the term ‘Pothiyil’ also. In later times, the western littoral of the ancient Chēra dominion became Malayalam-speaking and fell under the rule of numerous local chieftains, who wrested from the Pāṇḍyas by far the greater portion of the Pothiyil mountains and their adjoining regions. The Tamil name ‘Pothiyil’ consequently fell into disuse amongst them. The Pāṇḍyas, the sole surviving member of the ancient Tamil monarchs, then had to content themselves with the possession of the southernmost peak of the chain, which accordingly came to be known as the Pothigai. Thus Ptolemy’s map and the Chino-Japanese maps have made it clear that the Pothiyil of the ancient Tamil poets about the early centuries of the Christian era is quite different from the Pothigai hill of the present day.

The following three lines from stanza 2 of Purāṇāṇuṟu,

“அப்பரும் குறுக்காலம் வில்லலே
மோக்கா பெரும் போதியிலை நூற்றாண்
புராணநுறு போதியில் போதியில் போதியில்”

only go to confirm the interpretation I have herein sought to give to the term ‘Pothiyil.’ In these lines the
Poet institutes a comparison between the Himalayas and the Pothiyil mountain. The Himalayas, here, surely does not refer to a peak. It refers to the whole of a continuous chain of mountains. Naturally, a poet, who wants to bring in another mountain for comparison with this, is not likely to pitch upon a solitary peak or promontory in a chain of hills in Southern India, however sacred or otherwise important it may be. He must be taken to have had before his mind another range of mountains in the south which would stand comparison with the northern range. Thus early, literary usage also makes it plain that Pothiyil refers to a chain of mountains and not to a particular peak in it, as it came to signify in later times.

I may also advert in this connection to the grammatical difficulty in interpreting ‘Pothiyil’ as a common belt of mountainous country unappropriated by the three Tamil kings of those days. Though the term பொத்தீயில் like so many other terms in Tamil ending in ‘ பொத்தீயில் ’ signifies a place name, the phonetic rules of later grammarians state that பொத்தீயில் could become only பொத்தீயில் and not பொத்தீயில். To escape this dilemma Dr. Caldwell split up the word into பொத்தீயில் and interpreted the name as referring to a place of concealment. Apart from the fancied necessity of concealment—from whom or what Dr. Caldwell himself does not say—it is very unlikely that a metaphor should have been resorted to for naming a mountain where such terms as பொத்தீயில் would have answered the purpose even more suitably and with absolute directness. The difficulty which seems to have driven Dr. Caldwell to this fanciful derivation, however, could be got over by the supposition that the term itself arose at a very ancient period when the Tamil speech was in an amorphous condition as every spoken dialect should be expected to be and when the Tamil phonetic rules themselves had not acquired
that regularity and rigidity which later on they came to assume in set grammatical treatises. Even these later grammarians had to show deference to such usage as is seen in முருய்கு, சுமி, etc., and take it under the wing of what they are pleased to call செஞ்சுல்லு வாய் covering forms of words which in their opinion though not strictly grammatical are yet sanctioned by usage.
APPENDIX II.
TESTIMONY OF SCHOLARS RE DRAVIDIAN CIVILISATION.

After giving an account of the Aryan colonization of the Maratha country, Dr. Bhandarkar writes as follows:

"But farther south and on the eastern coast, though they penetrated there and communicated their own civilization to the aboriginal races, inhabiting those parts, they were not able to incorporate them thoroughly into their own society and to root out their languages and their civilization. On the contrary, the Āryas had to learn the languages peculiar of those races and to adopt a portion at least of their civilization. Thus the Kanarese, the Telugu, and the Tamil and the other languages now spoken in Southern India are not derived from the Sanskrit but belong altogether to a different stock, and hence it is also that Southern Art is so different from the Northern. The reason why the result of the Āryan irruption was so different in Southern India from what it was in the North, appears to be that when the Āryans penetrated to the South there existed already well-organised communities and kingdoms."—History of Deccan, p. 10.

