

THE INNER MEANING OF HUMAN HISTORY

Collected works of
Dr. Justice S. Maharajan

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M.Chidambaram

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FOREWORD

HOMAGE TO AN ILLUSTRIOUS SAHRIDAYA

Celebrating the birth centenary of Justice S. Maharajan is doubly blessed. He was not only eminent in his chosen field of service but was also a distinguished scholar, one who could write and speak with equal ease. He traversed the two worlds of Law and Literature independently. His legal career was precise and to the point for he did not allow his scholarship to weigh upon his arguments or judgements. As he points out in his address at the Conference of District Judges and District Magistrates in 1973, exhibition of one's scholarship when delivering judgements has no place in the Court. He takes up a Sessions Judge who had to deal with a case in which a son was accused of murdering his mother. Steeped in the best elements of Indian culture, Justice Maharajan does not reveal the name of the judge but points out how the judgement was stuffed with quotes from classics to point out how sons like Parasurama have killed their mothers. When the judge has to tackle a case of infanticide, he reels in matter like the Nallathangal story. None of them touch upon any vital point in the cases.

“These quotations, apart from failing to clarify any obscure truth of psychology or reinforcing any relevant argument, give the impression of an utter lack of judicial sobriety and dignity. Not that I am against literary pursuits by Judges. I would certainly like them to have the experience of enlargement of consciousness by sousing them in literature. But if that kind of extra-judicial learning is going to affect, impair or subvert the judicial faculty, it would be better for a judge to abandon such pursuits. Literature ought to give you a correct imaginative and human problems that you have to tackle. It ought not to intrude into the judgements as a piece of exhibitionism.”

There lies the secret of Justice Maharajan’s success on two fronts. In both the arenas, he was never an exhibitionist. Very hard work was at the back of the legal celebrity. When he was appointed the Chef du Service Judiciaire of Pondicherry, he says, he did not know “the A,B, and C of the French language or of French jurisprudence.” He was not exactly welcome to the French lawyers or judges either. What, just a District Judge and he is to lord over us all now? But before five months were out Justice Maharajan had learnt a comfortable amount of the French language, French legal jargon and the fundamentals of the French substantive and procedural law. I leave the rest of this highly serious but occasionally rib-tickling article, ‘Administration of Franco-Indian Laws – Some Glimpses’ in this volume to the reader. For, with Justice Maharajan, every move in his articles and speeches has to be followed carefully so as not to miss the inlaid artistry of a very alert intellect. Since, the legal career was also a spiritual discipline for him, his writings on the subject are important for the general reader too. As he mentions in a confessional tone:

“I have had occasions to err; but I have the satisfaction that those errors were not the result of any conscious prejudice on my part. As I regarded my judicial work as part of my spiritual discipline, I always endeavoured to put myself under the microscope to see that my sub-conscious prejudices, which I have inherited from the amoeba downwards, did not affect my decisions. But I suspect that the unconscious prejudices of my Ego might possibly have left their stamp upon my judgments.”

A stern Judge in search of truth in the Court; but a sahridaya par excellence when he was with books and authors. Justice Maharajan writing about others of his feather like Rajaji, T.K.Chidambaranada Mudaliyar, T.M. Bhaskara Thondaiman and A. Srinivasa Raghavan spreads streams of joy which are not blocked by narrow walls of egotism. I had the privilege of sitting nearby while he and Prof. Srinivasa Raghavan held court in the evenings of the International Conference-Seminar of Tamil Studies at Kuala Lumpur in 1966. If the seminarial sittings were mostly on subjects like linguistics and philology that did not hold much interest for me, it was a great joy to just listen to the discussions on literary works by some of the delegates from Tamil Nadu which included K.V. Jagannathan. Being much younger and unfamiliar with the delegates (I came from Andhra Pradesh), I was wise enough to keep my lips shut but ears alert. I marveled at the generosity of understanding for one another among these scholars of repute. This was an education, by itself. The elders were kind to me too, when they learnt about my father whom they knew. They spoke well of my translations from Subramania Bharati which was most welcome for an aspiring author.

Justice Maharajan was particularly generous and I felt at home in his presence as he knew my father well. His paper presented in the Conference-Seminar was of deep interest to me as a translator, as if he were holding a class for my benefit. He was listing some of the problems that one faced when translating Shakespeare into Tamil. I am glad this important essay is in this collection. Why translate Shakespeare? There comes a breathless sentence in answer:

“Fortunately for the translators, Shakespeare offers through his plays not only untranslatable imponderables, but also other things, which are worthwhile translating and which are susceptible to translation, such as his presentation of the great panorama of Life, the motive springs of human action, the grand play of impulses and emotions, the march of destiny, his reflections on the incongruities between life and death, between human weal and human woe, between Finitude and Infinity. As an incomparable storyteller, as a Psychiatrist, as a Philosopher, as an Artist and as a Mystic, he conveys many things, which can be caught by the translator.”

He translated Macbeth, Hamlet and King Lear. It is interesting to speculate why he chose only these tragedies for translation and not any of Shakespeare's comedies. As one who had a translucent sense of humour, he would indeed have done a great job. Perhaps it is Shakespearian tragic moments that criss-crossed his mind when he focused himself on cases in the court and so he may have unconsciously veered towards presenting these three great works of crime, punishment and atonement in the Tamil language.

The Tamil language and culture he loved on this side idolatry. He was passionate about taking the Tamil poets to a wider audience through English translations. The opening essay, 'The Culture of Tamils' reflects the state of his mind in pellucid terms. At a time when Tamil chauvinism was trying to imprison the Tamilian in narrow, domestic walls, Justice Maharajan proudly presented the cosmopolitan outlook of the ancient Tamils. Referring in detail to the trade and cultural contacts of Tamil Nadu with different countries like China and Greece, he said: "It is not therefore surprising that the Tamils, who had contacts with different nations and races, were singularly free from insularity, and a Sangam poet of the pre-Christian era proclaimed, with incredible catholicity, 'Every country is my native land and every one my kinsman.'"

He finds science too in Tamil culture (Siddha medicine), ship-building, engineering (the Grand Anicut, for instance), psychological studies (the Aham poetics), pearl-diving, reverence for life (Pari and the jasmine creeper) and a uniformly aesthetic approach in everyday activities. And of course, the unequalled temple culture unique to the Tamil nation.

