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The Theme of Domesticity in a Genre of Hindu Devotional Poetry

by PAULA S. RICHMAN

In South Asian culture, as elsewhere, women are closely linked with the home as a space and with domestic activities, the nurturing and house-maintaining chores that take place within the home. This article explores the poetic use of the theme of domesticity in pillaiittamils, a genre of Hindu devotional poetry written by male poets. In particular, the portrayal of childcare and housework will receive close scrutiny. This article demonstrates how the theme of domesticity becomes a literary resource for a writer who seeks to express his feelings of devotion to a chosen deity. I examine three types of pillaiittamil verses in which domestic activities function as the main action of the verse, as a backdrop, or as a metaphor respectively.

The development of the concept of domesticity, as it is culturally constructed, has been the subject of much debate and research among feminist scholars of Western literature. In using the term “domesticity,” I draw upon a number of meanings such as “to be of the household,” “home,” “attached to home,” and particularly “devoted to home life or duties.” Feminist critics have argued that literature dealing with the life of the home has been neglected and even denigrated by earlier scholars because it has been seen as part of women’s sphere. Since the dominant literary tradition assumed that “great” literature deals with war, politics, and other aspects of public life, so the critique goes, they brushed aside literature of the domestic as minor and unimportant. The locus classicus for such critical evaluations of previous literary assessments in the West can be found in Virginia Woolf’s A Room of One’s Own, where she sums up the way such an attitude elevates the public activities of men while denigrating the sphere of the home: “This is an important book, the critic assumes, because it deals with war. This is an insignificant book because it deals with the feelings of women in a drawing room.” Closer to our own time, Tillie Olsen has analyzed the devaluation of the women’s sphere in Western literature and its relegation to the category of minor literature. As she says, “Power is seldom recognized as the power it is at all, if the subject..."
matter is considered woman's: it is minor. . . " Even when a genre of literature dealing with the domestic was recognized, it was seen as "women's literature" and, hence, not as "artistic" as that of men. As Nina Baym says in commenting about American women writers between 1820 and 1870, they "were expected to write specifically for their own sex and within the tradition of their woman's culture rather than within the Great Tradition [e.g., Milton, Spenser]." Feminist literary critics urge us to examine texts about the domestic sphere on their own terms rather than in such a reductionistic and marginalized context.

In recent theological discussion as well, writers have sought to give due respect and attention to the domestic experience of women. Examples of this school of religious reflection may be found in a recent anthology entitled Sacred Dimensions of Women's Experience, which considers the way in which women's domestic activities can be invested with sacred meaning. This volume pays particular attention to the spiritual dimensions of care-giving and doing housework.

Such perspectives—both literary and theological—enable us to view domesticity in Western culture in new ways. These perspectives can also provide us with the impetus to reflect upon the construction of domesticity in literature from non-Western cultures.

**Pillaittamil Literature**

Among the genres of Tamil literature, the *pillaittamil* is a particularly appropriate place to consider the theme of domesticity. A *pillaittamil* is a poem addressed to a particular Hindu deity in the form of a child; in its individual verses the author usually takes on the persona of a mother. *Pillaittamil* s are written in Tamil, a Dravidian language possessing a literary corpus dating back to the first centuries of this millennium as well as more than fifty-five million speakers today.

*Pillaittamil* s have a recognized place within the devotional framework of Hinduism, a religion that recognizes a number of different modes of relating to the divine. Among them the following are most popular: seeing the deity as one's master and oneself as a servant, seeing the deity as one's beloved and oneself as a lover, and seeing the deity as one's child and oneself as a parent.

6. There are about 50 million Tamil speakers in India, 4 million in Sri Lanka, and about one million in Latin America and East Africa.
traditions, is the one chosen by *pillaittamil* poets to express their love for a chosen deity.\(^8\)

In addition to diverse ways of relating to the divine, Hinduism also encompasses many different deities. *Pillaittamil* authors have composed many poems in praise of many of these multifarious deities.\(^9\) *Pillaittamil* were especially popular among Tamil Saivite poets, who composed a number of *pillaittamil* praising Murukan, one of Siva's sons, as well as many poems praising Siva's consorts. In this paper I confine my discussion to five verses selected from two Saiva *pillaittamil*, each of which is considered to be a beautiful and highly developed example of the genre.\(^10\)