James Fergusson's Study of Indian Architecture contains the following reference about the Dravidian Architecture:

"Here is a representation of a temple, at Badami, on the limits between the northern and southern architectural provinces. Any one at all familiar with the subject will at once recognise the difference between the two."
That on the left is a straight-lined low pyramid, divided into storeys, and adorned with pilasters, that on the right is curvilinear, with no trace of storeys or pilasters and instead of the domical form that crowns the one it terminates in a conventional fruit-like ornament. I know the people who erected the first must have been speaking Tamil or some of the allied languages when working upon it and that those who erected the other were speaking Bengalee or some tongue with a strong infusion of Sanskrit in its composition" (pp. 11-12).

From a study of the South Indian alphabets and languages Dr. Burnell comes to this conclusion:—

"The development of the early stages of the Grantha character is very difficult to trace, for the reason that the North Indian civilization, when it got far down in the Peninsula as the Tamil country, found there a people already in possession of the art of writing and apparently a cultivated language. Thus Sanskrit does not regulate the Tamil Phonetic system nor did it become more to the people than a foreign learned language."—Elements of South Indian Palaeography.

Prof. E. J. Rapson writes thus:—

"This extension is everywhere marked by the spread of Sanskrit and its dialects. It received a check in Southern India, where the older civilization and languages remain predominant even to the present day."—Ancient India, p. 9.

Apropos of the Dravidian race inhabiting South India, Dr. A. C. Haddon writes as follows:—

"Apart from language, there is a general culture which is characteristic of those peoples and after the elimination of the pre-Dravidians a racial type emerges with finer features than those of the aborigines and the conclusion seems evident that this was due to an immi-
grant people who reached India before 2000 B.C."—
*The Races of Man.*

In his *Early History of India*, Dr. Vincent A. Smith writes as follows:

"The ancient kingdoms of the far south, although rich and populous, inhabited by Dravidian nations not inferior in culture to their Aryan rivals in the north were ordinarily so secluded from the rest of the civilized world including Northern India, that their affairs remained hidden from the eyes of other nations; and native annalists being lacking, their history, previous to the year 800 of the Christian Era, has almost wholly perished" (p. 7).

Sir Walter Elliot adds the following testimony:

"But although the Dravidians were not the earliest settlers, and although they have not been exempt and that in no small degree, from external influences, it is from them that the civilized part of the Dakkan derives its characteristic features in language and institutions. Among the latter may especially be noticed its monetary system and the coins in which it is expressed."—*Coins of Southern India* (p. 2).
APPENDIX III.

THE HYPOTHESIS OF MANY AGASTYAS.

While writing this paper, I had not sufficiently taken into account the tendency on the part of some scholars to make capital out of the bare possibility that more than one individual of the same name might have existed in the past as at present and played their role in the history of their land. But after going through a recent work, The History of the Tamils by Mr. P. T. Srinivasa Aiyan- gar, M.A., Reader in Indian History, I felt that I should have gone into the question at some length and offered detailed criticism on this favourite device often resorted to by certain Indian scholars for simply tiding over anachronisms, contradictions and irreconcilabilities turning up in the materials they happen to handle. It is, however, not possible to compress within the short space of an appendix the various considerations which should weigh with writers towards a cautious, not to say extremely limited, use of this hypothesis of plural personages going under one identical name in pre-historic times. Still, I shall try to indicate here a few of the major grounds which will show how risky it is to convert an exceptional method into one of general application.

Such writers as resort to it as a common step in their researches go on multiplying historical personalities, not for differentiating between separate individuals, admittedly historical, but with the sole object of parrying the arguments of the other side formulated against the historicity of such characters. These greet them from the most unlikely quarters, from times, places and circumstances not at all in keeping with their admitted
antecedents. So far as these characters of ancient Indian history are concerned, chronology and geography, which form together the iron frame-work of history, have sometimes been twisted out of all recognition, if not wholly splintered and thrown together into an indistinguishable dust-heap. Two facts, to begin with, must give us food for serious reflection. Few will dispute that, in the first place, the phenomenon of plural personalities appearing under one identical name seems to occur frequently more in the history of India than in that of any other country in the world and, in the second place, more in the history of ancient India than of modern India. Why should this be so? The explanation, I think, lies not so much in the peculiar historical accidents of India as in certain psychological characteristics of its people, who react on the traditional materials of antiquity in a manner peculiar to themselves. It is very necessary to bear this in mind.