While we have this splendid variety in the essays included in this volume, we also get to have the complete texts of the two monographs on Tiruvalluvar and Kamban that Justice Maharajan wrote for Sahitya Akademi's Makers of Indian Literature series. Tiruvalluvar opens with a Maharajanesque statement: "Though Tiruvalluvar lived about 2000 years ago, it does not seem he is dead." So the living bard of ethical perfection comes through as the Eternal Teacher, and his innumerable facets glow and spread

creative light. Justice Maharajan repeatedly refers to the contemporaneous significance of the Kurals and how his quoting Tiruvalluvar got him kudos in the World Vegetarian Congress meeting. Why give long lectures on sculpting the virtuous man? One Kural is enough!

“What is virtue except non-killing?
for
killing brings in its train
All the other vices.”

From the ethical maxims of Valluvar to the epic grandeur of Kamban. Justice Maharajan is equally at home in both the areas, and manages to imprison the splendour of Kamban in the course of a brief monograph. **Kamban** is the work of a rasika. Here there is no place for the carping critic or soul-destroying sceptic. Translations from Kamban’s work dot the prose narration. While V.V.S.Ayyar had preferred Miltonic sublimity for his translation style, Justice Maharajan wisely chose to give simple retellings that created in the translator a desire to go back to the original:

“Eye caught Eye, in pairs,
and each the other devoured.
their feelings brought to a standstill,
the Prince stood looking at the Princess
and the Princess stood looking at the Prince.”

He was never one for literal translation that forced the translator to perform gymnastics with word combinations. And yet nothing vital to the poetic statement was lost in his version. At the same time he does not allow us to forget the unique pressure Kamban brings to his Tamil words and phrases. Those

who read a translation of Kamban must not ignore the original springs that glow iridescent in the epic, says our translator with utter humility:

“The success achieved by Kamban is due not so much to what he says as to how he says it. Each word of his is a focus of persuasive energy, in which his living faith is transformed into the vibrations of the human voice. And those, who wish to expose themselves to these vibrations, must listen to the songs of Kamban in the original and not to the feeble and uncreative vibrations of the translator.”

Finally, there is the title essay, ‘The Inner meaning of Human History’. Though we do speak of the endless cycle of birth and death with a touch of tiredness, quoting *punarapi jananam, punarapi maranam*, Justice Maharajan did not consider that death is the end for the human species. A student of the curves of history and a swimmer in the high seas of great literature, he was also deeply concerned with the evolutionary future of man. Voracious reader that he was, Justice Maharajan drew close to modern philosophers of science like Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and Sri Aurobindo. As a result, his Principal T. Dhanakoty Sixty First Birthday Endowment Lecture turned out to be an admirable study of comparative evolutionary philosophical thoughts. He finds traces of the thought processes in modern philosophy visible in earlier Tamil poets like Pattinathar, Manickavasagar and Tirumoolar. The Noosphere of de Chardin is the Mass of Consciousness that appears with the interaction of human minds. With such brilliant minds that have been at work through the centuries all over the world, this Noosphere must be increasing in bulk and reaching out for the next stage in evolution referred

to as Omega Point by de Chardin. Justice Maharajan points out how de Chardin could not publicise his work because of objection from Papal Authority.

So Justice Maharajan turns to Sri Aurobindo and finds in his theory of Supramental Evolution a viable philosophy for the future. The next step in evolution would take man beyond the dry light of reason to a supernatural light where the contraries are dissolved and the sheer Ananda pervades Creation. Is this possible or just a helpless dream? Justice Maharajan then goes to other scholars and poets and concludes aptly:

“When we ask Tirumoolar why God should have created the Universe and sent a multitudinous number of souls into it and subjected them to weal and woe, he sings, ‘It is all his Ananda’.

ஆனந்தம் ஆடரங்கம் ஆனந்தம் பாடல்கள்
ஆனந்தம் பல்லியம் ஆனந்தம் வாச்சியம்
ஆனந்தமாக அகில சராசரம்
ஆனந்தம் ஆனந்தக் கூத்துகந்தானுக்கே!”

Turn any page in this centenary volume, and a living voice speaks to you. Words that seek to sculpt the perfect man, whether he is bending his bow to destroy an evil King or a litigant seeking justice under the nation’s rule of law. Is perfection possible? But why should we pose such a question? Let us first put the first step forward in the Path of Right, let us cultivate our private garden. Then the perfection of the race would follow. Is this but an utopian dream in a world riddled with corruption, is the next question of the Doubting Thomas. Yes, corruption can be eliminated, here is the first step, says Justice Maharajan. I leave

the reader to this stimulating volume and find the exact page where this first step against corruption has been described and put to action successfully.

Meanwhile, my grateful thanks to Sri Chidambaram for preparing this volume and giving me an opportunity to open the casements of memory and remember the times when this scholar-friend with other sahridayas remained conversing with my father for hours on life and literature. I could sing like Wordsworth with just a little variation: Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up fostered alike by scholarship and nobility ...

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Dr. Prema Nandakumar

THE INNER MEANING OF HUMAN HISTORY AS DISCLOSING THE ONE INCREASING PURPOSE THAT RUNS THROUGH THE AGES

**(Principal T. Dhanakoty Sixty First birthday Endowment Lecture)*

R. G. Collingwood, an outstanding English theorist on history, says that history is self-revelatory and that history exists in order to tell man what man is by telling him what man has done. In other words, history tells us about man's achievements in the past, so that we may judge his nature and then proceed to predict his future potentialities. Before understanding man's achievements, we must understand what man is. It is impossible to gather the meaning of history without understanding the meaning of man. It is at this juncture we have to step out of history into metaphysics. Does man's life begin with his birth and end with his death? A Belgian philosopher said that the true history of a man begins with his

death and ends with his birth. In other words, the temporal history of man would have no meaning except against the background of Infinity. Does man represent the passage of Eternity through the corridors of time, the imprisonment of Infinity in the Finite? Does he have a soul which is deathless and which survives the death of the body? Is the Earth only a theatre in which his embodied Soul is given an opportunity to accumulate Karma or redeem himself of the effect of Karma accumulated during his previous births? If the Earth is only a theatre, who is running that theatre and directing the play? Does the Director give man only one chance to redeem himself and then despatch him to hell or heaven after a scrutiny of the balance-sheet of his good and bad actions performed in the course of a brief life-time? These questions arise and the answers to these questions depend upon the value-system in which we believe. In this lecture, I propose to present to you, first, the view-point of a distinguished scientist, and second, that of a distinguished mystic, both of the Twentieth Century.

