

Critical Evaluation of the Narrative Song of *Muthalamman*

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Abstract

Critical Evaluation of the Narrative Song of *Muthalamman* aimed at studying the folklore songs that narrate the story of the seven sisters, highlighting the importance of the seventh sister Muthalamman. There is not even a single instance mentioning the name Angala Eswari within the song; hence, it is called as the narrative song of Muthalamman. *Angala Eswari Amman Kathai Paadal* is a war ballad sung, while performing *Kummi* during the month of *Masi* in *Therukattu Pongal*. It bears the elements of folk songs. It serve as evidence portraying the beauty of classical literature, with eleven sections in the structure of the ballad. The aim of the ballad is to prove that Saktham is equivalent to Saivism and Vaishnavism. It talks indirectly that female Gods are not inferior to the male Gods. Besides, the songs have a lot of social issues and ethnographical information have dealt in. The study show that the folklore songs were rich in information and message to the local community.

ஆய்வுச்சுருக்கம்

ஏழு சகோதரிகளின் கதையை விவரிக்கும் நாட்டுப்புறப் பாடல்களைப் படிப்பதை நோக்கமாகக் கொண்ட முத்தலம்மனின் கதை பாடலின் விமர்சன மதிப்பீடு, ஏழாவது சகோதரி முத்தலம்மனின் முக்கியத்துவத்தை எடுத்துக்காட்டுகிறது. பாடலுக்குள் அங்கலா ஈஸ்வரி என்ற பெயரைக் குறிப்பிடும் ஒரு நிகழ்வு கூட இல்லை; எனவே, இது முத்தலம்மனின் கதை பாடல் என்று அழைக்கப்படுகிறது. அங்கலா ஈஸ்வரி அம்மன் கதாய் பாடல் ஒரு போர் பாலாட் பாடியது, தெருகட்டு பொங்கலில் மாசி மாதத்தில் கும்மி நிகழ்ச்சியை நடத்தியது. இது நாட்டுப்புற பாடல்களின் கூறுகளைத் தாங்குகிறது. இது கிளாசிக்கல் இலக்கியத்தின் அழகை சித்தரிக்கும் சான்றுகளாக விளங்குகிறது, இது பதினொரு பிரிவுகளுடன் பாலாட்டின் கட்டமைப்பில் உள்ளது. சக்தம் சைவ மதத்திற்கும் வைணவத்திற்கும் சமமானது என்பதை நிரூபிப்பதே பாலாட்டின் நோக்கம். பெண் கடவுள்கள் ஆண் கடவுள்களை விட தாழ்ந்தவர்கள் அல்ல என்று அது மறைமுகமாக பேசுகிறது. தவிர, பாடல்களில் நிறைய சமூகப் பிரச்சினைகள் உள்ளன, மேலும் இனவழித் தகவல்களும் கையாண்டுள்ளன. நாட்டுப்புறப் பாடல்கள் உள்ளூர் சமூகத்திற்கு தகவல் மற்றும் செய்தி நிறைந்தவை என்பதை ஆய்வு காட்டுகிறது.

திறவுச் சொற்கள்: நாட்டுப்புறவியல், தமிழ் கிளாசிக்கல் பாடல்கள், தமிழ் பாலாட் பாடல்கள், மதம் மற்றும் நாட்டுப்புறவியல்

Keywords: Folklore, Tamil classical Songs, Tamil Ballad Songs, Religion and Folklore

Introduction

The poem '*Angala Eswari Amman Kathai Paadal*' was documented as a manuscript by Mrs.M.Rajeswari in Sivakasi which in turn was collected by the autheress while she was a Reader in the Department of Tamil. The ballad extends upto 332 lines. The aim of this research paper is to evaluate the poetic beauty, the charm of folklore and the social aspects present in the same.(<https://kanmanitamil.blogspot.com/2019/11/blog-post.html>)

The specific song narrates the story of the seven sisters, highlighting the importance of the seventh sister Muthalamman. There is not even a single instance mentioning the name Angala Eswari within the song. So it is called as the narrative song of Muthalamman. It serves as the primary source. The other folklore and some of their compilation serve as the secondary source.

