



## Pastoral life in Silappadhikaram (Cilappatikāratil āyar vāḷkkai)

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### Abstract

Silappadhikaram, a double kappiyam, reflects the various life stages of Tamil society. The pastoral life (cattle herders or Greenland life) is particularly well described. This shows the social, economic, and cultural position of the bishops during the Sangam age. The pastoral life is very well and uniquely depicted in some texts. The pastoral people (Idaayars/Kovalars) belong to the land of Mullai. When Kannagi came to Madurai, Mathari, a pastoral woman, gave her shelter, which was an important part of Silappadhikaram.

**Keywords:** Silappadhikaram, kappiyam, idaayars, mullai, sangam age

### Introduction

Silambu, one of the Imberungapiyas, best tells the story of the pastoral life. Bishops are said to be those who have a life without a family and who take shelter from a nobleman's and a rich man's desires. They learn the rules of life. We see him as a master of hospitality, as one who fears evil for the shelter he deserves, and as a master of costly food.

### The life of a cowherd is not difficult

There is no cruelty in the life of a cowherd who protects the herd of cows and gives their benefit to everyone." "The news says that the calf is the guardian of all." Kaundidigal sees Madari as immature, old, noble, and meek. The simplicity of the life of the priests can be felt only by keeping the matri.

The shepherds, after grazing the animals, return to the slum at dusk. The cries of the cows are heard. The shepherds also carry the parched cow on their shoulders. A goat and a donkey are on their shoulders. They are accompanied by middle-aged men.

"Kaṇru tērāviṅ kaṇai kuraliyampa maṛittōnaviyat tuṛikkāvālaroṭu ceṛivalaiyācciyar cilar puṛaṅcūḷa" (āṭaikkalakkātai 204-206)

This is how the researchers, who are excommunicating Kannagi, refer to her situation.

The price at which the flour is sold is referred to as the price of food. A butcher's job is to sell milk.

### Āyar kuṭiyiruppu (the bishop's residence)

mīḷaicūḷ kōvalarirukkaiyaṅṅip  
pūvalūṭṭiya puṇaimāṅpantark  
kāval ciṛril kaṭimaṅaiṅpaṭuttuk (kolaikkaḷak kātai 4-6)

"U.Ve.Sa. They are referring to. The specialty of giving the guest a new house in the middle of the houses where they live is seen here. A new fence surrounded the building. Policeman. This is a beautiful little house. Bandar is.

### 'Tarumaṅal tāḷappetu iṅpūvalūṭṭi'

It is mentioned here that on the day of the wedding, the sand is spread and applied to the house. But in Silambu we see that the newness of the guests has been beautified by applying vermilion. These two messages indicate the gradual development of civilization into pastoral life.

In Kalithokai, we know Ayarseri as 'Cherikizhavan Magalen Yaal' in Mullikali. From this reference we learn that the bishops gathered together and stayed together.

Don't say 'don't come here,' and don't say 'get out of here.'

It can be seen that they were in a state of migration. (Gali: Mullai: 108-7) Thus we see two types of residents in the Kalimada: those who have settled permanently and those who migrate. But only permanent residents can be found in Silam. It is said that Puranjeri was the place that stayed on the outskirts of the town.

The situation of 'the cowherd sitting surrounded by the millet' is mentioned here. They appear as if they are wearing flower-draped guards. The Kovalars depicted in the Silambam are seen as members of the community with a settled life.

### Food

āvaka nōṅṅipikaḷ aṭikaḷāṭalin  
nāttūṅ naṅkaiyoṭu nāḷ vaḷippaṭū'um  
aṭicilākkuvataṅku amainta naṅkalāṅkaḷ  
neṭiyāṭaḷimiṅṅnīṅ eṅakkūṅa  
iṭaikkula maṅantai (kolaikkaḷakkātai 18-23)

They were said to be the ruling elites of the ruling elites. Here it was said that the bishops had carried on the tradition of eating in the cellar and giving the guest new cells. Along with the 'new pot,' the flower-bearing Fasul's swollen buds, the curved-line cucumber, the kōmmatti pomegranate, the sweet mango, the banana, and the jasmine were offered to Kannagi. The bishop seems to have had the above-mentioned varieties of fruits and vegetables as his food, along with milk and ghee.

The guests were made to sit on the tawais woven from the very silver garden of Talapullu. They had a tradition of making food from the pulp of the virgin banana. Failure after eating. The priests also had a benevolent nature.

### The reasons (Nimittaṅkaḷ)

There is a temple in Pandiyan. Since there are priests in the temple. There is a temple in Pandiyan. Their social status is enhanced by the presence of priests in the temple. They had access to the temple. So for today's ritual, the mother comes to the loom with her daughter with rope and wine. But then the old woman who comes there says some bad things.

"We have not spilled milk. Tears ooze from his eyes. So melt the butter of the first day, and it will not melt. The goats didn't play. They're broken. The birds are really chirping. Their legs were broken. So there is production.

The bishops thought that there was a product of the freezing of milk, of the breaking of bread, of the melting of butter, of the lamb not boiling, of the fear of the bulls, and of the fall of their necklaces. All these were considered bad omens. And milk. They danced to 'Kuruvai.'

Silambu shows the pastor's house arrangement, hospitality, diet, his manner of conducting the ceremonies, and the state of the miser's 'kuruvai.'

### Conclusion

Pastoral life (Ayar life) in *Silappatikāram* is depicted as a model of simplicity, honesty, and strong cultural identity, deeply connected to the Mullai landscape. The Ayar community, epitomized by Mātari, represents unwavering virtue and trust. This is crucial, as they provide the only safe haven for Kannagi and Kovalan outside of the urban merchant class. Their existence centers on pastoralism (raising cattle and deriving dairy products), contrasting with the maritime trade of Puhār or the judicial/administrative focus of Maturai. Their spiritual and communal life is vividly represented by the Āyacciyar Kuravai, a ritual dance dedicated to Māyōṇ (Krishna/Vishnu), which showcases their unique folk traditions and valor.

In essence, the Ayar life serves as an ethical anchor in the epic, embodying traditional Tamil values rooted in the harmony of nature, thereby highlighting the diverse yet interconnected social structure of the ancient Tamil land ruled by the three kings.

### Reference

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3. Ma.Po. Civañāṇam. Cilappatikāra āyvurai. (Cilappatikārattin camūka, araciyaḷ, marṛum ilakkiyak kūrukaḷ parriya ālamāṇa pārvai).
4. Pa. Aruñācalam. Tamiḷil aimperuñ kāppiyaṅkaḷ. (Aimperuñ kāppiyaṅkaḷ kuritta potuvāṇa oppāyvu, itil nilaviyal marṛum vāḷviyal kūrukaḷ vivātikkappaṭum).
5. A. Ca. Nāṇacampantaṇ. Ilakkiyak kalai. (Tamiḷ ilakkiyattil kalai, camūkam, marṛum nilaviyal cārnta āyvuk kaṭṭuraikaḷ).
6. Vi. Ār. Irāmaccantira tīṭcitar. The Silappadikaram (āṅkila molipeyarppu marṛum āyvu).