The scientist I have chosen is Pere Teilhard De Chardin, a celebrated French Paleontologist. Sir Julian Huxley, the distinguished British Biologist, thinks that Teilhard's influence on the world's thinking is bound to be important, for Teilhard enables us to understand the special significance of Man in the tree of evolution—Man as the axis and leading shoot of evolution. Man is not, as Bertrand Russel would have it, a brief episode in the history of a small planet in a little corner of the Universe. On the contrary, Man contains within himself all the achievements of life in the past, and all the possibilities of the earth's immense future.

Some thousands of millions of years ago, an unbelievable accident occurred. May be, it was the result of a brush with another star or due to an internal upheaval in the sun. A fragment of matter composed of particularly stable atoms was detached from the surface of the sun. This fragment remained at the right distance from the mother-star to receive a moderate radiation. Then, the fragment began to condense, to roll itself up, to take shape. It contained within its globe and orbit the future of man. What aroused the physicists' interest in this globe is the presence of composite chemical bodies not to be observed anywhere else. At the extreme temperatures occurring in the stars, matter can only survive in its most dissociated states. Only simple bodies exist on these incandescent stars. On the earth, this simplicity of the elements still obtains at the periphery in the more or less ionised gases of the atmosphere and the stratosphere and probably far below in the layers of the barysphere, but between these two extremes comes a long series of complex substances harboured and produced only by stars that have "gone out". Arranged in successive zones, they demonstrate from the start the power of synthesis contained in the Earth. It is not merely a power of synthesis that is at work but also a power of complexification. Pere Teilhard's idea is that one of the mechanisms by which life evolves is that of complexification. This is an original concept and it is used to indicate the method by which sub-atomic units become transformed into atoms, atoms into inorganic molecules, and later into organic molecules, then into the first sub-cellular living units and then into cells, into multi-cellular individuals, into cephalized metazoa with brains and finally into man. He speaks of complexification as an all-pervading tendency, involving the whole of the universe in all its parts. He says that in this

process the world-stuff is “rolled up” or “folded in’, upon itself. This folding-in upon itself produces further complexification and increases the psycho-social temperature of the Earth.

From the organic point of view, the whole metamorphosis leading to man depends on the question of a better brain. How was man’s cereberal functioning perfected? Four-footedness retards the growth of the brain. When a four-footed animal becomes a biped (a two-footed one), its hands become free to release the jaws from their prehensile function, and the thick band of maxillary muscles, which had imprisoned the cranium, become relaxed. Thanks to two-footedness, the brain became able to grow, and the eyes, brought closer together on the diminished face, were able to converge and fix on what the hands hold— this is the very gesture which is the external counterpart of reflection. Evolution took a giant step forward when man began to reflect. From an experimental point of view, reflection is the power acquired by consciousness to turn in upon itself, to take possession of itself as of an object endowed with its own particular value: no longer merely to know, but to know oneself; no longer merely to know, but to know that one knows. (*“Non plus seulement connaitre, mais se connaitre; non plus seulement savoir, mais savoir que l’on sait”*).

As Tirumoolar says,

சாத்திரம் ஓதும் சதிர்களை விட்டு நீர்
மாத்திரைப் போது மறித்துள்ளே நோக்குமின்.

Leave aside the vain reading of scriptures;
Send your mind back upon itself.

The man, who is the object of his own reflection in consequence of that very doubling back upon himself, becomes in a flash able to raise himself into a new sphere. In reality, with the birth of thought, another world is born. Abstraction, logic, reasoned choice and inventions, mathematics, art, calculation of space and time, anxieties and dreams of love—all these activities of inner life are nothing else than the effervescence of the newly-formed centre as it explodes on to itself.

It is this fact of reflection which distinguishes man from animal. Admittedly, the animal knows, but it cannot know that it knows: that is quite certain. If it could, it would long ago have multiplied its inventions and developed a system of internal constructions that could not have escaped our observation. Consequently, the animal is denied access to a whole domain of reality in which man can move freely.

We now see the direction of evolution: — from the grain of inanimate *matter* to the grain of *life*, and from the grain of life to the grain of *thought*. This marks a new era in evolution. A glow ripples outward from the first spark of conscious reflection. The point of ignition grows larger. The fire spreads in ever widening circles till finally the whole planet is covered with incandescence: Only one name can be found worthy to describe this grand phenomenon of reflection and Teilhard coins a word and calls it *noosphere*. This sudden deluge of cerebralization, this biological invasion of a new animal type subjects all forms of life that are not human. Now begins a tide of fields and factories, matter and ideas; these things proclaim that there has been a change on the earth — a change of planetary magnitude. To a Martian, capable of perceiving sidereal radiations psychically, the most marked

characteristic of our planet would be, not the blue of the seas or the green of the forests, but the phosphorescence of thought.

In Pere Teilhard's view, we must infer the presence of potential mind in all material systems, by backward extrapolation from the human phase to the biological phase, and from the biological phase to the inorganic phase.

This conclusion reached by Teilhard by a process of scientific ratiocination was arrived at several centuries earlier by Pattinathar by a sheer flash of intuition. In fact, Pattinathar goes farther and says that the compulsive force or conation behind all evolution is the will of God.

The tomato seed is a tiny particle. But when we plant it in the earth, manure it and irrigate it, it grows into a big plant and yields hundreds of tomatoes. Did this sizeable quantity of fruits come out of that wee little seed? The root of the plant absorbs the minerals and the moisture from the soil. The leaves of the plant absorb sunlight and nitrogen from the atmosphere. Due to this process, a double advantage is gained; the tomato plant increases in size and fertility; the inorganic substances like water, salts and nitrogen become enriched by climbing the ladder of evolution and becoming endowed with life, by becoming transformed into organic matter. This is what Teilhard would call biogenesis or evolution of life from matter. Pattinathar had a penetrating insight into this miracle of transformation and he saw: 'Water and air, that are lifeless, beg of the tomato for life and entreat her to make them part of her tomato personality and in *response* to this request, the tomato initiates them into life'. But, who is it that put this longing into inorganic matter—This

longing to become organic? It is God, declares Pattinathar.