1.0 Elements of a ballad

1.1. This folk piece may be categorized as a war ballad for the performance art *kummi*.

The ballad begins with the musical note "*thaanaane thaanaane thaanathantham thaanaane*". It is also subtitled as "*Mulaipari Kummippattu*" i.e. song for the performance art *kummi* with the *mulaippaari* paid as a homage to the Amman. The musical note proves that this is a specific song for performing *kummi*.

It explains the war of the seven sisters with Mahishasuran (ll.- 16- 134) and their victory. Following this war a narration about the biowar between Lord Shiva and the seven sisters is also found in the ballad (ll.- 135– 176) The story runs as follows:

Mahishasuran, the son of a lady demon observed penance. He demanded Lord Shiva that he may not be opposed and killed by any man anywhere. Lord Shiva granted him the wish. His atrocities increased then and all the *devars* in heaven sought the help of Lord Vishnu who planned to create a female to kill him.

A virgin *naga* and her brother nagarajan were plucking flowers in the forest to perform *Sivapuja*. At that time Lord Vishnu passed them in his vehicle *garuda*. The virgin *naga* saw Him. As a result she got conceived immediately by this miraculous circumstance. Hence her brother abandoned her. She prayed to Goddess Parvathi during the tenth month. Parvathi in the form of a Brahmin Sorceress helped her deliver the children. The seven sisters were born and the lady *naga* entered the heavenly abode. i.e. *Sivaloga*.

All the seven virgins were agile and they could not stay idle. They wished to visit Lord Shiva to get a boon. On their way they crossed Yamadarma's residence. They killed his vehicle bison. As soon as they reached Lord Shiva's residence, they killed the milch cow at the entrance. Lord Shiva feared the seven sisters and sent Bairava to combat them. He was defeated and suppressed by them. Then Lord Shiva suggested the seven sisters to kill the demon Mahishasuran after which he would give them a boon.

The seven sisters slayed Mahishasuran to death and then came to Lord Shiva who gave Kaliamman; the eldest sister who is still believed to be the most powerful deity a cartful load of smallpox pellets which looked like corals and asked them to go to the world.

The seven sisters understood that they were cheated by Lord Shiva and threw back the smallpox pellets on Lord Shiva. He was infected severely. Goddess Parvathi sought the help of Lord Vishnu. Lord Shiva was fed with the cow's milk brought by Lord Vishnu. The small pox pellets got dried. Goddess Parvathi knelt down and begged alms in front of the seven sisters. Perspiration trickled down and it grew into a neem tree. She plucked the neem leaves and used them as a fan so that Lord Shiva could feel comfortable. The seven sisters took pity on Him and cured Him at last. They bade farewell to Lord Shiva and came to this world. Undergoing the worldly sufferings, she (the one Sakthi as a fusion of the seven sisters) lost her earwear (*katholai*) and even the sari. So she lost her temper and let the people suffer with smallpox. Then the people passified Her by celebrating *Pongal* and offering *mulaipari*.

1.2 There is another mythical story (A Singaravelu Muthaliyar - *abithaana chinthamani*) which talks about another group of seven forms of Sakthi who came from the body of Lord Shiva when he took the mission of slaying the demon Anthagasuran.

2.0. Elements of folklore

2.1.0 Reiteration

2.1.1 The line '*en thaaye naagakanni*' is found twelve times in the passage that deals with the virgin *naga* getting ready to perform *Sivapuja*, crossing the months carrying the foetus in her womb and praying to Goddess Parvathi for help during the tenth month (ll.-).

2.1.2. To emphasize a subject matter it is reiterated. The virgin *naga* did not pluck the flowers for *Sivapuja* with her hand because the stalks of the flowers may get rotten. Again the poem repeats the same subject matter and says she did not pluck the flowers with her fingers because they may get rotten. (ll.- 44- 49)

The devotees pray to Muthalamman by growing *mulaipari* and performing *Kummi*. They ask her whether she could not hear the sound they are calling. It is expressed as

“*kuuppitta chaththamum thaan koyilukkuk kekkalaiyo*” (l.- 275).