The first text, *Tiruccenturppillaittamil* (henceforth abbreviated as *TCPT*), was composed by Pakalikuttan (who lived ca. 1375–1425). It tells of the unusual birth, nurturing by his mother Uma, and charming activities of the infant Murukan. It also alludes to and praises his military conquests and erotic adventures with beautiful Valli once he has grown to manhood. This particular poem praises the form of Murukan enshrined in a temple in the seaside town of Tiruccentur.\(^11\)

The second text, *Maturaimingalciyammaippillaittamil* (henceforth abbreviated as *MMPI*) tells of Minaci, the consort of Siva enshrined in the main sanctuary in Maturai. Minaci, a manifestation of the goddess Pârvati (daughter of the Himalaya mountains), was born to the human Pântiyân king and his queen reigning in South India. After she grows up and conquers the four directions of the universe, she meets Lord Siva and becomes his bride. Minaci is traditionally represented as having a beautiful emerald color of skin. Kumarakurupara Cuvamika!, whom scholars believe died ca. 1688, composed this text to praise the great deeds of this goddess.\(^12\)

Few South Asian poetic genres are as fruitful for an investigation of the theme of domesticity as *pillaittamil*. According to Tamil tradition, *pillaittamil* poems are, par excellence, the literature of childhood. In fact, the name of the genre means Tamil (poetry) for a child (*pillai*). Traditional commentators see the poems as tracing the activities of an infant as it grows.\(^13\) In the course of portraying the relationship between mother and child, poets depict many domestic scenes.

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\(^9\) Within the Hindu tradition *pillaittamil* have been composed to (among others) Murukan, Gajapa, various consorts of Siva, Viṣṇu, Alakar, Hanumān, and Rāma. There are also Muslim, Christian, and Jain *pillaittamil*, as well as *pillaittamil* written in praise of political figures such as M.G.R. and E.V. Ramasami.

\(^10\) The Tamil pandits I consulted consistently singled out these two texts as examples of the most admired *pillaittamil*. They are also praised in a book which grew out of a symposium about the genre sponsored by members of the Saiva Siddhanta movement. See *Cirrilakkiyam Mani*, 2nd, Tirunelveli, India 1959 (Tirunelveli: South Indian Saiva Siddhanta Works Publishing Society [henceforth SISS], 1959).


\(^12\) Kumarakurupara Cuvamika!, *Maturaimingalciyammaippillaittamil* in *Pillaittamilikkottu*, II (Tirunelveli: SISS, 1970).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME OF PARUVAM</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>REFRAIN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Kāppupparuvam</td>
<td>invoking a series of deities to protect the child</td>
<td>Protect (this child)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* 2. Čenkīraipparuvam</td>
<td>encouraging the baby to sway back and forth</td>
<td>Sway back and forth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Tālapparuvam</td>
<td>lullaby/encouraging the child to move its tongue</td>
<td>Talelo (equivalent to la la la)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Cappāipparuvam</td>
<td>asking the child to clap its hands</td>
<td>Clap your hands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Muttapparuvam</td>
<td>asking the child for a kiss</td>
<td>Give me a kiss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* 6. Vārānaipparuvam</td>
<td>asking the child to come</td>
<td>Come</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Ampulipparuvam</td>
<td>asking the child to move its tongue</td>
<td>Moon, come and play</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FEMALES**

| 8. Ammāgaipparuvam | encouraging the girl to play jacks | Play jacks |
| 9. Nīrāgaparuvam | encouraging the girl to bathe in the river | Bathe in the river |
| 10. Ćaipparuvam | encouraging the girl to swing on a swing | Swing on the swing |