Addressing God, he sings,

“ஊன்றேடும் உயிரேயோ!”

“Are you not that longing
that sets matter
searching for life?”

Pattinathar has now another vision. A man, who has suffered from typhoid for four weeks, gets a relapse. His body becomes mere skin and bones. His faculties fail and his sight and hearing become dim. He fails to recognize his near and dear ones. His sensitive ear, which once identified and enjoyed the nuances of music, has become as good as deaf.

In this state of inanimation, the Doctors feed the sinking patient with dribbles of tomato soup. Slowly and gradually, the patient regains strength. In a fortnight, his lack-lustre eyes recover their lustre and his inert mind recovers consciousness; he starts identifying friends and he hails them with gusto. He recovers the faculty of hearing, and listening to the Sankarabharana raga, he jumps with joy. What is the magic that has produced this consciousness? It is the tomato soup that has merged with this man's personality, and given light to his eyes, hearing to his ears and consciousness to his mind. Even as air, water and salt merged with the tomato and became endowed with life, the tomato has merged now with man and become endowed with consciousness. The tomato has now acquired feeling and has now learnt to enjoy music, to discriminate between truth and untruth, the beautiful and the ugly, the good and the bad. Who is it that gave the

tomato the longing for consciousness? God, declares Pattinathar. It is God, who is behind the search of matter for life, behind the search of life for consciousness.

Pattinathar sings;—

ஊன்தேடும் உயிரேயோ
உயிர்தேடும் உணர்வேயோ!

Are you not That
which makes matter
search for life?
and That
which makes life
search for Consciousness?

Even after matter has searched for, and acquired life and even after life has searched for, and acquired consciousness, the search continues for higher and higher states of being. Even after water and air become tomato and even after tomato becomes man, God implants in man the longing to become Super-man. He studies in the Universities, researches into the arts, sciences and Scriptures and wishes to unravel these mysteries of life by searching for the secrets embedded in esoteric literature. Men, who have sharpened their consciousness in this manner, were called “வானவர்” in Tamil.

வான்தேடும் மறையேயோ!

Are you not That
which the Super-men search for
in the hidden scriptures!

It is in this search of Super men for the hidden secrets that

God resides. And what about those secret scriptures? They are themselves engaged in a search for God, and God hides Himself behind that search and is immanent in that search.

மறைதேடும் பொருளேயோ!

Are you not That
which the hidden Scriptures
are searching for!

Thus, in Pattinathar's vision, there is an eternal quest going on—a race in which the lower searches for and becomes the higher, and God and the entire Universe take part in this endless searching and becoming.

A thief has burgled a house, and made away with the booty. A whole crowd of men run helter-skelter in hot pursuit of the thief. The thief adroitly mingles with the crowd; he joins the crowd and cries, “Catch the thief, the thief!”; he is intensely engaged in searching for himself.

தான்தேட, ஐகமெலாம்
உடன் தேட

He searches for Himself,
and the whole Universe
Joins Him in this search.

Looking at this grand Comedy, the great truth flashes on Pattinathar's mind. He muses; “What a fool am I to have joined in this search! Has not my ego deluded me into thinking that I am different from Him. He is inside me and who am I to search for Myself? Is He different from Me?”

... .. தன்னைத்தான்
நான் தேடிநான் காண
நான் ஆரோ, தான் ஆரோ!

oh! For me to search
for the Inner Self,
Am I different from Him!

Pattinathar has thus worked out the theory of evolution to its logical conclusion. His theory is more satisfying and more cosmic in its sweep than the Darwinian view, which is fragmentary, than the Teilhardian view, which is vacillating and hesitant. The luminosity of this mystical vision will become self-evident when we listen to this song as a whole

ஊன்தேடும் உயிரேயோ!
உயிர்தேடும் உணர்வேயோ!
வான்தேடும் மறையேயோ!
மறைதேடும் பொருளேயோ!
தான்தேட, ஜகமெலாம்
உடன் தேட, தன்னைத்தான்
நான் தேடி, நான் காண
நான் ஆரோ! தான் ஆரோ!

It is doubtful if in the whole range of creative literature a more magnificent song has been produced.

It is time now for us to revert back to Teilhard de Chardin and his concept of a noosphere, that is to say, a sphere of thought, which, according to him, envelops the whole earth. He sees with his mind's eye the effect of the rotundity of the Earth. If the Earth had been flat instead of being spherical, man's thought would simply diffuse outwards. It would extend over a larger area but

would remain thinly spread—dissipated. But the Earth is a sphere and the sphericity of the Earth has a confining influence. Idea will encounter idea and the psycho-social tension will go on rising, producing; further complexification in the thought processes. The result will be an organized web of thought, an intellectual system operating under high pressure, a piece of evolutionary mechanism capable of generating high psycho-social energy. All that we think, our inventions, our increasing knowledge of the universe from the galaxies and stars to human societies and individuals—all this cumulative Conscious of man, if I may use this Jungian expression, will promote the further complexification of the noosphere. The noosphere will incorporate the sum total of human knowledge and wisdom and will become a microcosm, which will influence and direct evolution. The combined result of the noosphere acting upon human thought and human thought acting upon the noosphere will be the attainment of what Teilhard calls the point Omega, where the noosphere will be intensely unified and will have achieved a “hyper-personal” organization.

Teilhard’s thought becomes obscure at this stage. No doubt, he equates point Omega with an emergent divinity, but he fails to work out boldly the metaphysical implications of his scientific findings. It must, however, be said in fairness to him that the Catholic Church, of which he was a priest, threatened to ostracize him. He was forbidden to continue teaching in France. His thoughts on evolution were considered dangerous. His application for permission to publish his work was refused in Rome. In fact, his sensational book, “the Phenomenon of Man” was published by his friends only after his death. This background would show why Teilhard failed to declare candidly the philosophical

implications of his findings. Evidently in his eagerness to placate the Church, he speaks of the noosphere as Christogenesis. He was apologetic because he was afraid that the charge of pantheism might be flung at him. In fact, what he taught was a genuine type of pantheism, of which no seeker of Truth need feel ashamed.