Again the same matter is repeated as

“*azhaikkira chaththamum thaan aalayamum kekkalaiyo*” (l.-276).

There is no special meaning attached to the reiterated matter.

Similar punning during narration is found when the people call the deity Muthalamman to accept their offerings

“.....*azhaikkirom maathaave
varunthi azhaikkirene vanakkiliye vanthidammaa
kuuppittu naanazhachchen kuyilmozhiye vanthidammaa*” (Il.- 268- 270)

They seek Her blessings. They beg Her to have pity on them.

The subject matter of their prayer is repeated again in different metaphors which bear the same meaning.

“*kallaana ommanasu karaiyavenum inthaneram
irumbaana ommanasu ilakavenum inthaneram*” (Il.- 277- 278)

2.1.3 Repetition of words is also found. The word *vanam* is repeated eight times in the passage;

“*kongu peruththa vanam konraikal puuththa vanam
moongil peruththa vanam munivarkal aalum vanam
elakkai kaaykkum vanam iisvariyaal aanda vanam
chaathikkaay kaaykkum vanam thavamunivar aanda vanam*” (Il.- 53- 56)

It is describing the forest area in which the virgin naga plucked flowers for *Sivapuja*.

2.2 Reiteration of phrases found in other folk songs

The phrase “*maaraadi paasikaari*” (l.- 7) is found not only in the specific narrative song of Muthamman but also in ‘Chakkamma *padal*’ (Il.- 33& 71) (<https://kanmanitamil.blogspot.com/2020/07/blog-post.html>). This phrase means that; a chain of beads (A chain of black beads is still considered as an auspicious ornament.) is swinging on her chest.

2.3. Counting the data using arithmetic numbers

It is a common element found in folk songs. The sufferings of the lady *naga* are illustrated from the first month to the tenth month using the numbers one to ten (Il.- 68– 79). She delivered seven children and Goddess Parvathi became the nurse. The song enumerates the birth of Kaliamma, Mariamma, Muthumari, Rakkachi, Durgai Amman, Pechiamman and Muthalamman.

2.4.0 Convention of listing things

2.4.1 While narrating the bio-war between Lord Shiva and the seven sisters, the small pox boils were found all over the Lord’s body from head to foot. The list starts from his *uchi* i.e head, eyes, then chest, and at last the ankle (Il.- 147- 150).

2.4.2 Similarly while explaining the procedure of growing *mulaipari* (Il.- 400- 415) the ballad lists the following.

1 Green gram	5 Paddy straw
2 Cowpeas	6 Goat dung
3 Black eyed peas	7 Cow dung
4 Ear of pearl millet	8 Terrakota pot / bowl etc.

2.4.3 Various flowers like *mahizhambu*, different types of jasmines namely *aduku malli*, *thoduku malli*, and *picci* and roses are used while worshipping the Goddess (Il.- 217- 226).

2.5. The colloquial medium used

Colloquial Tamil is used in this song as it is found in any other folk song. *tāyi* is the colloquial form of ‘*taay*’ which means mother (l.- 157).

Lord Shiva is mentioned as *Karakandar* (l.- 21) meaning; God with the stain of venom in his throat; while literary Tamil denotes him as *Karāikkandar*.

ennurāne is the (l.- 18) colloquial form of *ennukiraan* meaning; thinking .

pūdam is the (l.- 329) colloquial form of *piidam* which means the place where offerings are given to Gods and Goddesses in a temple.

ceyyaraanaam (ll.- 20 & 22)

vaaraaraam (l.- 24)

are the colloquial forms of *ceykiraanaam* and *varuhiraaraam* respectively. The fact that *cullaiyile* (l.- 415) is the colloquial form of *cuulaiyile* is proved as *cuulai* is the furnace where all the pots designed from mud are burnt to get vessels. *kusavanāru* (l.- 225) is the colloquial form of *kuyavanār*.