As a basis for my observations, I subjoin here a few extracts from H. H. Wilson’s Essays on Sanskrit Literature, Vol. III and Mr. P. T. Srinivasa Aiyangar’s History of the Tamils.

**Essays on Sanskrit Literature, Vol. III.**

*P. 175. Re more than one Vararuchi:*

“That the name of Vararuchi has in like manner been applied to different individuals might fairly be inferred from the practice thus described; but we have in this case a remarkable confirmation of our conjecture and find from the varying statements of several writers, that two, if not three persons of this denomination are celebrated in the literary history of the Hindus.”

*P. 189. Re more than one Sankarāchārya:*

“The followers of Madhwacharya in Tuluva seem to have attempted to reconcile these contradictory accounts by supposing him to have been born three times; first at Sivuli in Tuluva about 1,500 years ago, again in Malabar some centuries later and finally at Padukachaytra in Tuluva no more than 600 years since; the latter assertion being intended evidently to do honour to their own founder, whose date that was, by enabling him to triumph over Sankara in a suppositious controversy.”
APPENDIX III

History of the Tamils.

P. 30. *Re* more than one Rāvaṇa:

"Among others he (Kārtavirya) defeated a Rāvaṇa, king of Lanka and imprisoned him in Mahīśmati. This Rāvaṇa was certainly not the enemy of Rāmachandra who lived at least five hundred years later. Hence, the Rāvaṇa who was imprisoned by Kārtavirya must have been an earlier Raja of that name or perhaps the guess of Dr. Sten Know is true that the name Rāvaṇa was but the result of the Sanskritization of Tamil 'Iraivan' and merely meant a Tamil King."

Take along with this the foot-note:

"There was a still earlier Rāvaṇa who fought with Anāraṇya, king of Ayōdhyā."

P. 46. *Re* more than one Vālmiki:

"Probably this Vālmiki of the VII Century B.C. revised the Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmiki Pracētasa in classical Sanskrit and worked into it the concept of Rāma's being an incarnation of Viṣṇu."

P. 51. *Re* more than one Hanumān:

"Hanumān himself is said to have been the eighth great Sanskrit grammarian but this perhaps refers to a much later Hanumān."

P. 54. *Re* more than one Agastya:

"The first Agastya, husband of Lōpāmudrā, a princess of Vidarba, was a contemporary of Alaraka, king of Kāsi, who lived a little more than 20 generations before Rāma. Thus the earliest Agastya lived in the region immediate south of the Vindhyas."

"But the Agastya whom Rāma met two yōjana from Panchavaṭi could not have been the first Agastya, who lived about four centuries before Rāma's time, but must have been one of the later Agastyas; for this Agastya of Rāma's day lived near the Gōdāvari, near which in his asrama, Rāma stayed on his way south."

After referring to Agastya's residence on the top of the Malaya Hill (Coorg) the author writes:

"Hence this must have been inserted by a later poet who lived after the Agastyas had proceeded further south than the Agastya of Rāma's time and settled in the Tamil country."

"In the Epic as in the Purāṇas, all the Agastyas are spoken of as one Agastya Rāsi, though different Agastyas resided in different places at different times."
These extracts are enough to convince the reader of the existence of peculiar difficulties besetting the path of a historian of ancient Indian Literature and traditions. If, from the shores of such literature and traditions, spectral forms of numerous Vālmikis, Hānumāns, Rāvaṇas and Agastyas are thus found to accost the historian, surely he is apt to lose his bearings in the wide expanse of ancient Indian history unless he takes special care to keep a strict critical watch over this brood and banish such of them from his ken as are mere will-o-the-wisps.