At this point, we may bid good-bye to Teilhard, and turn to Shri Aurobindo, who has come to a similar conclusion by travelling along a different route.

When we say life emerges out of matter, and mind emerges out of life, we are merely stating a phenomenon without explaining it. We must go farther and accept that Life is already involved in matter, and that is why it arises out of it, and Mind is already involved in Life, and that is why it arises out of life. Likewise, certain higher states of consciousness like the Supramental are already involved in the Mind, and will emerge in the future. That Supramental condition is a purely spiritual condition of Sat, Chit and Ananda (Truth, Consciousness and Bliss). That condition will be reached by a double movement:- by the ascent of human consciousness to the Supramental level and by the descent of the Supramental to the Earth. Each will act upon and reinforce the other and a perfect condition of harmony among men and spiritual bliss is in store for Man. Hitherto evolution has been a process in which the things evolving were not consciously involved. Now, with the birth of consciousness, evolution has become conscious of itself and Man can consciously co-operate with the processes of evolution and accelerate the Golden Age, and establish a Heaven upon Earth. How then can Man co-operate with the processes of evolution?

Says the Mother of Pondicherry:- “Every individual must constantly expand his consciousness. It is no good to have a little aspiration, a little effort and then fall back into lethargy. The Supramental world has to be created in us by the Divine Will as the result of a constant expansion and self-perfecting. This must be the constant pre-occupation of our being, the constant effort and aspiration of our being. “If five minutes in the day you happen to remember that there is something in the Universe like the supramental Force, and that after all, “it would be well if it manifested itself in me”, then all the rest of the time you think of something else and are busy with other things, there is not much chance that it would come and work seriously within you. Aurobindo does not tell you that it is you who will do it; he says it is the divine Will. So, do not come and say, “Ah! I, I can’t”. You are not asked to do it. But there must be in the being a sufficient aspiration for the expansion of the being, for the expansion of the Consciousness to be possible. For, to tell the truth, everybody is small, small, small, so small there is not enough room to put in the supramental! It is so small that it is already quite filled up with all the petty ordinary human movements. One must widen out a good deal to make room for the movements of the Supramental. And then there must be an aspiration for progress; not to be satisfied with what one is, how one is, what one does, what one knows or thinks one knows; but to have a constant aspiration for something more, something better, for a greater light, a vaster consciousness, a truer truth and a more universal goodness. And over and above all this, a good will which never fails. That cannot happen in a few days.”

According to Aurobindo, the supramental man of the future will undergo a physical transformation. He will be flooded with

spiritual light; he will become luminous and plastic. He will lose weight and become less coarse. He will be able to displace himself freely. He will be able to appear at a dozen places at the same time. He will get a kind of illumination— not the dry light of reason, “nor the moist and suffused light of the heart, but a lightning and solar splendour.” It will give Man a supernatural light, a Truth greater and truer than the knowledge given by Reason and Science, a Sense beyond the senses. This, according to Aurobindo, is the direction in which evolution is moving and the goal of human history. According to Teilhard de Chardin, Point Omega will mark the end of history, because Christ, the Cosmic Presence, will gather up all souls into Eternity, and thereby put an end to human history. But, according to Aurobindo, the Supramental condition will only open a new and glorious chapter in human history and there can be a more ultimate state later.

In the light of the Aurobindonian and Teilhardian concepts of evolution, we can approach human history from a different angle. If man has a destiny, his history ought to show how he is groping towards that destiny. We must rewrite history from this point of view, after eliminating the insignificant details and taking just those facts, which have a bearing on Man’s conation towards a higher state of being. Looking back at the past, can we say there is a progressive movement towards the goal? Is there a direction in all that has happened in the past? Is man marching towards his destiny?

The true history of man must begin from before he was born. It really begins with the birth of the inorganic atom. From atom to the molecule was a great advance in organization. From the

inorganic to the organic, there was a greater advance, because life became manifest. From the Animal to the Man was a dramatic advance, because thought and consciousness became manifest. Man as he is, homo sapiens, came into being only about 50,000 years ago, and it is too short a period for all men to become Supermen. During this period, individual saints and seers have become supermen and attained salvation by reaching their individual Point Omega.

Saint Manickavasagar gives the history of his individual evolution in the following song:-

புல்லாகிப் பூடாய்ப் புழுவாய் மரமாகிப்
 பல்விருகமாகிப் பறவையாய்ப் பாம்பாகிக்
 கல்லாய் மனிதராய்ப் பேயாய்க் கணங்களாய்
 வல்லசுரராகி முனிவராய்த் தேவராய்ச்
 செல்லா அநின்ற வித்தாவர சங்கமத்துள்
 எல்லாப் பிறப்பும் பிறந்திளைத் தேன்எம்பெருமான்
 மெய்யேயுள் பொன்னடிகள் கண்டின்று வீடுற்றேன்.

The individual soul cycle is complete with Manickavasagar perceiving the Ultimate Reality and merging with it. Many other mystics belonging to different religions and different countries have completed the cycle and reached Point Omega. That is clear from recorded history. But, does history show that mankind as a whole has been cumulatively marching towards such a destiny? The answer to this question lies in a reappraisal of history and in a scrutiny of just those broad trends which have a bearing upon the cumulative movement of mankind.

Because of the haphazard arrangement of the Earth's surface, and the vicissitudes of climate, some regions are more favourable

than others for the habitation of mankind. Vast cultivable plains irrigated by great rivers have been the cradles of human civilization. We find human masses concentrated in such regions and leading a settled life there. We may pick out five such centres of culture :- Central America with its Maya civilization; the South Seas with Polynesian civilization; the Yellow River basin, with its Chinese civilization; the valleys of the Ganges, Indus, the Cauvery and the Tambraparni with its Indian civilization; and the Nile Valley and Mesopotamia with Egyptian and Sumerian civilization. Of these, the Indian, Egyptian and the Sumerian are the most ancient. These represented three distinct psycho-somatic currents, which were independent of each other. Each of them tried to spread and transform the earth. The Maya civilization in Central America proved ineffective; the Polynesian civilization was too weak to radiate. Ultimately the contest for the future of the world was fought mainly between the dwellers of Asia and North Africa.