**MALES**

* 8. Ćirīpparuvam | the girls entreating the boy not to knock down their playhouses made of sand, pearls, and shells | Don’t destroy our playhouses |
| 9. Ćirupaçaipparuvam | encouraging the boy to beat on his drum | Beat your little drum |
| 10. Ćiruṭparuvam | encouraging the boy to play with his toy chariot | Drive your little chariot |
Like other Tamil genres of its type,\textsuperscript{14} \textit{pillai\textipa{[}aittami\textipa{]}s} are highly stylized; the domestic sphere, hence, is depicted according to a strict set of conventions governing its literary structure. According to these conventions poets should compose \textit{pillai\textipa{[}aittami\textipa{]}s} with ten sections, each of which is called a \textit{paruvam}. Each \textit{paruvam} contains ten verses so that the entire poem has one hundred verses. The topic of each of the ten \textit{paruvams} is dictated by tradition although the particular manner in which a poet handles that topic is open. In the chart on page 179 I have starred the \textit{paruvams} from which I examine verses in this paper. The first seven \textit{paruvams} are standard while the last three differ for females and males. Within the framework of these \textit{paruvams}, poets have written intriguing accounts of domestic scenes.

In individual verses the poet usually takes on the persona of a mother. In this paper I will analyze five verses, four of which are spoken in the mother's voice. Two of these are from the \textit{varagai} section in which the mother encourages the baby to come to her. The other two, \textit{ce\textipa{[}h\textipa{]k\textipa{]r\textipa{]}}ai\textipa{[} verses, ask the baby to sway back and forth. In the fifth poem the poet takes on the persona of a little girl by the seashore building a playhouse from sand, pearls, and shells nearby.

In order to examine the theme of domesticity, let us turn to these five poems. But before doing so, I want to indicate to the reader that not every verse in a \textit{pillai\textipa{[}aittami\textipa{]} poem is exclusively concerned with domestic themes. For example, outside of the poem's refrain, some verses relate heroic deeds performed by the deity after he or she grows to adulthood.\textsuperscript{15} Others are purely literary pieces of art with puns, plays on words, formal literary ornamentation, or alliteration as their main focus.\textsuperscript{16} But within \textit{pillai\textipa{[}aittami\textipa{]} poems there is a large core of verses for which the theme of domesticity is central. The five verses analyzed below are representative of verses from this core.

\section*{Main Action, Background, and Metaphor}

In our endeavor to understand how images of domesticity become a resource for a writer who seeks to express devotion, let us start by looking at a type of verse which occurs often in \textit{pillai\textipa{[}aittami\textipa{]} poetry: one in which the author describes a parent caring for a child who is a deity. Here domestic deeds are the main action depicted in the verse. Since this is a fairly typical type of \textit{pillai\textipa{[}aittami\textipa{]} verse, one quite germane to our analysis

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Pillai\textipa{[}aittami\textipa{]}} are one among ninety-six literary genres considered to be in the category of \textit{pirapentam} (Sanskrit, \textit{prabandha}) literature. For a discussion of these genres see Kamil Zvelebil, \textit{Tamil Literature}, II, fasc. 1 of \textit{Handbuch der Orientalistik}, gen. ed. Jan Gonda (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975), 235, n. 7. Also see the papers presented by Norman Cutler, David Shulman, Paula Richman, and Rajam Ramamurti in the panel titled “The Medieval Genres in Tamil Literary Tradition” presented at the 12th annual meeting of the Mid-Atlantic Region of the Association for Asian Studies, October 1983.

\textsuperscript{15} See, for example, TCPT 15.

\textsuperscript{16} See, for example, MMPT 61.
and a kind of poem seen as quintessentially typical of \textit{pillai-tamil} poetry by Tamil tradition, I will analyze several different kinds of these verses.

Verses about a parent caring for a child occur most often in \textit{pillai-tamil}s written in praise of male deities. There the poet's voice is that of a mother describing the way she takes care of her son. Perhaps due to the primacy of the mother-son relationship in South Asian culture,\textsuperscript{17} one finds many \textit{pillai-tamil} verses which depict a mother caring for a son and very few which tell of the father-daughter relationship.

An excellent example of a mother-son verse is TCPT 54, in which Murukan's mother calls him to come to her and nurse. This verse comes from the \textit{vārānaipparuvam}, the section of the \textit{pillai-tamil} in which the poet takes on the voice of the mother and calls the baby to come. In addition to the usual refrain at the end of the verse, which asks the baby to come, in this particular verse the \textit{vārānai} idea is even more conspicuous because each line contains the plea “come” (\textit{varuka}: polite imperative, literally, “May you come”).