Making the fullest allowance for the possibility and even probability of two or more historical personages going under one proper name, the question before the historian, especially ancient historian, is to see whether, even after a rigorous critical examination, there exist facts which would warrant his assuming for the explanation a different personality with an identical proper name, and not to rush at once to this handy expedient of multiplying personalities. We have seen how Agastya has come to figure in the ancient history of many countries in southern Asia and in many different centuries. Are we then to assume the existence of a separate Agastya for each country and also for each century in each country? This procedure does not seem to take into account the well-known fact that many characters have been created by poetic imagination or by mythic fancy or by religious megalomania. Are we to give to these spurious births a 'local habitation and a name' by admitting them into the gallery of historic personages? Turning to historical characters themselves, is it not a fact that later traditionalists have shifted some of these from their strict historical setting and made them play many different parts, in different places, and at different times? An impulse to blind hero-worship it is that furnishes the ground for so wrenching a character from its proper historical milieu and introducing it amidst
new surroundings and conditions. Are we, here also, to resort to multiplying the original character as occasion requires? Then again, those who resort to this device exhibit an amazing credulity in the acceptance of even fictions as facts. No doubt, the common man is credulous by nature and acts on the principle that unless a statement is proved false it must be accepted as true. But that can hardly be the scientific frame of mind. Unless and until a proposition is proved true it has no credentials for acceptance. If the strength of history lies in its critically-tested and carefully-ascertained facts, is not the historian under the necessity of rigorously testing his facts before he tries to raise any theoretic structure on them or seeks to explain them. For instance, while the existence of Rāvaṇa himself as a historical character is not above doubt, what conceivable purpose can it serve to create two or three Rāvaṇas? While all the recensions of the existing Rāmāyaṇa text is in classical Sanskrit, why should a Rāmāyaṇa in Vedic Sanskrit be hypostasized and another Vālmiki created to become the author of that hypothetical Rāmāyaṇa? Along with this exhibition of ‘primitive credulity’ on the part of some investigators there is also a tendency to exhibit undue veneration towards ancient tradition and literature and to expect from them more than what the life and characteristics of the possessors of such tradition and literature would warrant us to expect. If in actual life we come across impostors and other unscrupulous characters, why could they not intrude now and then into the world of letters also? Are there not instances of deliberate forgeries committed in the name of well-known authors in the literary history of every country and at all times? Simply because a statement gets embodied in a literary work, does it become sacrosanct on that account? Should the critical method relax its rigour and go to sleep when that statement hails us from antiquity? On the other hand, the more an investigator recedes into the past the
greater should be his care and circumspection in satisfying himself whether every fact rings true or not. If once that attitude is relaxed, history is likely to become more a fairy tale than a strictly scientific record of carefully-tested facts. Still, it may be urged that there are cases where the assumption of more than one historic character going under one identical name seems to be necessary. Such an assumption, however, can be resorted to only in cases where strict historical conditions vouch for it. The creation of a dozen Agastyas to answer all the differences brought about by historic conditions and then to formulate the existence of a family of Agastyas to which all of them are to be traced is scarcely a justifiable procedure. In fact, this delectable method of creating a number of Agastyas, Rāvaṇas and Hanumāṇś and of an equal number of families to go under such generic proper names is too vague and indefinite for practical application. What does this family name connote in India? Does it cover only a simple family (gens), or a group (phratry) composed of many families, or a whole tribe composed of such groups? If gōtra names, such as Atri, Bhāradvāja, be considered as family names, millions of the present-day Āryans could be distributed under a few gōtras and be considered as the Atris and Bhāradvājas of this century. But this would hardly serve the purpose of any clear identification of the individuals concerned. Thus the gōtra name will in no way serve our purpose and need not be resorted to as signifying a definite individual in any period of our history except the first founder of a particular gōtra. Is it not a little disconcerting that proper names intended to identify definite individuals should thus be converted into indefinite generic names for uncontrolled and even whimsical application?
procedure called "the Occam's Razor." Where one hypothesis is sufficient to explain adequately a number of observed facts, it is a vicious scientific procedure to formulate more than one hypothesis for the same purpose. Applying this principle to the phenomenon of many Agastyas appearing in the history of different countries and at different times, are we to go on assuming the existence of separate Agastyas for each country and for each century? Or are we to ascribe the whole phenomenon to a common psychological characteristic of the races concerned—the strong tendency to hero-worship ingrained in them? It is very likely that the first Agastya was a historic character but the subsequent Agastyas were all the result of popular imagination catching hold of an ancient hero and spinning round him all sorts of stories. Where such a solitary hypothesis as this is sufficient to account for all the facts of the case, is it not a violation of legitimate scientific procedure to go on creating Agastyas ad libitum to suit the multiplicity of historical circumstances turning up? If anywhere, here it is that the necessary pruning, insisted upon by the old Logician, should be effected.