China, inspite of its refinement and profundity, went into a long stupor from which it woke up only recently as a result of the injection of a virulent dose of Communism into its body politic. The sleeping giant has woken up, but he has nothing original to contribute to the evolutionary movement as he has merely absorbed a foreign system and killed his own through the “cultural Revolution.”

As for the Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilizations, though they died, they bequeathed their virile culture to Greece, through Greece to Rome and then to the whole of Europe and America. Greece vibrated with profound thought, scientific inventions and aesthetic beauty. Rome absorbed this Greek contribution and stamped it with its genius for organization. France was inspired

by the Roman legacy and she contributed through her French Revolution, the concepts of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. Germany, England, Russia and the U.S.A. have taken up the torch and by their brilliant scientific achievements, widened the frontiers of material knowledge. It is Western Civilization that has discovered all that goes to make the modern man. The result is that the psycho-social temperature of the Earth has risen considerably as a result of those inventions. Man has not only probed the Moon but has also forged weapons which have gone beyond the solar system to probe into the mysteries of inter stellar space. In spite of these achievements, the Western Culture has failed signally to bring peace upon Earth, because it is a culture which has failed to turn inward to study the spirit of Man. In spite of its great vigour and speed that culture lacks direction. On the contrary, the Indian Civilization possesses just that which the Western Civilization lacks. For thousands of years hundreds of Indian Saints have been engaged in research in the laboratory of the spirit. Untrammelled by the Church or any secular organization they have risen to the highest in the world of the spirit and they have been most audacious in declaring the spiritual truths discovered by them. But in their pre-occupations with the Spirit, they neglected the development of material things. It was all right for a seer to say, "Remain unconcerned in action". It was a truth which could be understood experientially but not intellectually. But the great masses of Indians tried to understand this truth intellectually and succeeded only in perverting and misunderstanding this truth. Instead of being unconcerned in action, they became unconcerned with action. A supreme slovenliness became the national trait. There was an utter indifference to the welfare of the masses. Narrow caste and

communal divisions divided the country vertically and horizontally.

It was at this juncture that an event of great evolutionary significance took place. I refer to the 150 year connection between Great Britain and India. It resulted in a commerce of ideas and values; the West supplementing the East, each gaining from the other and trying to achieve an equilibrium between material civilization and spiritual insight.

When I say that the West is materialistic and India is spiritual, I over-simplify the problem for the purpose of driving home a truth. I am not unaware of the spiritual strain in western culture and the materialistic strain in Indian Culture. The Judeo-Christian contribution to the Western culture cannot be underestimated. Though Buddha had earlier proclaimed the message of compassion in India, the message did not receive that amount of practical application in India which Christ's message of compassion received in the West. The Christian countries of the West have organised elaborate institutions through which succour is given to the poor and relief is given to the sickly—effectively, but they have failed to go deeper into the spirit of Man to solve problems of peace. Likewise, the Indian achievement has not been exclusively in the domain of the spirit. The Pallava kings, the Cholas and the Pandyas have been great sea-farers and builders of great masterpieces of sculpture and architecture. Asoka and Akbar have made distinct contributions to the art of Government. But, as we look back upon the total achievements of the West and India, the predominant contribution of the West is in the secular field and that of India, in the deep recesses of the spirit. A synthesis of the peculiar genius of India and the West is bound

to give a distinct push to the process of human evolution in the right direction. Is there not, therefore, a plan behind the forces that brought India under British suzerainty and kept her under British influence for nearly two centuries? By that material subjugation of India, Great Britain and through Great Britain, the whole of the Western World was kept exposed to the spiritual influence of India. When both these influences are absorbed and assimilated by man, there is bound to be a leap in the process of human evolution.

This process is vigorously going on now. Many Indians have migrated to the West, especially the U.S.A. and have made a mark there in technological inventions. Many Westerners are coming to India to slake their spiritual thirst. Some time back, I interviewed a number of American hippies at Pondicherry and investigated the circumstances leading to their migration. Most of them were postgraduate students of Philosophy and some of them were sons of multi-millionaires. They said: - “We suffer from too much of wealth in the U.S.A. We have enough money to buy whatever we want. But our trouble is we don’t know what to buy. We are in search of peace and we cannot buy it for money”. I asked them what was their reaction to India, and they said: “We find in the Indian soil a spiritual vibration. Spiritual guidance is in-built in Indian Society. We have no such guidance in our country. We float rudderless in our Society.”

I have seen not only Americans, but people from the farthest corners of the West coming to India on a spiritual quest. Writing in the *Bande Mataram* on 16-4-1907, this is what Aurobindo said:

“There are periods in the history of the world when the unseen power that guides its destinies seems to be filled with a consuming passion for change and a strong impatience of the old. The Great Mother (Shakti) has resolved to take the nations into her hand and shape them anew. These are periods of rapid destruction and energetic Creation, filled with the sound of cannon and the trampling of armies, the crash of great downfalls and the turmoil of swift and violent revolutions; the world is thrown into the melting pot and comes out in a new shape and with new features. They are periods when the wisdom of the wise is confounded and the prudence of the prudent turned into a laughing-stock; for it is the day of the Prophet, the dreamer, the fanatic and the Crusader — the time of divine revelation when Avatars are born and miracles happen.

The peoples of Europe have carried material life to its farthest expression, the science of bodily existence has been perfected but they are suffering from diseases which their science is powerless to cure. England with her practical intelligence, France with her clear logical brain, Germany with her speculative genius, Russia with her emotional force, America with her commercial energy have done what they could for human development, but each has reached the limit of her peculiar capacity. Something is wanting which Europe cannot supply. It is at this juncture that Asia has awakened, because the world needed her.”

Writing on “Spirituality and Nationalism”, he pursues this line of diagnosis and says: “The strength of Europe is in details, the strength of Asia is in synthesis. When Europe has perfected the details of life or thought, she is unable to harmonize them into a perfect symphony and she falls into the intellectual heresies,

practical extravagances, which contradict the facts of life, the limits of human nature and the ultimate truths of existence.

It is therefore the Office of Asia to take up the work of human evolution when Europe comes to a standstill and loses itself in a dash of vain speculations, barren experiments and helpless struggles to escape from the consequences of her own mistakes. Such a time has now come in the world's history.