2.6.0 Lexical transmutations

2.6.1 Owing to the usage of colloquial Tamil there are some words for which we have to strive hard to find the meaning. One such problem is to comprehend the meaning of the word ‘*ottaaram*’ (l.- 66 & 87). The word is used more than once in this folk piece with the prefix *kaadu* (forest). So it is clear that *ottaaram* is a tree. It may be *odai maram* > *otaram*. This refers to a thorny tree found in the dry forest areas of Tamilnadu. As *otaram* means arrogance and robustness people used the transmuted form to denote the forest with dry thorny trees.

2.6.2. It is quite interesting to find out the meaning for the phrase ‘*pacarisi vanathileyum*’ (l.- 17). Due to lexical transmutation of the phrase; *paca rishi vanatileyum* which means a green forest where *rishis* dwell to do penance; it is sung as *pacarisi vanatileyum* which means a forest of rice which is got from raw paddy before boiling. In colloquial Tamil *pacca* means green. *Pacca vanam* denotes the fertility, abundance of water and the density of the forest. *Rishi* is the Sanskrit word for *munivar* who is doing penance. People of Tamilnadu have mistaken *rishi* for *risi* because there are no /s/ and /s/ phonemes in Tamil.

2.7. Regional dialect

There are some regional Tamil words found in this folk song due to the usage of colloquial Tamil. *kottaam petti* (l.- 214) a handicraft made from palm leaves is used as a cup. *kendi* (l.- 163) denotes the feeding cup in which milk is given to the infants.

The name Bairavan mentioned as Vairavan is a common change found in the region of Virudhungan and Tirunelveli districts. The /b/ becomes /v/.

kakkam is the regional usage denoting armpit (l.- 159).

2.8. Spelling mistakes

As the ballad was documented by illiterate people it bears many mistakes in spelling, a common feature in folk songs.

urumi kottu (l.- 255) is the wrongly documented form while *urumi kottu* is the right form. It denotes the music of the percussion instrument *urumi*. *urumi* means roaring of a lion or tiger which does not suit here.

The words *idatu puram* and *valatu puram* (ll.- 15, 85 & 260) are wrongly documented which have different meanings because *puram* denotes a town or city; a residential area. But *idatu puram* and *valatu puram* are the correct forms which denote the left side and right side respectively.

The word *nadupaal* (l.- 162) is a drastic mistake because it should be *madipaal* as it is secreted by a cow. *nadupaal* has no meaning in it as nobody can get the centremilk.

The name *Muthalamman* as found in the ballad is itself incorrect. It should be *Muthalamman* (*muthu* + *aal* + *amman*) which means the *amman* who cures the small pox boils with water droplets which resemble a pearl.

2.9 Hyperbolic expressions

A common folk element found frequently in a folk song is the hyperbolic expression. The virgin *naga* used a golden pin and a silver pin to select the incomparable flowers to be used for *Sivapuja* (ll.- 46& 48)

Lord Vishnu brought four hundred milch cows to supply milk for Lord Shiva who was suffering from smallpox. (l.- 162)

3.0 Aesthetic elements

3.1.0 Imagery

Metaphors and similes the offsprings of imagery excel the poetic beauty in any literature.

3.1.1 Similes

The sprouts of *mulaippari* are compared to a silver chariot due to their pale colour (ll.- 235- 238).

“*pacca mutha thaneduththu Pavalam pola koduththaare*”(l.- 141)

means Lord Shiva gave the fresh small pox boils which look like corals to Kalamman. The resemblance of the small pox boils and the corals is due to the colour. Of course it is the colour of the boils which help people to identify the infection. Thus the simile originates and adds to the aesthetic excellence in the narration.

3.1.2 Oxymoron

Beside the simile the phrases ‘*paca*’ and ‘*pavalam*’ result in an Oxymoron i.e *muran todai* meaning green and red respectively. The colour green and red take place in the consecutive lines and add beauty.

3.1.3 Metaphors

Metaphoric expressions are present to add beauty to the narration. They ask Muthalamman that she should bless them by changing her heart of stone. Again they say she should bless them by changing her heart of iron (refer- 2.1.2).