The following observations of Mr. Bhagabat Kumar Goswami made in the introduction (pp. xxxii-xxxiii) of his work, the Bhakti Cult in Ancient India, will, I think, be of interest as bearing upon the pruning he attempts to do in the case of Vyāsa:—

"Whenever a new system of thought arose in Hindustan, it was not only sought to be based upon some teaching of the Vedas but the name of Vyāsa was generally sought to be connected with the department of thought some way or other while the names of the Vedic seers themselves were utilised for similar purposes wherever necessary and possible. This was specially the case after the Buddhistic onslaught on Vedicism. Vyāsa then figured as a writer of philosophical commentary Yogābhāṣya, an author of a philosophical system, Brahma Sūtra, an author of a Śruti system, Vyāsa Śruti, a writer on polity, a writer on Astrology. He was again claimed as the author of all the Purāṇas and to crown all, the author of the whole of the greatest
Epic Mahābhārata. When not the original author, he was often traditionally claimed as connected some way or other with the authors of the other systems, who themselves in most cases bore the sacred names of or claimed some affinities with the old Vedic seers. To seek therefore to fix a historic age from some alleged connection of the name of Vyāsa or a Vedic seer is to court disaster. We must leave Veda Vyāsa at about 3,100 B.C. and allow other Vyāsas to take care of themselves."

To the Vasiṣṭhas, who figure as numerously as the Vyāsas, Mr. F. E. Pargiter feels justified in giving a different treatment. Being committed to the position of finding greater authenticity in the Kṣatria tradition than in the Brahman, he is forced to conclude that the later Vasiṣṭhas were as historical as the kings with whom they lived. He is not disposed to apply the pruning knife to the requisite extent and grapples with the Purānic traditions to extract from them some genealogical facts for the construction of history. How in this heroic attempt he gets hopelessly entangled in the legendary quagmire will be seen if one tries to follow the identifications and discriminations of the many Vasiṣṭhas he makes in pp. 203-211 of his work Ancient Indian Historical Tradition. He dismisses the first two Vasiṣṭhas (the mind-born son of Brahma and one, the contemporary of Ikshuwaku) as mythical, and considers the later Vasiṣṭhas as historical. But when we find these later Vasiṣṭhas described as having most of the characteristics attendant on their mythical prototype, we have to doubt the validity of the procedure, adopted by Mr. F. E. Pargiter in the valuation of the testimony of the Purānic annalists—accepting it as trustworthy in one portion and rejecting it as entirely worthless in another. How, for instance, could each one of the fourth, the fifth and the seventh Vasiṣṭhas possess Arundhati as his wife, the Arundhati, the companion of their mythical progenitor? Much the safer rule in such cases would have been to accept all or none. Nothing in these regions will enable us to distinguish between Tweedledum and Tweedledee. It is
true that by arranging the goodly company of Vasiṣṭhas as Vasiṣṭha I, Vasiṣṭha II, etc., in an arithmetical series, some sort of order is introduced into chaos; but how can one be sure that it is an order of a real series and not an imaginary one? To say that these have been referred to by their gōtra names merely is to clutch at a straw, or even worse, a shadow. The works in which these traditions are embodied must be taken either as contemporary records or later compilations. If contemporary, the authors should naturally be expected to distinguish the character they write about by giving the personal name and other biographical details which could distinguish their character from others of the same gōtra. At any period of time the Puraṇas treat of, there should have been living a very large number of Vasiṣṭhas claiming their descent from one of the seven progenitors of the race. Would any contemporary writer leave the character he seeks to glorify in the haze and uncertainty of a generic name? If, on the other hand, the works are considered as later compositions, as presumably they are in spite of their prophetic manner, the authenticity of their statements so far as personal identifications are concerned gets more and more attenuated and loses in value as we recede from the times treated of. Hence, a Vasiṣṭha going under a gōtra name, unless he is rendered distinct by authentic details of a personal or historical character, is little better than a figment of the writer’s imagination conjured out of the name of a legendary hero or the idol of a literary coterie.

