

Representative Of Buddhist And Hindu Philosophy In Tamil Literature

(A Critical Study Based On 27, 29, And 30 Cantos Of Maṇimekhalai)

Rev. Kumburuwela Seelananda

Introduction

Tamil is one of the most ancient languages in the world. Therefore, Tamils have a significant cultural and literary heritage that can be pointed out its full of remarkable values. It is a common feature that the visibility of interdisciplinary relationships between one language with other languages simultaneously. This linguistic tendency can be seen in the Tamil language as such. For instance, as an essential stream of literature, Tamil literature has influenced other languages, as well as Tamil literature, was influenced by other languages. It is perspicuous that the Buddhist and Hindu philosophical concepts are more closely connected with Tamil literature because both are the major religious corporations that existed with the Tamil community in South India. In this research, the main problem is the Buddhist and Hindu philosophical affection for the Tamil literature based on 27, 29, and 30 cantos of Maṇimekhalai.

Krishnaswami (1928) has provided a long description of the great epic Maṇimekhalai with its historical background. In that sense, he discusses the philosophical milieu of Maṇimekhalai as a part of the treatise. The book “Imagining a Place for Buddhism: literary culture and religious community in Tamil-speaking South India” written by Monius (2001) mainly focused on the Buddhist community in South India represented in Maṇimekhalai. The article “Maṇimekhalai: Dancer with Magic Bowl Tamil Culture and Transcultural Buddhist Art” is a study of Tamil Buddhist art based on Maṇimekhalai. In this book, the author has investigated the relationship of epic addresses between literature and philosophy in Buddhism and Tamil. “Religious Rhetorician Maṇimekhalai” is a doctoral dissertation written by Richman. In this book, the author contributed to pointing out a full of context with an annotated description of Maṇimekhalai. Somasundaram Pillai, the author of “A History of Tamil Literature” has provided a few descriptions of both Silappadikaram and Maṇimekhalai. Considering all the aforementioned references, the critics have

not adequately endeavoured to point out the framework of philosophical influence on Tamil. Only Krishnaswami (1928) has attempted to provide some information related to this theme. However, it is not a deep comparison between Buddhist and Hindu philosophical backgrounds. Hence, this study would be essential for the completion of the research gaps related to this field.

In this study, the main focus was to investigate Buddhist and Hindu philosophical influences on Tamil literature. For that, the 27, 29, and 30 cantos of Maṇimekhalai were selected as the main source.

Methodology

This research is mainly based on qualitative research. Thus, this study is based on a critical discussion of the philosophical background in Tamil literature influenced by Buddhist and Hindu literature. To understand the critical aspects related to this study, the major works in Sanskrit and Pali were taken into consideration to compare and analyse. Besides, secondary sources mainly written in English were extensively used.

Discussion

Maṇimekhalai is one of the five great epics in Tamil literature. There are many controversies among scholars about the exact period of the author of this book. However, the scholar Kandaswami accepts the author of this book, Sītaiei Sāttanar, can be included in the fifth century C.E. According to the story of this great epic, Maṇimekhala reached the professors of the various philosophical schools, the doctrine of their particular systems based on their authoritative works to learn what exactly they might have to teach in India. The 27, 29, and 30 cantos of Maṇimekhalai have included these philosophical ideas.

Manimekhala was tempted to learn ten tenets for the assumption of what the real teaching included in the current religious systems. According to this treatise, it is perspicuous that there were ten religious systems at that time and they can be mentioned as follows.

1. Pramāṇavāda
2. Śaivavāda,
3. Brahmavāda,
4. Vaiṣṇavavāda
5. Vedavāda
6. Ājīvaka

7. Nirgrantha
8. Sāṅkhya
9. Vaiśeṣika
10. Bhūtavāda

Of the aforementioned ten systems, five schools are considered as one named Vaidikavāda. According to the 27th canto, Maṇimekhala reaches the current leaders of philosophical schools and begins with a discussion of the Pramāṇas (Means of Knowledge) applicable generally as instruments of knowledge and under the general grouping Vaidikavāda, five separate systems are described, all acknowledging the authority of the Veda. The number of Pramāṇas and accepted relevant schools can be categorised as follows.

