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The Ancient Sea Trade of the Hebrews with Tamil Nadu, India with Reference to the Biblical Word 'Thukkiyyim' [Peacock] in the Classical Literatures of Tamil and Sanskrit

By Dr. D. Pugazhendhi

Abstract- A living thing called 'thukkiyyim' is mentioned in the Hebrew bible which was imported from the foreign land through sea. There are some difference of opinion in the translation of this word and some of them translated this word as parrot and others as peacock. The peacock is a bird named for its colourful long feathers that lives in India. Besides Sanskrit and Tamil are the two classical languages of India. The scholars have difference of opinion between these two languages in the origin of the word 'thukkiyyim'. Some of them finalized that it is derived from the Tamil word *Thogai* means hanging tail. In recent times, in the European languages this bird is called as peacock. The etymologist has mentioned that the word peacock is derived from the middle English language, from the pe- that is from Old English pēa. But in Tamil the feathers of the peacock were called as pēle. This has resemblance with the Hebrew word יִאְֶּ֥֫ים: pē-le means wonderful as the feathers of the peacock is also wonderful. It clearly shows the root of the English word peacock is nothing but the Hebrew word יִאְֶּ֥֫ים pē-le with reference to the Tamil language of Tamil Nadu from where the peacock was exported to Hebrew land. The reason for importing of peacock has no references in Hebrew text but has evidences in Tamil text.

Keywords: *thukkiyyim, peacock, sanskrit, tamil, pele.*

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The Ancient Sea Trade of the Hebrews with Tamil Nadu, India with Reference to the Biblical Word 'Thukkiyyim' [Peacock] in the Classical Literatures of Tamil and Sanskrit

Dr. D. Pugazhendhi

Abstract- A living thing called 'thukkiyyim' is mentioned in the Hebrew bible which was imported from the foreign land through sea. There are some difference of opinion in the translation of this word and some of them translated this word as parrot and others as peacock. The peacock is a bird named for its colourful long feathers that lives in India. Besides Sanskrit and Tamil are the two classical languages of India. The scholars have difference of opinion between these two languages in the origin of the word 'thukkiyyim'. Some of them finalized that it is derived from the Tamil word *Thogai* means hanging tail. In recent times, in the European languages this bird is called as peacock. The etymologist has mentioned that the word peacock is derived from the middle English language, from the pe- that is from Old English pēa. But in Tamil the feathers of the peacock were called as pēle. This has resemblance with the Hebrew word יאלֶפֶ: pē-le means wonderful as the feathers of the peacock is also wonderful. It clearly shows the root of the English word peacock is nothing but the Hebrew word יאלֶפֶ: pē-le with reference to the Tamil language of Tamil Nadu from where the peacock was exported to Hebrew land. The reason for importing of peacock has no references in Hebrew text but has evidences in Tamil text.

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I. Introduction

The Hebrew bible belongs to C 10 B.C. This literature refers to the foreign contact of the Hebrew people made through sea. It shows the development of the Hebrew people in the sea trade during that era. There were many things imported from the foreign countries to the Hebrew land. Peacock was one among them that which is mentioned in the bible.

'For the king had at sea a navy of Tharshish with the navy of Hiram once in three years came the navy of Tharshish bringing gold, silver, ivory, apes and peacocks.'

1 Kings 10:22

Among other things this peacock is brought by the navy of Hiram once in three years. Obscurity is also seen in this Hiram or Huram. So the research on peacock may remove the obscurity in the Hiram or Huram.

a) Peacock

The peacock is a bird. The Etymological Dictionary of the English Language mentions that this word comes from Middle English peacock, from pe- (from Old English pēa peafowl, from Latin pavon-, pavo peacock) + cok cock or from Greek[1].

Here the Hebrew language don't have any place in the etymology of the word peacock. But Hebrew is the first and far most to import peacock from the foreign land. So there should be a Hebrew root word behind this word peacock. To find this root word there is a need of research on Thukkiyyim.

b) Thukkiyyim

The Hebrew bible itself has mentioned that the word 'Thukkiyyim' was borrowed from the foreign country. There is some controversy which exist in the translation of this word. Some translated it as parrot and some others as peacock.

'- tucciyyim; Amongst the natural products of the land of Tarshish which Solomon's fleet brought home to Jerusalem, mention is made of "peacocks:"for there can, we think, be no doubt at all that the A.V. is correct in thus rendering tucciyyim, which word occurs only in 1 K. x. 22, and 2 Chr. ix. 21; most of the old versions, with several of the Jewish Rabbis being in favour of this translation. Some writers have, however, been dissatisfied with the rendering of "peacocks," and have proposed "parrots," as Huet (Diss. de Nav. Sal. 7, §6)'[2].

Here in from the reference argument the translation of 'Thukkiyyim' to mean 'peacock' has been taken for research for its feathers were portrayed in the Hebrew.

'Gavest thou the goodly wings unto the peacocks? or wings and feathers unto the ostrich?'

Job 39:13

Author: Associate Professor, Department of Tamizh, Government Arts College, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India.
e-mail: pugalsm10101968@gmail.com

[1] Walter W. Skeat, *An Etymological Dictionary of the English Language*: (New York: Dover Publications, 2005)

[2] William Smith, *Dictionary Of The Bible:* (London: Oxford University, 1863), 763 - 64.