Granting, however, the legitimacy of the method—the assumption of a gōtra name to explain away a number of characters under one denomination coming to us from the distant past—the question will naturally arise how this method will help us in solving such a problem as the four or five Auvais appearing in different periods of Tamil
Literature. To what gōtra did the original Auval, the Tamil Poetess, belong? Or should we resort to some other method to save the historicity of all the Auvais figuring in Tamil literary history? The truth of the matter is that Mr. Pargiter's tenderness towards traditions as a whole has, I fear, made him a little too prone to ascribe objective reality even to subjective creations. He seems to have wholly expunged the subjective factor as an agent in the creation of personalities and perhaps may have thought that novelists are all of modern growth, the old world having none to show. However, the more we push our way into antiquity, the more are we brought into contact with an imagination of an unbridled type. Reason seems to have been a slow growth of millennia of tardily accumulated experience and painful labour. As against this, it was all easy for imagination to go to work. Hence it is that imagination got a start over slow-developing Reason, the results of which are visible even to this day. Few will doubt the abstract probability of traditions containing truths, but, when a large masses of them are thrown into the melting-pot of a poet's imagination or overwrought religious feeling or sectarian prejudice, to expect reality or truth to emerge therefrom unscathed is to expect the impossible.
APPENDIX IV.

WORKS CONSULTED.

ENGLISH.

1. Prof. Max Muller's History of Ancient Sanscrit Literature.
2. Dr. Washburn Hopkins' The Great Epic of India.
3. Dr. Bhandarkar's Early History of Deccan.
4. The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea (McCrie's translation).
5. Prof. A. A. Macdonell's History of Sanskrit Literature.
6. Prof. Ihering's The Evolution of the Aryans.
7. Ptolemy's Geography of India and Southern Asia (McCrie's translation).
8. Travancore State Manual.
9. Mr. F. E. Pargiter's Ancient Indian Historical Tradition.
10. Dr. Caldwell's Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian Languages.
11. Prof. Seshagiri Sastri's Essay on Tamil Literature.
12. Dr. Burnell's Elements of South Indian Palæography.
13. Prof. E. J. Rapson's Ancient India.
14. Mr. L. W. King's Babylonian Religion and Mythology.
15. Dr. Vincent A. Smith's Early History of India.
17. Goethe's 'Literary Essays' (Spingarn's translation).
18. Dr. A. C. Haddon's The Races of Man.
19. The Epigraphia Carnatica, Vol. II.
22. Dr. S. K. Aiyangar's Beginnings of South Indian History.

1. Paripūṭal.
2. Pattupāṭṭu.
3. Puranānūru.
5. Tolkāppiyam.
6. Ilakkanakkottu.
7. Virasōliyam.
8. Tiruvāyulī.
10. Aganānūru.
12. Chilappatikāram.
13. Pannirupatalam.
15. Agapporu Vilakkam.
17. Tiruvilayāṭal Purāṇam.
20. Tāṇḍavarāyaswāmi's Works.
22. Kantaṭṭurāṇam.
23. Kācikāṇṭam.
24. Tirukkurāltālappurāṇam.
25. Tiruvēṅkaṭattalappurāṇam.
26. Tirunēlvelīlāṭṭalappurāṇam.
27. Kuḍantaiṭṭpurāṇam.
29. Vēṭāranyapurāṇa.
30. The Chentamil, Vol. XIX.
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