The mother begins by calling the baby so she can adorn him with jewelry and an auspicious mark, the \textit{tilak}, to be drawn on his forehead. She offers to caress him, bathe him, and nurse him. With each promise she encourages him to come to her. Her offers emphasize the baby's smallness and vulnerability—he takes tiny steps, she must keep him clean, he is dependent upon her for nourishment.

The refrain in this verse turns the tables. Suddenly the poet describes the baby as powerful, located in his own shrine, and part of his own domestic establishment. Pakalikkut\texttildelow{\textit{t}} praises Murukan's sharp spear, reminding the listener of his salvific deeds. He also mentions the place where the deity's shrine is located, indicating that his divine presence there has enriched the surrounding land, on which rise many-storied houses, whose wealthy owners possess luminous gems. Finally, we are reminded that this young baby nursing at its mother's breast is himself the handsome husband of beautiful young Valli, whose breasts are just beginning to mature.

\begin{quote}
\textit{Come to me (TCPT 54)}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
Come so I can fasten your waist-string, 
adorned with rare jewels  
Come so I can slip a ring 'round your finger  
Come so I can mark a \textit{tilak} on your forehead  
Come and play in the lane  
Come let me take you on my lap and hug you  
Come so I can bathe you in fresh rose-water  
Come drink ambrosia from my firm breasts  
Come so you can get kisses  
Come let me wipe the dust from your body  
Come and speak a few words
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{17} See Sudhir Kakar, \textit{The Inner World: A Psycho-analytic Study of Childhood and Society in India} (Delhi: Oxford Univ. Press, 1981), pp. 52–112.
Come so I can watch your tiny steps 
Come, Murukān with the sharp spear, 
of Tiruccentūr, 
where towering houses are filled 
with lustrous gems.

Come, husband of Valli, 
the woman whose budding breasts, 
adorned with sandalpaste, 
are like tender coconuts.

The comfortable, mother-son domesticity of the main part of the verse thus contrasts with the message of the refrain. By juxtaposing the two, the poet reminds us that the divine is both child and grown man, charmingly helpless and salvific, an experiencer of both childish and adult sexuality. The domestic scene in the main part of the verse helps the poet to contrast the accessible child-god with his great salvific power. 18

In another verse of the same type, Pakajikittan concentrates specifically upon the baby’s hunger and his mother’s call for him to come and nurse, a major domestic activity. Again in a vārānai verse we find the mother caring for the baby—here one so vulnerable that it cries if it feels even the tiniest bit of hunger. The verse deals mostly with the baby’s sadness, which ends only when his mother Umā begins to nurse him:

Come to me (TCPT 56)
Even when you feel hunger 
as tiny as a sesame seed, 
You get sad 
and go to and fro. 
Your little tummy contracts, 
you are about to cry, 
your lovely coral lips pout, 
and then you shed tears.

You jump up, 
you quiver, 
You move to the side of your cradle 
and kick your legs.

You suck your thumb, 
and droplets flow 
from the corner of your mouth. 

You crawl slowly, 
while the fish-shaped earrings 
that dangle 
brush across your shoulders.

You smile a little, 
you sit on my lap.

18. For a parallel analysis of the way in which Hindi poems by Śūrdās about Kṛṣṇa play with Kṛṣṇa’s double identity as a helpless child and a salvific deity, see Kenneth Bryant, Poems to the Child-God: Structures and Strategies in the Poetry of Śūrdās (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1978), pp. 26–71.
Then you sob, whimper, 
and gaze at my face.

Come, prattling little one, 
who is happy 
now that you have consumed 
nectar from the vessel 
of beloved Uma's breast, 
adorned with sandalpaste.

Come, husband of Valli, 
the woman with budding breasts 
like tender coconuts.

Once again the refrain has a linking function. In its first few lines the mother calls the baby, describing him as happy now that he has consumed sweet nectar from *her* breasts. The poet then directs our attention to the breasts of Valli, Murukan's consort. Here the poet contrasts the scene of the mother's nursing with the one of god and his consort to reveal the different aspects of Murukan's nature.

The parent-caring-for-child kind of verse is not as common in *MMPT*, but one of its occurrences there contains an unusual twist—the verse telling of the father caring for his daughter. Here the domestic play is a bit like roughhousing. While in *TCPT* 54 the mother dresses and bathes her little boy, in *MMPT* 14 the baby Minači rushes around, climbs all over her dad's chest and across his shoulders.