3.1.4 Epic simile

The beauty of Muthalamman is highlighted by saying that her beauty belongs to the famous birth place of Sri Rama; the city of Ayodhya. It resembles the many such similes found in the classical Tamil i.e Sangam Literature.

3.2. Assonance and Alliteration

eduhai and *monai* are found invariably throughout the ballad. Starting from

“*tonti kanapatiye Kantanuku munpiranta*” (l.- 1)

assonance is present in many instances. Alliteration is more dominating than assonance. For example in the passage from ll.- 3- 8 there are one assonance and three alliterations.

3.3 Elaborations

Elaborating the events, nature and appearance are found in the ballad as they are present in any literature uplifting the aesthetic beauty. The cult of Muthalamman is elaborated (refer 8.1). The forest in which the virgin *naga* and her brother plucked the flowers is also elaborated (refer 2.2).

The song gives special importance to Muthalamman by elaborating her appearance during birth (ll.- 97– 105). The seventh sister Muthalamman was born with the percussion instruments *pambai* and *udukai*. She had a stick in her hand and anklets in her feet. She had her hair in the form of *chadai*.

The devotees receive the blessings of all the seven sisters at the end of the *puja*. (ll.- 279- 302). They describe all the Ammans in different attire.

Kalamman with saffron sari
 Mariamman with yellow sari
 Rackachi with maroon sari
 Durgaiamman with red sari
 Pechiamman with green sari
 Muthalamman’s sari was as bright as a pearl

The process of growing *mulaipari* is described elaborately (ll.- 211 -238). It is kept in a clean place where there is no place for direct sun rays. The sprouts grow in a pale colour. The sprouts may be seen on the third day itself. The growing sprouts look like silver chariot i.e. *velli ratam* on Friday (*vellikkilamai*). The secondary roots may grow on Saturday itself before the pongal celebration. On Sunday the sprouts grew strong even with tertiary roots.

4.0. Structure of the ballad

4.1. The first unit in the ballad is the rhythm to be followed while performing the *kummi*. The tune is written in the first line.

4.2. The second unit is the invocation to Lord Ganapathy followed by the same to Goddess Chakkammal, Lord Murugan and finally Goddess Saraswathi (ll.- 1 -12).

4.3. The third unit is the statement that the story of Kalamman and Mariamman is to be sung thereafter and it seeks the support of Goddess Eswari (ll.- 13-15).

4.4. The fourth unit is the story of the seven sisters (ll.- 16- 134) slaying Mahishasuran.

4.5. The fifth unit is that part of the story of the seven sisters which proves that they are more super powers than Lord Shiva (ll.- 135 – 146).

4.6. The sixth unit deals with the method of treating a small pox infected patient i.e. Lord Shiva, Goddess Parvathi and Lord Vishnu treated Him till recovery (ll.- 147 - 174).

4.7. The seventh unit describes the seven sisters reaching the world and the temples built for each of the six elder sisters except the seventh one and festivals celebrated in honour of them each year (ll.- 175 - 200)

4.8. The eighth unit elaborates the unique nature of the seventh sister who is worshipped at the junction where three roads meet and the fresh new altar built for *puja* (ll.- 201 – 207).

4.9. The ninth unit speaks elaborately the methodology of growing *mulaippaari* and how the celebration for Muthalamman begins (ll.- 208 – 242).

4.10. The tenth unit describes the cult of Muthalamman; the building of the new *sanctum sanctorum* by common folk in the junction of streets. Description of the celebration procedures include decorations, prayers by people to let them live happily as married women with husbands i.e. *sumangali* (ll.- 243– 302).

4.11. After deciding that the next celebration will be conducted in the forthcoming calendar year during the waxing of the moon, the song lists the various popular Amman temples all over Tamilnadu (ll.- 303- 328).

4.12. Finally the song ends with the auspicious *mangalam* (ll.- 329- 332)

5.0. The names Muthalamman, Mariamman and Muthumari are derived forms.

5.1. The name Muthalamman is derived from the small pox boils. The small pox boils are called *muthu* in colloquial Tamil. The boils have droplets of water within them. Water is also called *aal* in many Tamil phrases.