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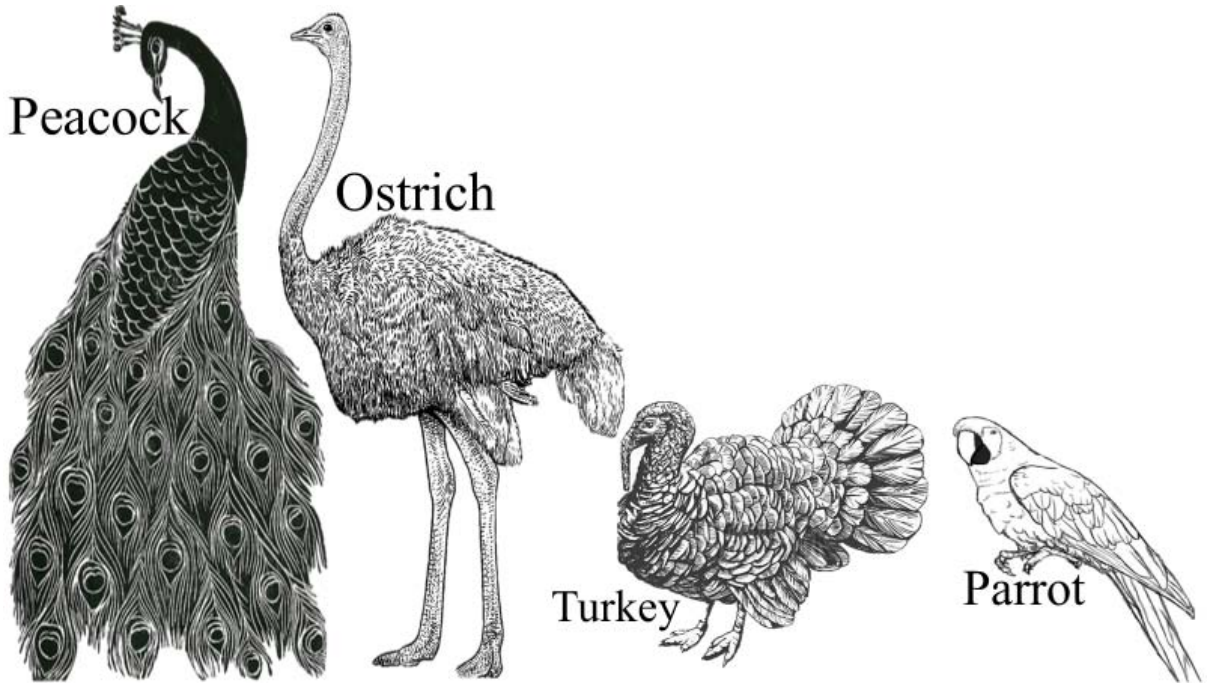

So the feathers of the peacock is more appropriate than comparing it with ostrich in this context. Thus Hebrew biblical sources has mentioned about peacock.

c) Hebrew יכִּ

Hebrew biblical sources clearly mentioned that it is not the native of Hebrew. It has been imported from the foreign land.

'For the king had ships that went to Tarshish with the servants of Huram; once every three years came the ships of Tarshish, bringing gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks.'

2 Chronicles 9:21

Thus peacock was imported to the Hebrew land. The reason for importing such goods is not visible in Hebrew literature. This also needs to be researched. These goods were not only imported to Hebrew land, but also to Greek and Latin lands. Like the Hebrew, the Greek has also mentioned that these goods were imported to their land.

Hence the Greek word ταῶς and Latin word pavus, pavo, perh and the Hebrew wordtukkîyîm may be borrowed from the same oriental source[3]. The Greek work also attested that thesegoods were borrowed from India.

καὶ ταὼς ἐξ Ἰνδίας Luc. Nav. 23[4]	the bird was a native of India

This implies that the peacock is exported from India to Hebrew land. Further, there is a need to find out from which of the two Indian classical languages viz Sanskrit and Tamil the word Thukkiyyim is borrowed. So the argument that arises here is about the language which has the root of the Hebrew word tukkîyîm.

The Norwegian-German Orientalist Christian Lassen started this trend in 1844 when he announced in his Indische Altertumskunde that the original Hebrew words for the ivory, apes, and peacocks mentioned in 1 Kings were borrowed from Sanskrit, inferring that the goods also came from India. Max Müller quoted Lassen and added the algum tree to his list in his Lectures on the Science of Language (1861), in which he assured his London audience that 'the country in which [Sanskrit] was spoken must have been the Ophir of the Bible'. Carl Ritter echoed this view in his Comparative Geography of Palestine, which was translated into English and 'adapted to the use of Biblical students' in 1866, placing Ophir on the coast of present-day Pakistan[5]

Thus these scholars have argued that the word tukkîyîm was borrowed from the Sanskrit language and followed that the Ophir is near Northern India and Pakistan. In this argument they connect the Hebrew word tukkîyîm with the Sanskrit word suka and sikhin meaning parrot.

'Hebrew tukkiim (1 Kings, x. 22) be correctly translated by "peacocks," it is derived from the Sanskrit sikhin. If it mean a parrot, however, as Quatremere interprets the

[3] Henry George Liddell. Robert Scott, Sir Henry Stuart Jones (Revised) A Greek-English Lexicon: (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940)
[4] Lucian, Navigium, Karl Jacobitz, (1896)

[5] Friedrich Max Müller, "Lectures on the Science of Language"*The Comparative Geography of Palestine and the Sinaitic Peninsula,* 3 vols (London: Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1861) 190.