Pramāṇavāda	Vedavyāsa	1. Kāṭchi (Pratyakṣa) 2. Karuttu (Anumāna) 3. Uvamam (Upamāna) 4. Āgamam (Āgama/Śabda) 5. Aruttāpatti (Arthāpatti) 6. Iyalbu (Svabhāva) 7. Aitiham (Aitihya) 8. Abhāvam (Abhāva) 9. Mīṭchi (Pāriśeṣa) 10. Unḍāneri (Sambhava)
	Kṛtakoti	1. Kāṭchi (Pratyakṣa) 2. Karuttu (Anumāna) 3. Uvamam (Upamāna) 4. Āgamam (Āgama/Śabda) 5. Aruttāpatti (Arthāpatti) 6. Aitiham (Aitihya) 7. Abhāvam (Abhāva) 8. Unḍāneri (Sambhava)
	Jaimini	1. Kāṭchi (Pratyakṣa) 2. Karuttu (Anumāna) 3. Uvamam (Upamāna) 4. Āgamam (Āgama/Śabda) 5. Aruttāpatti (Arthāpatti) 6. Abhāvam (Abhāva)

After a detailed discussion, all Pramāṇas can be summarised as six and the respective philosophical schools are also six. The six Pramāṇas are Pratyakṣa, Anumāna, Śabda, Upamāna, Arthāpatti, and Abhāva. Six systems held as orthodox are Lokāyata, Bauddha, Sāṅkhya, Naiyāyika, Vaiśeṣika, and Mīmāṃsa. The respective authors are Bṛhaspati, Jina, Kapila, Akṣapāda, Kaṇāda, and Jaimini. According to the author, Sītalei Sāttanar, Maṇimekhala learned five heretical systems and finally followed the orthodox Buddhist system. The importance of this investigation is that the six accepted Vaidika Pramāṇas applied even to Buddhism. In chapter 29, the author introduces the teaching of Buddhist logic as the highest

authority for the system is Jinendra, the Buddha, and the Pramāṇas are only two, Pratyakṣa, and Anumāna. After the description of these two means of knowledge, the author points out the capability of inclusion of other Pramāṇas in Anumāna. At the end of this explanation, we are led to the purpose of the cultivation which is stated to be, at the end of the chapter, that means of the validity of reasoning and its invalidity, one may understand that which is a true form that which is other than the truth. In the 30th canto, the author of Maṇimekhalai attempts to elaborate on the actual teaching of Buddha following the main Buddhist theory such as; four noble truths, twelve Nidānas, and the means of getting to the correct knowledge, which ultimately would put an end to 'Being'.

Findings

According to the above discussions, the author of the Maṇimekhalai, Sītalei Sāttanar should be a Tamil Buddhist poet who lived in Kāñchi. It is perspicuous, that the current geographical areas where the Tamil community lived, had prevailed the philosophical Background of Buddhist and Hindu. However, the three pairs which are accepted as the orthodox systems such as Sāṅkhya-Yoga, Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, Pūrva and Uttara Mīmāṃsas are differed in this elaboration. For instance, the Sāṅkhya systems are treated by themselves without any association with Yoga and Pūrva and Uttara Mīmāṃsas are considered as one system. Another significant feature of the Maṇimekhalai is that author considered Lokāyata and Bauddha among the Vaidika system.

Conclusion

Considering the aforementioned elaborations, it is obvious that the Buddhist and Hindu philosophical systems have influenced Tamil literature.

Keywords: Maṇimekhalai, Pramāṇas, Vaidikavāda, Sāṅkhya, Vaiśeṣika

References

- Hart, G.L., (1976) The relation between Tamil and classical Sanskrit literature (Vol. 2). Otto Harrassowitz Verlag.
- Krishnaswami Aiyangar, S.,(1928)Maṇimekhalai in Its Historical Setting. London, Luzac.
- Monius, A.E., (2001) Imagining a Place for Buddhism: literary culture and religious community in Tamil-speaking South India. Oxford University Press.
- Richman, P.S., (1983) Religious Rhetoricin "Maṇimekhalai". Doctoral Dissertation, The University of Chicago.
- Shattan, M.P. and Kōpālayyar, T.V., (1989) Manimekhalai: the dancer with the magic bowl. New Directions Publishing.
- Somasundaram Pillai, J.M., (1968) A History of Tamil Literature. South India.