(eg.) a. Aalavai is the name of Meenakshi Sundareswarar Temple in Madurai. It is called so because it is near a water source; the banks of River Vaigai.

b. Courtaalam is called so because there are many springs which are otherwise called waterfalls. So the special deity worshipped for curing smallpox is named Muthalamman. The name is a derivative from *muthu* and *aal* meaning droplets of water in the small pox boils.

5.2. Mariamman is the specific deity who is worshipped to get rain as her name denotes the rain which is called *maari* in Tamil.

5.3. Muthumari is the deity named after her power to give rain and control smallpox.

6.0. Confluence of different religions

The ballad illustrates that Saktham i.e. the cult of Sakthi, is equivalent to Saivism and Vaishnavism. It accepts Ganapathyam i.e. worship of Ganapathy and Gowmaram i.e. worship of Kumaran alias Murugan.

6.1. Lord Shiva was won by the seven sisters in the bio war. He was dependent on Goddess Parvathi and the seven sisters to get rid of the small pox boils. Lord Vishnu created the seven sisters through the virgin *naga* and was unable to execute the task undertaken by the seven sisters. People asked Lord Shiva about worshipping the seven sisters to get rid of smallpox and it was Lord Shiva who directed the people to construct temples for the six elder sisters with special prayers during all the six periods of a day and an annual celebration.

6.2. The ballad starts with the invocation to Lord Ganapathy to help perform the folk art *kummi* narrating the story of the deities Mariamman and Kaliamman. The invocation part of the ballad praises Lord Murugan also stating that he is enshrined in Tiruchendur and will give chaste Tamil language to sing the folk song. Religious tolerance among Saivism, Vaishnavism, Ganapathyam, Gowmaram and Saktham is taught by the story of seven sisters in this ballad.

7.0. Feministic views

Feminism binds the events in the story of the seven sisters. There is scope for a separate and elaborate deep study about the feministic elements present in the song.

7.1 The demon Mahishasuran's wish to Lord Shiva that he should not be opposed or killed by any man implies immortality (ll.- 27- 30). That women can be more valourous than men is the moral taught by the story of the seven sisters. When the seven sisters went to Lord Shiva to get a boon; He was scared to meet them (ll.- 110- 118). Lord Shiva created Bairavan to control the seven sisters. But the seven sisters controlled Bairavan. Lord Shiva escaped by asking them to kill Mahishasuran (ll.- 119- 137).

The sisters were shrewd enough to understand the complex nature of Lord Shiva and proved their talent and capacity by making him unhealthy and cry for help (ll.- 138- 153). Goddess Parvathi helped Lord Shiva recover his health. Then the seven sisters blessed Him to recover from illness (ll.- 154- 174). The story of the seven sisters proves that women are not in any way inferior to their male counterparts. Thus through this story Gender parity is established.

7.2 Even in the story of Lord Shiva fighting with Anthahasura (A. Singaravelu Muthaliyar - ibid-p.1290.) seven forms of Sakthi originated from His body with specific vehicles and weapons to slay down the asura

Brahmi with Vedas on *annam*
 Maheshwari with *pinaham* on *rishabam*
 Vaishnavi with spear on peacock
 Gowmari with *chakra* on eagle
 Varahi with plow on lion
 Chamundi with *vajra* on elephant
 Indrani with *sulam* on *pey*

This shows that mythology illustrates the importance of Sakthi as an equivalent counterpart of saivism and vaishnavism