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word, it corresponds equally as closely to the Sanskrit suka, with though change of the sibilant for the dental'[6].

Thus they have argued about the origin of the Hebrew word tukkîyîm in the Sanskrit language. that has seen with its occurrences in the literary lines of Hebrew language. So it is necessary to see the word that is used for peacock in its way of its occurrences in the Sanskrit literatures. Unlike Hebrew language, the Sanskrit and Tamil languages differ in its language style, custom and culture. So there may be some difficulty in understanding the literary lines of these languages by the Hebrew people. So for the sake of easy understanding the literary lines needs extra explanations. For that these literary lines are picturised.

d) Sanskrit

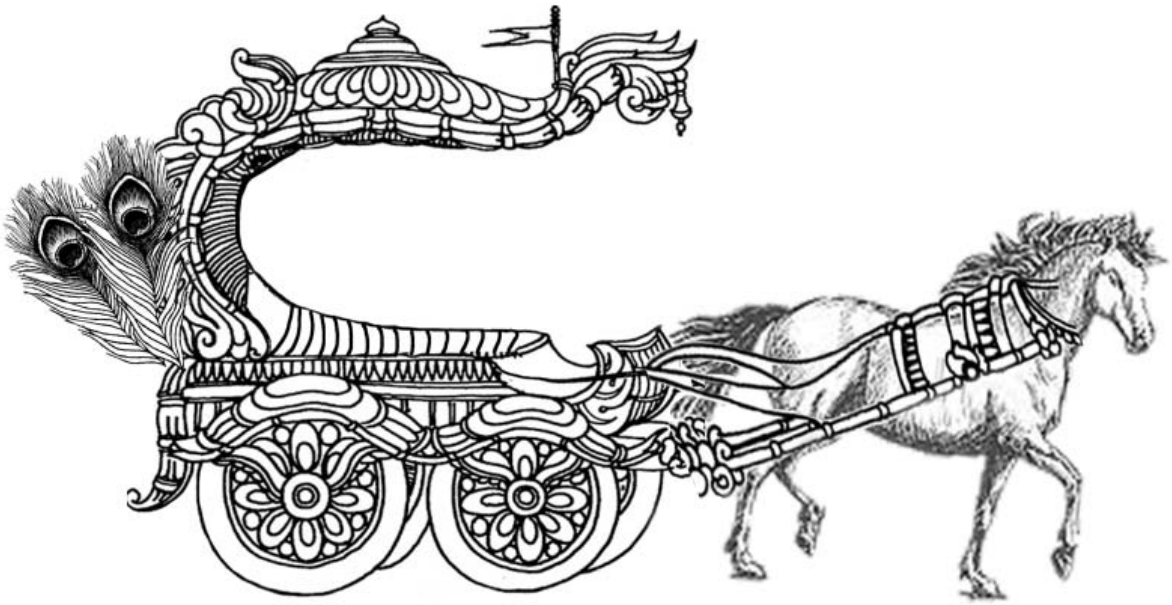
Sanskrit is one of the classical language of the world that which is included in Indo – Iranian and Indo – European language family. There are many literatures written in this language. Among these, the literature Rig Veda is the foremost literature. So this has been taken for the study. In Rig Veda the peacock is mentioned by the name mayūra.

e) Decoration

The feather of the peacock is famous for its colours. So it was used as a decorative item.

'Yoked to thy chariot wrought of gold, may thy two Bays with peacock [mayūra] tails'

Rig Veda. 8.1.25



Thus the feathers of the peacock is used for decorating the chariot with the gold. Here it is to be noted that the chariot is not the belonging of the ordinary man. There are also some other occurrences about peacock in Sanskrit, Rig Veda but their usage that are in a metaphorical sense.

f) Peacock with Horse

The horse often occur in the Rig Veda. In one place the horse that which belongs to the God Indira has been described.

"Come hither, Indra, with Bay Steeds, joyous, with tails like peacocks' [mayūra] plumes.

Rig Veda.3.45.1

Here it was describing that the tail of horse of the God Indra is like the feathers of the peacock. Because the hair is the important indication for the health and youthfulness. More thick, strong and long hair is the symbol of the health and the youthfulness.

[6] Curzon A, "On the Original Extension of the Sanskrit Language over Certain Portions of Asia and Europe," *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*16 (1856): 172-200

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And here it is noted that this horse is not a ordinary horse that which is used by common man but the horse is used by God. In the same way, peacock also is not seen to be used by common man. The other metaphoric usage is related with that of women.

'So have the peahens [mayūryaḥ] three-times-seven, so have the maiden Sisters Seven'

Rig Veda.1.191. 14

Here not the peacock but the peahens are compared with the maiden sisters. These are the occurrences available in the Sanskrit Rig Vedic literature. And these occurrences relates mainly with the richness. There is no any direct connection with that of the peacock which gives rise to other arguments.

Lassen further adduced the Sanskrit word sikhin, from which he assumed that the Dravidian word tokei was derived[7].

Here the Dravidian word refers to the Tamil language. Thus it attested that there is a word tokei in Tamil language that which is derived from Sanskrit language. But many scholars directly relate the word tukkîyîm with the Tamil language. Travancore missionary Samuel Mateer cited the Tamil origin of this word in the Bible"[8]. Gesenius supported the translation of thukkiyyIm as 'peacock' by the comparison with tokei, a Dravidian word for 'peacock'[9].' On the basis of these thought, William Smith who has written the Dictionary of the Bible came to a conclusion.