This poem, presumably in the voice of Minači's mother, describes how the little girl plays with her father. Crawling over to him, she prattles and climbs on his chest, anointed with sandalwood paste. According to poetic convention, a strong powerful man will possess extremely long hands: Her father's hands that she grabs extend to his feet while he is sitting. The next section of the poem describes her father as surrounded by the sweet tones of the Tamil language, as if it were a garland of flowers around his shoulders upon which she climbs. As she stands on his shoulders, dancing back and forth, her lustrous emerald body makes her look like a radiant green peacock. In this verse, one does not find the nursing mother; instead one finds a loving father playing with his daughter.

*Sway back and forth (MMPT 14)*

You stand there, 
your inner joy bursting forth.

And then even before 
your sacred father calls you, 
saying, "Come to me" 
and beckons you a single time, 
you rush over on all fours.

You feed him the sweet ambrosia 
of your childish prattle, 
which is so cool 
that his burning hunger is quenched.
Then you cling to his broad chest
adorned with kumkum
and grab his wide hands
which extend down
to his golden feet.

You climb over his broad shoulders
garlanded with fresh blooming flowers,

do of pure musical Tamil,
and onto the nape of his neck.

Green peacock,
stand there and dance,
with clear moonlight
gleaming from your lovely mouth
and green rays
emanating from your sacred body
like the light of emeralds.

Sway back and forth,
one daughter
of the southern king
and of the king of the Himalayas.
Sway back and forth.

Again we see the use of a domestic scene as part of the poet’s strategy
to remind his reader of both the accessible, lovable child and the transcen­
dent deity. Minäci’s dual nature is particularly emphasized in the refrain,
where she is called the “one (oru) daughter of the southern king and the
king of the Himalayas.” The term oru has several meanings here—“only
daughter,” “unique” or “singular daughter,” and also “the one daughter”
of two fathers. The last meaning is crucial to this poem’s overall thrust. The poet emphasizes in the refrain that this one girl is daughter to both an
ordinary human and the great celestial king of the Himalayas. This phrase
serves to remind the reader that she is both a human child, vulnerable and
accessible, as well as a goddess, powerful and transcendent.

In all three of the verses just analyzed, the portrayal of domesticity is
used in the service of depicting the deity’s accessibility—his or her in­
nocence, vulnerability, and charm. Images of a mother caring for her son
or a father playing with his daughter give listeners a sense that the deity
is accessible. If they are fond of children, such imagery makes it easier for
them to relate to the divine. The poet can express the charming,
chicievous, and playful nature of god. In combination with the refrain
which usually reminds the reader of the deity’s power, such imagery can
make the hearer aware of both the charming and awesome aspects of
South Asian divinity.

In the second type of verse to be analyzed, a domestic scene provides the
backdrop for conflict in the poem. Such verses are ones from the cirrir
paruvam (the “little house” paruvam), the section of a pillaitamil in
which the poet beseeches the small boy not to knock down the playhouse
which the little girls have built by the seashore. Note that in this paruvam
the poet must take on the persona of a young girl and become a suppliant to god:

_The Playhouse (TCPT 84)_

We little girls
make the outer walls
of our playhouse
with pearls from golden conches
which surround the fragrant golden water.

We make our cooking pots
from right-whirling conches.

We fill the pots with rich honey,
produced when buds break
in the seed pods of red lotuses
growing in newly-planted fields.

We cook our rice,
made of pearls from bamboos.

We make our curry
from freshly picked bunches of flowers
grown in a grove
as fragrant as rosewater.

See how eagerly we cook
our precious rice.

Don't destroy our playhouse,
with your fair young feet,
redolent from the head of Indra.

Don't destroy our playhouse,
rich one of Tiruccentūr,
where waves wash up pearls.

In this verse we find a play on domesticity. What gives the verse its charm is the clever way in which the girls fabricate the elements of nurturing. After building their house, they stock it with the equipment and ingredients for cooking. Conches function as pots, honey as cooking liquid, pearls as grains of rice, and flower petals as vegetables and spices. The girls are imitating housework. Their poignant plea, “See how eagerly we cook our precious rice,” is almost a parody of the young Indian wife’s desire to please her in-laws and husband with her culinary devotion.