8.0. Cult of Muthalamman

8.1. No separate temple is built for Muthalamman anywhere. She is worshipped during the month of *Masi* (February - March) at the meeting place of three roads by common folk. When children and people are infected by smallpox, chicken pox or mums they propitiate the anger of Muthalamman and her six elder sisters. They make an announcement of the celebration in the residential quarters and grow *mulaipari* in pot shards, a symbol of the Amman cult. The cow dung and cattle dung are spread on which the cow peas, black eyed peas, pearl millet and paddy are sown. They sprout on the third day. Virgins and auspicious ladies (those who live with their husbands) bathe and make themselves ready for *Kummi*. They decorate their residential areas and surroundings. A new terrakota image is made for the celebration each year using wet clay. It is created either by skilled people or by common folk. The festival is celebrated with *Pongal* on Tuesday only. The streets are decorated with neem leaves. The temporary *sanctum sanctorum* is tied with sugar canes and mango leaves. They offer chicken or cock, rice *kolukattai* (a snack done from rice flour either by adding sweet or salt.) eggs and drumsticks. The well grown *mulaipari* is carried on the heads of ladies who come around the streets with the orchestra of *urumi* and other percussion instruments. *Kaatholai* (an ornament worn by people in the historical period to grow their earlobes long) made from palm leaves are kept along with turmeric powder and kumkum. *Panakaram* (a beverage done by fireless cooking using tamarind, lemon juice, palm jaggery and dried ginger) and neem juice are offered separately. *Tulluma* (hand-made raw rice flour mixed with sugar cane jaggery, and cardamom) and opened Tender coconut are also offered. Newly created *piidam* (Altar) is decorated with lemon garlands flowers and yellow color *Chithadai* (a mini sari; almost half the length of a sari.) *Kumbam* (a pot often considered as a female) is decorated with a bunch of coconut and flowers at the top (ll.- 241- 300).

9.0. Convergence of the seven sisters as one Amman

9.1.0 The seven sisters and Parvathi are part and parcel of one Sakthi.

9.1.1 Angala Eswari is one of the names attributed to Goddess Parvathi. The ballad praises ‘*en taaye iisvariye*’ in 43 lines. Eswari is the common name for all goddesses in Saivism and Saktham. Within the ballad the seventh sister Muthalamman is also mentioned as ‘*en taayi iisvari*’ in two instances (ll.- 290& 298).

9.1.2 By worshiping Muthalamman the devotee gets the blessings from all the seven sisters (ll.- 281-290). Even Mariamman and Kalamman are worshiped during the month of *Masi* in *Therukattu Pongal* (Mariamman Pongal is celebrated in the specific temple during the month of *Panguni* i.e. April. Kalamman is worshipped in the specific temple during the month of *Chithirai* i.e. May.)

9.1.3 The ballad enlists the various forms of Amman- Badrakali, Chakkamma and Mariamman in Sivakasi and other places in Tamilnadu. Mariamman in Irukangudi, Samayapuram, Kannapuram, verkadu, koviyanoor, Palayam, and Kadumpadi. They are considered as one at the end of the song.

9.2. The concept is prevalent in Tamilnadu even now. The film song written by the poet Kalidas and sung by the playback singer Chithra in the film *Purushalatchanam* lists the 101 ammans worshipped by the people of Tamilnadu in various places. The list includes Angala Eswari, AthiParasakthi, Mariamman, Kalamman, Durgaiamman, Pechiamman and Muthumari also. The specific form of Lord Siva as Arthanari and the literary character Paanjaali are also added to the list. The song illustrates that all the Amman forms are a part of Thayamma; the Mother Goddess (Annexure- 1).

10.0. Social elements in the ballad

10.1. Land encroachment is the theme of the story of seven sisters. The problem dealt in the story is the clash between Brahmins and the Kshatriyas; the rulers.

While Mahishasuran was ruling a green dense forest area many *rishis* started encroaching his frontiers for observing penance. To fight with them successfully he sought the help of Lord Shiva and received an immortality boon. In the opponent party all the *munivars* and *devars* sought the help of Lord Vishnu to kill Mahishasuran. Goddess Parvathi the sister of Lord Vishnu took the form of a Brahmin sorceress to help Him execute His plan for supporting the *rishis*. Here it is clear that the conflict is between the Brahmins and the rulers. Lord Shiva created Bairavan from the *Darpai*; a type of grass used by the people following the vedic cult during *puja*, any auspicious occasions and rituals. He sent him to control the seven sisters.