'There can be no doubt that the Hebrew word is of foreign origin. Gesenius [Thes. P. 1502] cites many authorities to prove that the tucci is to be traced to the Tamul or Malabaric togei, 'peacock' which opinion has been recently confirmed by Sir E. Tennent [Ceylon, ii, p. 102, and i.p.xx, 3rded.], who says 'it is very remarkable that the terms by which these articles [ivory, apes, and peacocks] are designated in the Hebrew scriptures are identical with the Tamil names by which some of them are called in Ceylon to the present day – tukeyim may be recognized in tokei, the modern name for these birds." Thus Keil's objection 'that this supposed togei is not yet itself sufficiently ascertained' [comment]. Is satisfactorily met. Peacock are called 'Persian birds' by Aristophanes, Ares, 484: see also Acharn. 63: Diod. Sic. Peacocks were doubtless introduced into Persia from India or Ceylon: perhaps their first introduction dates from the time of Solomon: and they gradually extended into Greece, Rome and Europe generally. The ascription of the quality of vanity to the peacock is as old as the time of Aristotle, who says [Hist.An.i.1,15], 'some animals are jealous and vain like the peacock' The A.V. inn job xxxix . 13, speaks of 'the goodly wings of the peacocks;' but this is a different Hebrew word and has undoubted reference to the 'outrich.''[10]

[7] Ritter, Max Muller,."Lectures on the Science of Language," *The Comparative Geography of Palestine and the Sinaitic Peninsula* 3 (London: Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1861) 190.

[8] Samuel Mateer, The Land of Charity: A Descriptive Account of Travancore and its People, with especial reference to Missionary Labour (London: J. Snow and Co., 1871) 83

[9] Wlrterbuch (1834)

[10] William Smith, Dictionary Of The Bible: (London: Oxford University, 1863), 763 - 64.

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All these arguments were taken only on the basis of the word for peacock. So the difference of opinions about the origin of the Hebrew word tukkîyîm continues between Sanskrit and Tamil and it make obstacle to find the place Ophir. It may be solved, if the word peacock could be seen with its occurrences in the classical Tamil literatures.

g) Tamil

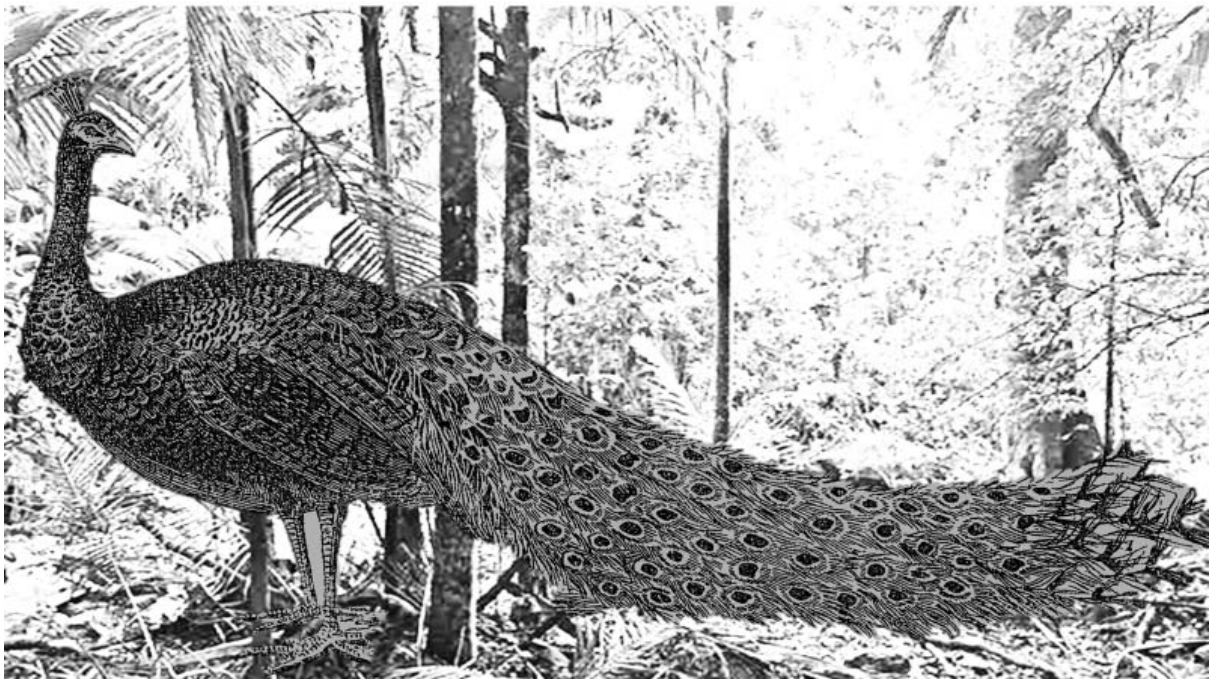
Tamil is one of the classical language having many number of literatures. These literatures mainly talks about the humans rather than Gods as that of Sanskrit literatures. The collection of ancient classical Tamil literatures are called as Sangam literatures. Some of the songs present in this collections, goes beyond twelth century BC,[11]. In these there are many references about the foreign contact of Tamils, both through the land and sea. Many world level scholars accepted the relationship between the Hebrew word thukkiyyim and the Tamil word thōgai. Other words such as the Mayil, Manjai and Pēle are also related with peacock in Tamil language. There are many occurrences of these words in the classical literature of Tamil language.

h) Thōgai

Thogai is one of the word in Tamil language used to denote the peacock. Thoungal means hanging. The feathers of the peacock is always hanging due to its enormous weight and the length. So from the word thoungal the word thōgai has been derived. The life of the peacock which has thōgai is mentioned with situations.