Mankind has long been experimenting with various kinds of thought, different principles of ethics, strange dreams of a perfection to be gained by material means, impossible millenniums and humanitarian hopes. Nowhere has it succeeded in realizing the ultimate secret of life. Nowhere has it found satisfaction. No scheme of society or politics has helped it to escape the necessity of sorrow, poverty, strife, from dissatisfaction with which it strives for an outlet; for whoever is trying to find by material means must fail.

Through all these ages, Asia has been seeking for a Light within But the grand workshop of spiritual experiment the laboratory of the soul has been India, where thousands of great spirits have been born in every generation who were content to work quietly in their own souls, perfect their knowledge, hand down the results of their experiments to a few disciples and leave the rest to others to complete. The work we have to do for humanity is a work which no other nation can accomplish, the spiritualisation of the race.”

LECTURE No. 2

Has human history an inner meaning? Does it disclose a purpose, and an increasing purpose at that? These are questions which have puzzled and fascinated man since the beginning of time. Before we try to grasp the inner meaning of human history, we must first have before our mind the whole panorama of history; we must supply the missing links with the aid of a vivid and realistic imagination; we must arrange the significant facts in the proper cosmic perspective, then we must study with reverence the march of events and the inter-connectedness of episodes; we must have the greatness and the intuition to connect effects with natural causes. And we must reduce the immensity of the historical material to intelligible order. For this purpose, it is necessary to possess a number of qualities, which rarely co-exist in the same individual. We must press into service the immense and the detailed scholarship of the historian; then we must interpret the material with the broad and deep understanding of a wholesomely constituted philosopher. Above all, we must have the penetrating vision of the mystic, and with the mystic's insight we must unveil the mystery behind the cosmic drama.

Let us select some outstanding observers of human history, and study their reactions to history in the light of their own peculiar accomplishments and limitations. Herodotus, the Father of History, presents all history as the drama of a divine Providence, rewarding the insolent prosperity of man. Thucydides, on the other hand, recognises no guiding Providence, no divine plan, not even "progress"; he sees life and history as a tragedy, at once sordid and noble, redeemed now and then by

great men, but always relapsing into superstition and war. Epicurus, who lived in stoic simplicity, said: "The gods exist and enjoy in some far-off space among the stars, a serene and deathless life, but they are too sensible to bother with the affairs of such an infinitesimal species as mankind. The world is not designed nor is it guided by them; how could such divine Epicureans have created so middling a universe, so confused a scene of order and disorder, of beauty and suffering? If this disappoints you, Epicurus adds, console yourself with the thought that the gods are too remote to do you any more harm than good. They cannot watch you, they cannot judge you, they cannot plunge you into hell.

Lucian of the Second Century B.C. defines philosophy as an attempt to "get an elevation from which you may see in every direction." As he stands on such an elevation, life seems to him a ridiculous confusion, a chaotic chorus in which all the dancers move and shout each at his own individual will, "until the impressario dismisses them one by one from the stage". In "Charon", he paints a dark picture of the human scene as witnessed by superhuman eyes from some celestial peak; men ploughing, toiling, disputing, suing in the Courts, lending at usury, cheating and being cheated, running after gold or pleasure; over their heads a cloud of hopes, fears, follies and hates; over these, the Fates spinning the web of life for each human atom; one man is lifted high from the mass and then has a resounding fall; and each in turn is drawn away by some messenger of death. Lucian in his cynicism satirizes the rich for their greed, the poor for their envy, and the gods for their non-existence.

Shakespeare's "Macbeth", on the other hand, cries out in bitter anguish:

“Out, out brief candle!
Life’s but a walking shadow; a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage;
And then is heard no more; it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.”

Evidently, Macbeth believes in the existence of the author of the tale, though, in his fury, he calls him names.

Bruno (1548-1600) had a vision of the universe which is primarily aesthetic, a profound and wondering appreciation of an incandescent infinity. His vision is a philosophical attempt to adjust human thought to a Cosmos in which our planet is an infinitesimal part of an unknowable immensity. The earth is not the centre of the world, nor is the sun; beyond the world that we see, there are other worlds and beyond those other worlds are other worlds again and so on, endlessly; we cannot conceive an end, nor a beginning, and instead of the fixed stars being fixed, as Copernicus thought, they change their place constantly; even in the skies, all things flow. Space, time and motion are relative. There is no centre, no circumference, and no up or down.

As Saint Manickavasagar says,

“நூற்றொரு கோடியின் மேற்பட விரிந்தன,
இல் நுழைகதினின்
சுன்னணுப் புரைய”

(There are over hundred and one crores of universes dancing like multitudinous particles of dust in a beam of sun-light penetrating inside a house.)

Kavi Chakravarthi Kamban says of this Infinite,

“It is neither Light nor Darkness
neither Above nor Below
It is not without ageing,
nor does it age;
It has neither beginning, middle nor end
neither Afore nor After.”

Says Kamban,

“Let Brahma put the four vociferous Vedas
and the allied scriptures
on the huge grinding-stone of Wisdom
and let him grind them hard
for days and days on end;
Yet he cannot grasp Reality.”

Bruno, who puts us in mind of Manickavasagar and Kamban, says that as time is the measure of motion, time too is relative. Probably, many stars are inhabited by living, intelligent beings. Yet, in this endless immensity, there is an invariable conservation of matter, an eternal and inviolable constancy of law.

Since the universe is infinite, and there cannot be two infinities, argues Bruno, the infinite God and the infinite universe must be one. There is no Prime Mover, as Aristotle supposed. There is motion or energy inherent in every part of the whole. “God is not an external intelligence..... It is more worthy for him to be the internal principle of motion, which is his own nature, his own soul.” Nature is the outside of the Divine Mind; however, this Mind is not in a “heaven above”, but in every particle of reality. The world is composed of minute nomads,

indivisible units of force, of life, of inchoate mind. Each particle has its own individuality, has a mind of its own; and yet its freedom is not liberation from law but (as in Spinoza) behaviour according to its own inherent law and character. There is a principle of progress and evolution in Nature in the sense that every part strives for development.