10.2. Though the seven sisters helped the Brahmins indirectly, they faced a lot of problems invariably from all sections of people after reaching the world. They lost their *katholai* in the dry thorny forest i.e. *otaaram* forest; an area for the unprivileged people. They lost even their saris in the *tillaivanam*; a green forest; an area of the privileged people. The lexican says that *tillai* is a tree. It also denotes Chidambaram where Thillaiambalam is situated. Lord Shiva in the form of Natarajan is enshrined there. The lyrics of Tevaram talks about the three thousand brahmin families which lived there. As the seven sisters suffered there; they got angry and started punishing the people with smallpox infection. She was cooled down by the common people.

10.3. The cult of Amman was accepted by the third varna i.e. vasyas who are otherwise called as chettiars. They took the responsibility of sculpting a new terrakota amman each year. The manual labourers who do not follow the vedic cult also follow the Amman cult.

Inference:

Angala Eswari Amman Kathai Paadal is a war ballad sung, while performing *Kummi* during the month of *Masi* in *Therukattu Pongal*. It bears the elements of a folk song. Beauty of classical literature is also found. There are eleven sections in the structure of the ballad. In addition to the story, it talks about the cult of Muthalamman. Religious tolerance is found embedded in the song. The aim of the ballad is to prove that Saktham is equivalent to Saivism and Vaishnavism. It talks indirectly that female Gods are not inferior to the male Gods. The names of the deities Mariamman, Muthumari and Muthalamman are derived forms. Land encroachment is the theme of the story.

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Annexure- 1

1. Kolavizhiyamma
2. Rajakaliyamma
3. Palayathamamma
4. Bangaru Mariamma
5. Muthumariamma
6. Badrakaliyamma
7. MundaKanniamma

8. Kanniamma
9. Kothai
10. Yosathai
11. Deivanai
12. Roopathi
13. Visalatchi
14. Soundambigai
15. Virupatchi
16. Sundara Neeli
17. Soundara Mali
18. Valliamma
19. Alliamma
20. Selliamma
21. Kolliamma
22. Angamma
23. Chengamma
24. Muppathamma
25. Veppathamma
26. Sankari
27. Umaiyatha
28. Manmari
29. Panmari
30. Sellayi
31. Singari
32. Silambayi
33. Maruvathuramma
34. Meenakshi Devi
35. Ponni
36. Akilanda Eswari
37. Thirupathur Gaumari
38. Thiruvanaika Amma
39. Mangadu kamatchi
40. Malaiyala Bagavathi
41. Tanjavur Mari
42. Kanyakumari
43. Malaiyallur Shenbagam
44. Mayilapur Karpagam
45. Kanniga Parameswari
46. Jegathambal
47. Gurukulathamma
48. Durgai Amma
49. Mukuli Amma
50. Kulungai Amma
51. Ellaiyamma
52. Gangai Amma
53. Nachiamma
54. Petchiamma
55. Moogambiga
56. Yogambiga
57. Alamelamma

58. Vaigolamma
59. Tanjaiamma
60. Veerapadavettamma
61. Bairavi
62. Thenatchi
63. Thirupatchi
64. Ammayi
65. Brammayi
66. Alagamma
67. Kanagamma
68. AthiParasakthi
69. Periamma
70. Theppakulathamma
71. Theradi Poovamma
72. Mandaveli Amma
73. Arthanari Amma
74. Jothi Amma
75. Vadivudai Amma
76. Thiripura Sundari
77. Vengadu Mayamma
78. Kasthuri
79. Thayamma
80. Urumari
81. Ulagamma
82. Uthiratcha Thilagamma
83. Unnamalai Amma
84. Bannari Amma
85. Maheswari
86. Sarpa Rajeswari
87. Logeswari
88. Yogeswari
89. Jegatheeswari
90. Parameswari
91. Buvaneswari
92. Rajeswari
93. Abirami
94. Sivagami
95. Arulmari
96. Mahamayi
97. Mamundi
98. Samundi
99. Panjali
100. Athayi
101. Solaiyur Mahamayi

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