'a peacock [thōgai] makes itself beautiful playing on
the flowering branches with fragrant pollen,
and basks in the rays of the early morning
warm sun with its flock'.

Natrinai 396,



This reference directly attribute to the life of the peacock with that of characteristic feature that it is always seen early in the morning. In this way, there are so many references about the peacock in the classical Tamil literatures and the word 'thogai' that which is related with peacock also occurs in the metaphorical sense.

'Oh man from the country,
where a peacock[Thōgai] perched
on a vēngai tree
bearing flame-like flowers,
looks like a young woman
decked with jewels!'

Ainkurunūru 294, Kapilar

Here the thogai is like a young women with jewels.

'peacocks [Thōgai] sit high on
the large branches
of black-trunked vēngai trees
whose buds have blossomed,
appearing like the women who
pluck its flowers.'

Kurunthokai 26, Kollan Alisiyār

[11] Pugazhendhi D, "The Greek Root Word 'Kos' and the Trade of Ancient Greek with Tamil Nadu, India," World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences 14, no3, (2020) 188

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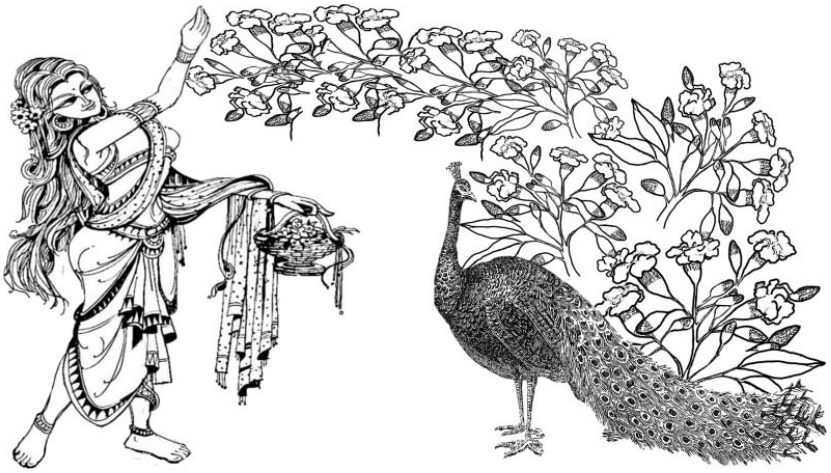

Here the thogai itself is like women plucking flowers.
'The lord of the lofty mountain,
where peacocks[Thōgai] spread their pretty
plumes that appear like the hair
of mountain women, asked for your
hand.'

Ainkurunūru 300, Kapilar



Here the thogai is compared with the women's long hair. It also mentions that the mountain is the living place of the peacock. All these occurrences are directly related only with the beauty of the peacock. This type of occurrences are not seen in Sanskrit literature. This shows that Tamil language hasn't borrowed words related to peacock from Sanskrit. More than that the Tamil word 'Thōgai' has more resemblance with the Hebrew word thukkiyyim than the Sanskrit words sikhin used to mean parrot and mayūra to mean peacock. Besides, the Tamil word 'mayil' meaning peacock, that has resemblance with the Sanskrit word mayūra also needs to be research.

i) Mayil

In Tamil the hair is called mayir. The hair of the peacock is its feathers. The beauty of the peacock lies only in its hair. So the peacock is called with this name as mayir which became mayil. There are so many occurrences of peacock with this name in Tamil literatures.

'The oiled, black hair of the viralis
is beautiful like the dark clouds that
shower delicate rain. Dancing peacocks [mayil]
with sapphire-hued plume eyes are ashamed
to be in their presence and hide themselves
among a flock of peahens.'

Sirupānātruppadai 13-22

This reference describes the peacock that is seen in the rainy season dances to welcome the rain.

'Peacocks [mayil] dance and male monkeys leap in
the mountains, female monkeys play on many
tree branches, loud winds rise and attack the
groves filled with trees'

333, Mathuraikkānji

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Here it is attested that all living things in the forest including the peacock are happy when the weather is pleasant.

'sweet drums roar, bulls bellow, fowls with
spots crow, pretty peacocks [mayil] screech, beautiful geese
cry along with large herons,
large male elephants that unite with their females
trumpet'

675, Mathuraikkānji

Thus there are so many attestation about the life of the mayil seen in day today life with other living things in the forest as described in the classical literature, Tamil. In one place the mayil which means peacock is also compared with the pregnant woman.

'Women in their first pregnancies, of delicate nature and peacock [mayil] walk, pray and give offerings'

608, Mathuraikkānji

Thus peacocks were well defined in the Tamil literature than in the Sanskrit literature. This shows the possibility of the Sanskrit word mayūra may be borrowed from the Tamil word mayil which is derived from the word mayir means hair which is related with the beauty of the peacock. There is one more important character of the peacock which is also represented in its name.

j) Manjai

Manjai is the word related with softness. Peacock is also called as manjai for its softness.