In this kind of verse the pleas of the girls have the pattern of supplications to a deity. The girls are terrified that Murukan might destroy their carefully created homes. The refrain serves to remind the hearer of Murukan’s tremendous power. His feet are redolent from the head of Indra because that great and powerful king of the gods has bowed in submission, the poet reminds his reader. The verse suggests that without the divine

19. According to literary convention, pearls can be found in a number of places, including inside of bamboo stalks.
compassion of Murukan, the domestic existence of everyday life will be endangered. Thus this mock domesticity becomes the occasion for seeking protection from god.

In the final verse to be analyzed here, domestic activity becomes a metaphor for the preservation of the universe. The verse begins by describing the construction of a dwelling—the building of the walls, the central supports, the roof, and a lighting system. This house, however, is extremely unusual. The walls support the Cakravāla Range, that set of mountains which surrounds the cosmos according to Hindu mythology. The central pillar is Mount Meru, the *axis mundi*, the column at the center which joins heaven and earth. The roof is the vast sky, illuminated by the sun and the moon. Thus when the goddess builds her house, it is a cosmogonic act—she establishes the world.

In the next part of the verse, the goddess is washing and stacking up the pieces of the universe. Its many worlds are the vessels which she rinses in the waters from the deluge. Dishwashing is an activity which must be done again and again because each day the cooking and eating vessels become dirty. In this verse the soiling of those dishes is identified with Śiva’s repeated destruction of the universe. Despite his mad acts of violence and destruction, the mother never becomes angry. She simply begins her task of washing all over again. In a manner that echoes in an intriguing way parts of the playhouse verse which we just analyzed, the poet tells us in the refrain that this little girl plays house with the universe.

*Sway back and forth (MMPT 15)*

You prop up the eight mountains to support the high encircling Cakravāla Range.
You plant Mount Meru in the middle as a pillar.
You cover the top of the sky, then you hang the sun and moon as lamps.

In the dashing waters you wash the old cooking vessels—all the worlds—and stack them up.
Then you cook sweet ambrosia from fresh food.

Mother, you’ve done this many times.

While you do this the great madman with the Tīmmattai flower wanders through the courtyard of space destroying your work again and again, and then comes before you, dancing.

You never get angry.
Every day, you just pick up the vessels.
If the verse previously analyzed was about non-“real” (play) housework, this verse is about housework that participates in the highest (cosmic) level of reality. In this verse images of domesticity have become the language of cosmic rejuvenation. “Women’s work” has been elevated to a cosmic metaphor as “doing the dishes” becomes the phrase for putting the world back together after Siva destroys it.

**Conclusion**

In this paper I have attempted to reflect both specifically on five *pillaiittamils* verses and more widely on the theme of domesticity in devotional poetry. In particular, I have examined three different ways in which domestic themes appear in *pillaiittamils*. In the first three verses a parent’s love for and care of a child is the explicit subject of the verse. In the fourth verse the performing of household duties — in particular, cooking — acts as the backdrop for the young girls’ entreaties to Murukan. In the final verse, household chores have become a metaphor for the divine activities of the goddess. In examining these five verses I have attempted to demonstrate both the diversity of *pillaiittamils* poetry and the way domestic themes can be a resource for Tamil poets who want to express religious devotion.

At a more general level, the analysis of these five verses suggests that in *pillaiittamils* poetry, domestic themes are neither neglected nor denigrated by male poets. Instead, they are embraced as a means to provide the poet with language for expressing love towards the divine. Until quite recently in the West, certain kinds of assumptions about the nature of “literary masterpieces” have resulted in the exclusion from the canon of many works of literature whose contents were considered “domestic” and, therefore, “minor” or “secondary.” Such an attitude towards domesticity does not seem to exist in relation to *pillaiittamils*. There images of domesticity are used in the service of praising and expressing devotion to one’s chosen deity, an act considered not minor at all in South Indian culture. Rather than being denigrated, the domestic has been elevated as a means of expressing the highest kind of sentiment — love for a god or goddess.

20. The most common (but incorrect) translation of the category of Tamil literature into which *pillaiittamils* fall is “minor literature.” The term *cirkillakkiyam* actually means “smaller literature” and is used primarily to distinguish it from “larger literature” such as epics.