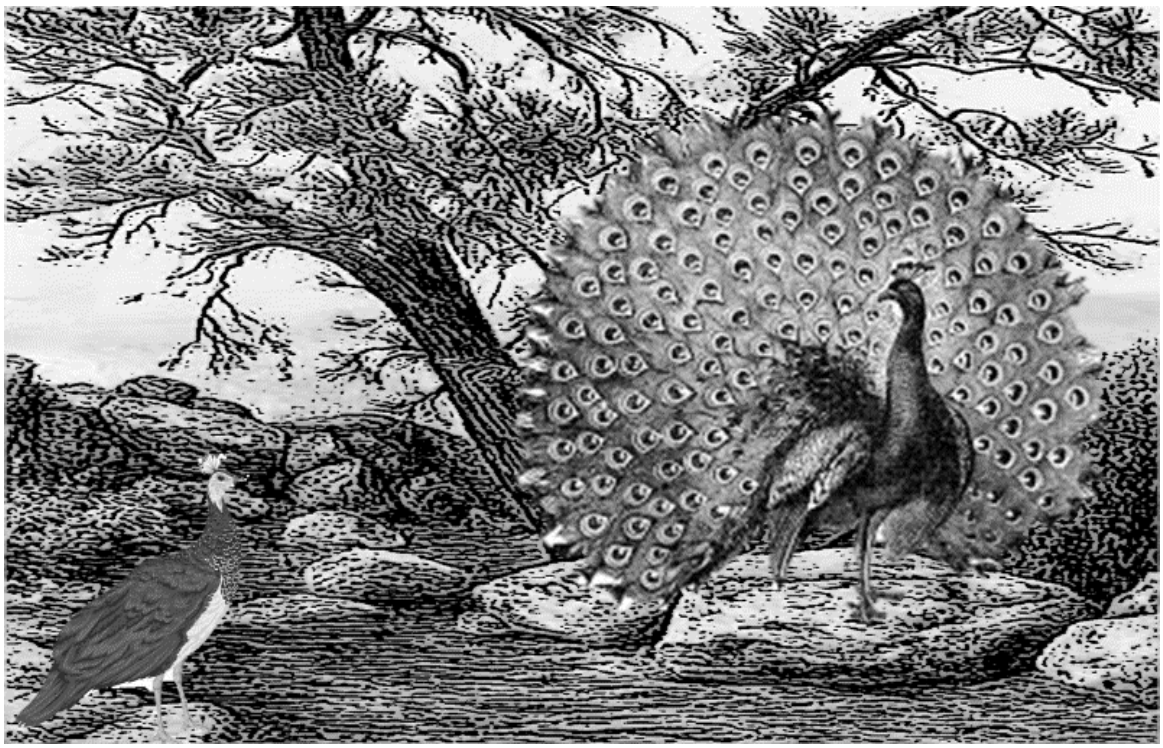
'the lord of the mountain where, bright
waterfalls cascade down, peacocks [Manjai]
dance on slopes which are danger, female monkeys
sweep the ground in the front yards of houses'

495, Perumpānātruppadai

Here the peacock is called as Manjai and it dances on mountain to call its mate.

'a male monitor lizard with curved legs that crawls on
pebbles on the wax-like red land, pretty peacocks [Manjai] with
delicate eyes that dance in the mountains, forest rooster
that calls its mate with love'

509, Malaipadukadām



Thus the direct life of the peacock are described elaborately in classical Tamil literatures using many Tamil words that are related with the characteristics of peacock. There is one more word for peacock which has restricted usage.

k) Pele

In classical Tamil literature the feathers of the peacock is called as pele. Moreover there is no separate name for feathers for any other birds in Tamil except for peacock. This pele feathers was used in the worship.

'Here,
these war weapons are adorned with peacock
feathers and decorated with garlands,
their strong, thick shafts anointed with
ghee and they are in perfect condition,
in this palace that is guarded'.

Puranānūru 95,

Poet Avvaiyār sang to Thondaimān for Athiyamān Nedumān Anji,

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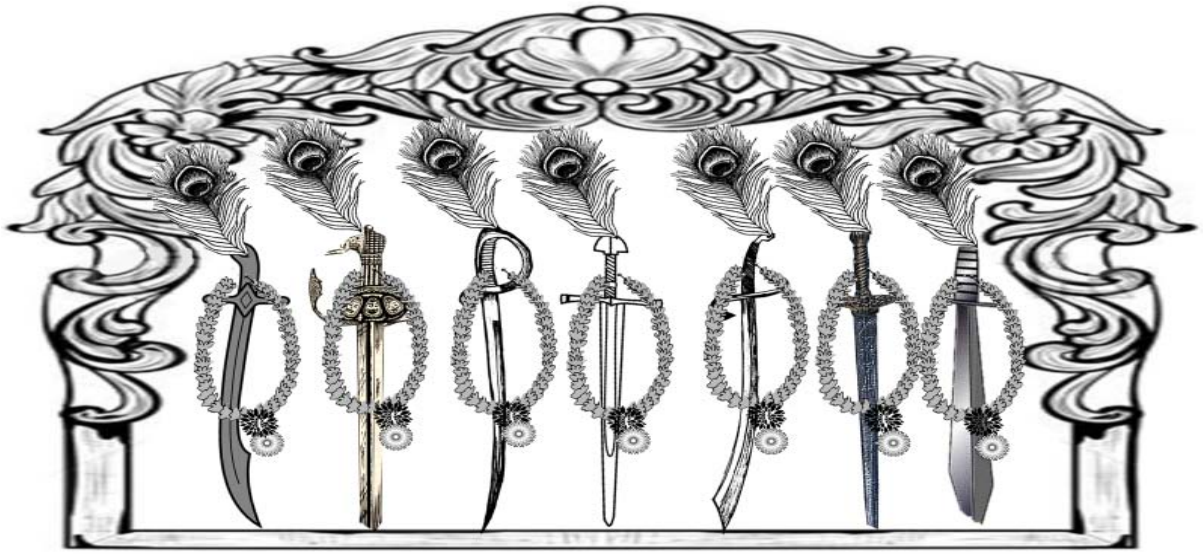
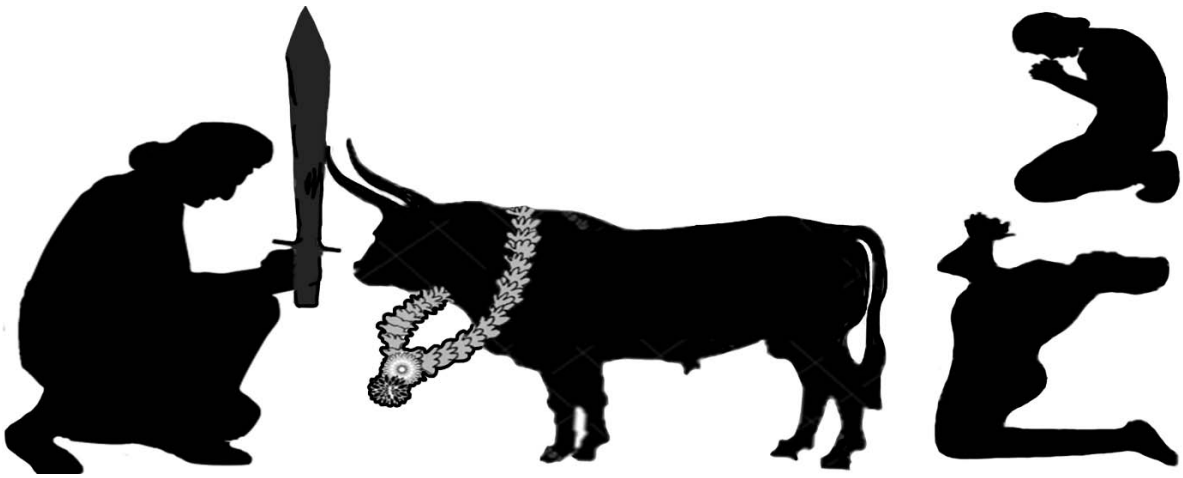


Thus the weapons were decorated with peacock feathers and garlands and used for worship. In the same way, use of the garlands in worship is also seen in Hebrew literature.

'Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people.'

Acts 14:13



In Tamil culture also this type of animal sacrifice have taken place with the feathers of the peacock.

'The shallow graves are worshipped, memorial stones are decorated with peacock feathers, rice wine is poured, sheep are given as offering and thudi drums are beat'.

Akanānūru 35, Ammoovanār

Thus, when the soldiers died in the war their memorials were worshiped with the peacock feathers. There are many occurrences about this custom.

'battlefields, there are flourishing memorial stones with names and deeds etched, decorated with peacock feathers'

Akanānūru 67, Nōy Pādiyār,

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looking like battlefields, there are bright memorial stones on all the paths, decorated with peacock feathers, along with spears and shields of men whose names and pride are written

Akanānūru 131, Mathurai Maruthan Ilanākanār

'he went on the path,
where the Vadukars who have great
enmity tie the shed feathers of delicate
peacocks with swaying walks, to their
strong bows using long straps on the
edges, shoot rapidly fitting the beauty
of the tied fibers, creating sounds'

Akanānūru 281, Māmoolanār

Thus the feathers of the peacock had a place in the worship of the Tamil people. More than this, the feathers were also used for identity.

In ancient times, when the Tamil kings took part in the war they always wore some flowers or things to identify their soldiers in other words to differentiate from the opposite party[12]. In this way the feathers of the peacock were also worn by certain Tamil kings.

'belonging to King Āy who wears sparkling gems
and heavy jewels, whose warriors with strong,
loud bows decorated with delicate peacock feathers
and darting arrows destroy a few forts and bring
their capture of precious jewels.'

Akanānūru 69, Umattūr Kilār Makanār Parankotranār

Thus peacocks normally live in hilly areas and the feathers are the symbol of certain Tamil kings. The Tamil literature identify these kings as those who belonged to mountain region and called as Āy and Velir.

In some places this word pele has the meaning pretty.

'Pretty [pele] peacocks
…….with beautiful plumes and sapphire
…….colored necks, that join together,
…….sing sweetly and dance with
…….delicate rhythm,
and play in the deep, large springs'

Akanānūru 358, Mathurai Maruthan Ilanākanār

Thus the occurrences of peacock both in the classical literatures of Sanskrit and Tamil are to be compared.

[12] Cherar - Pondhai flower, Chozhar - Aarthi flower , Pandiar - Vembu

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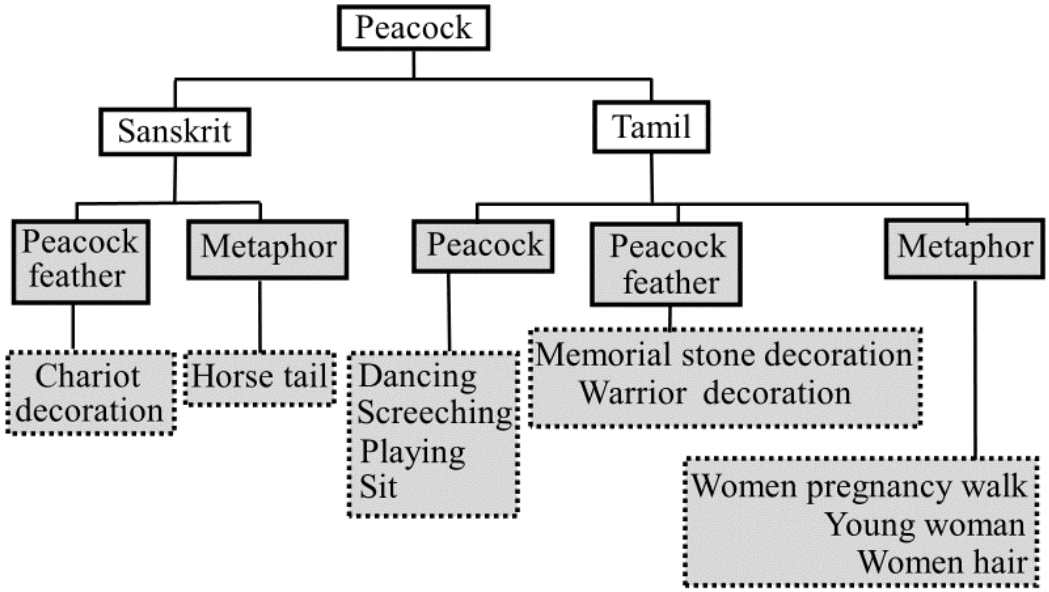

It clearly shows the occurrences of peacock is more present in Tamil literature with different connotations when compared to the Sanskrit literature. So it is clear that the word Thōgai is a Tamil word that which is not borrowed from any other language and this word has been changed as tukkîyîm in Hebrew. In the same manner, there is a possibility of some words of Hebrew to occur in the Tamil language. In this connotation the word pele need to be researched.

יאֹלֶפְּ pē-li wonderful

There is a word Pele in Hebrew language. It has many occurrences in the Old testament.

'But the angel of the LORD said to him, "Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful? [pē-li] "

Judges 13:18

אֹלֶפְּ pē-le wonders

Who is like unto thee O LORD among the gods who is like thee glorious in holiness fearful in praises doing wonders [pē-li]

Exodus 15:11

אֶלֶפְּ pē-le wonders

Thou art the God that does wonders [pē-li] thou hast declared thy strength among the people

Psalms 77:14

אֶלֶפְּ pē-le Marvelous things

Marvellous [pē-li] things did he in the sight of their fathers in the land of Egypt in the field of Zoan

Psalms 78:12

Thus the word 'pē-le' has many occurrences in Hebrew with the meaning of wonder and marvellous. Feathers of the peacock was a wonder and marvellous things for the ancient Hebrew people when it was imported from Tamil Nadu. So they call the feathers as pele meaning wonder and by seeing this the Tamil people name the peacock feathers as pele. This Hebrew word pē-le only became the prefix of the English word pē-le + cock = 'peacock'. And this pele became pavo in Latin.

l) Religious customs to religious god

Peacockis used to represent the symbol of beauty and it also had important place in the worship of war weapons and war memorials in some places. Even today it is present along with the mountain God who is considered as the ancestors of the mountain kings.



This God is called as Velan or Murukan. The mountain people called as kuravar worship this God with the ancestral king called Vēl Nannan.

m) 'Velan's Prayers and Kuravai Dances

On one side, a vēlan who instills fear saying that problems are caused by Murukan's wrath, surrounds people as sweet instruments are played in a rhythmic manner. Adorning himself with the rainy season's kurinji flowers, he prays to Murukan who wears

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kadampam flowers. In all the common grounds, women hold hands and perform kuravai dances. After the first phase with discourses, music, dances and various uproarious and confusing sounds, which is like the uproar in the communities celebrating the birthday of Vēl king Nannan, ended'

610 – 20, Madurai kanji

Thus peacock is portrayed not only for its beauty but also it is attached with a religious value. For these reasons the people of Hebrew might have imported this.

II. Conclusion

The thukkiyyim in Hebrew is derived not from the Sanskrit but from the Tamil word thogai along with the import of peacock. At the same time the Hebrew word pele which is used to denote marvellous became the name of the peacock feathers. This pele became peacock in other European languages. Further, these peacocks lives in mountains and so the mountain Gods are always seen with peacock. The mountain people who lived during those times are called as Kuravar in Tamil. So the Huram mentioned in the Hebrew bible has resemblance with Kuravar people who brought peacock from Tamil land to Hebrew land. The peacock might be imported for both its beauty and religious value. More than that it is seen as a symbol of advanced long distance sea trade of the ancient Hebrew people.

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