There are opposites in Nature, contrary forces, contradictions; but in the operation of the whole Cosmos, — in the “will of God” — all contraries coincide and disappear; so the diverse motions of the planets make the harmony of the spheres. Behind the bewildering, fascinating variety of Nature is the yet more marvellous unity, wherein all parts appear as organs of one organism.

That reminds us of a Tamil Saint, who declared several hundred years before Bruno : “ஒன்றாகக் காண்பதே காட்சி”. (To see the unity of life is the only true vision). We do not know if Bruno had a spiritual experience of this vision or merely inferred it through his intellect. But he says: “It is Unity that enchants me. By her power, I am free though thrall, happy in sorrow, rich in poverty, alive even in death. Though I am subject to law, I express my own nature; though I suffer, I find solace in recognising that the “evil” of the part becomes meaningless in the perspective of the whole; though I die, the death of the part is the rejuvenating life of the whole.” According to Bruno, the knowledge of the supreme unity is the goal of human life.

Pascal, the great French Philosopher, was both a believer and a doubter. He wrote his “Pensees” in 1670. His reactions to the universe are both fascinating and stupefying. Says he, “Let man

contemplate Nature entirely in her full and lofty majesty; let him put far from his sight the lowly objects that surround him: let him regard that blazing light, placed like an eternal lamp to illuminate the world; let the earth appear to him but a point within the vast circuit which that star describes; and let him marvel that this immense circumference is itself but a speck from the view-point of the stars that move in the firmament. And if our vision is stopped there, let imagination pass beyond..... All this visible world is but an imperceptible element in the great bosom of nature. No thought can go so far..... It is an infinite sphere whose centre is every where and whose circumference nowhere. This is the most perceivable feature of the almightiness of God, so that our imagination loses itself in this thought.”

And Pascal adds with quivering sensitivity, “The eternal silence of these infinite spaces frightens me.”

Contrast this sentiment with that of Tirumoolar. Being a mystic, he is not frightened by Eternity or Infinity. Consciousness of his ignorance holds no terrors for Tirumoolar. It is to him the starting point of wisdom. It is in the awareness of human ignorance that Tirumoolar sees the beginning of spiritual wisdom. Accordingly, in his prologue to his Tirumantram, he sings with characteristic humour,

“ஆரறிவார் எங்கள் அண்ணல் பெருமையை,
ஆரறிவார் இந்த அகலமும் நிகளமும்,
பேரறியாத பெருஞ்சுடர் ஒன்றதின்,
வேறியாமை விளம்புகின்றேனே,”

(Whoever knows the glories of my Lord,
And who, the vastness of Infinity: (yet)
Of my ignorance of that Nameless Light
I shall sing three thousand songs.)

Coming back to Pascal, we see that he is terrified not only by the Infinite, but also by the Infinitesimal. We can go on dividing the atom ad infinitum, and reduce it to a tiny minim. We will still find that it has parts smaller than itself. Our reason wavers, stupefied between the infinitely vast and the infinitely minute. Says Pascal: "He who sees himself thus will be frightened by himself, and perceiving himself sustained between these two abysses of Infinity and nothing, will tremble, and will be more disposed to contemplate these marvels in silence than to explore them with presumption. For, in the end, what is man in Nature? A nothing, in respect to the infinite, everything in respect to the nothing, a half-way between nothing and all. Infinitely far from comprehending the extremes, both the end and the beginning of things are invincibly hidden in an impenetrable secret; he is equally incapable of seeing the nothing from which he has been drawn, and the infinite in which he is engulfed."

"The French language", said Saint Beuve, "has no finer pages than the simple and severe lines of this incomparable picture."

How does Pascal react to this vision of the Universe? What, according to him, is the meaning of existence? He thinks that reason cannot guide us to the inner chambers of existence. He, therefore, believes that Science is a silly presumption because it is based on reason, which is based on the senses which deceive us in a hundred ways. It is limited by the narrow bounds within which our senses operate, and by the corruptible brevity of the

flesh. The misery of man is another mystery. Why should the universe have laboured so long to produce a species so fragile in its happiness, so subject to pain in every nerve, to grief in every love, to death in every life? And yet, “the grandeur of man is great in that he knows himself to be miserable.”

“Man is but a reed, the most feeble thing in nature; but he is a thinking reed. (*L’homme n’est qu’un roseau, le plus faible de la nature, mais c’est un roseau pensant*). The entire universe need not arm itself to crush him; a vapor, a drop of water, suffice to kill him. But when the universe has crushed him, man will still be nobler than that which kills him, because he knows that he is dying, and of the victory the universe knows nothing.”

None of these mysteries finds an answer in reason. If we trust to reason alone, we shall condemn ourselves to an uncertainty that will doubt everything except pain and death, and philosophy could be at best a rationalization of defeat. But we cannot believe that man’s fate is as reason sees it — to struggle, to suffer and to die, having begotten others to struggle, to suffer and to die, generation after generation aimlessly, stupidly, in a ridiculous and superabundant insignificance. In our hearts we feel that this cannot be true, that it would be the greatest of blasphemies to think that life and the universe have no meaning. God, and the meaning of life must be felt by the heart rather than by reason. “The heart has its reasons which reason does not know”, and we do right to listen to our hearts, to “place our faith in feeling”. For all belief, even in practical matters, is a form of will, a direction of attention and desire.” The mystical experience is profounder than the evidence of the senses or the arguments of reason.

What answer, then, does feeling give to the mysteries of life and thought? The answer is religion. Only religion can restore meaning to life, and nobility to man; without it we flounder even more deeply into mental frustration and moral futility. Pascal adds, "Religion gives us a Bible; the Bible tells us of man's fall from grace; only that original sin can explain the strange union, in human nature, of hate and love, of bestial wickedness and our longing for redemption and God. If we let ourselves believe (however absurd it may seem to the philosophers) that man began with divine grace, that he forfeited this by sin, and that he can be redeemed only by divine grace through the crucified Christ, then we shall find a peace of mind never granted to philosophers. He who cannot believe is cursed, for he reveals by his unbelief that God has not chosen to give him grace.

Belief is a wise wager. Granted that faith cannot be proved, what harm will come to you if you gamble on its truth, and it proves false? "You must wager; it is not optional. Let us weigh the gain and the loss in the wagering that God exists..... If you gain, you gain all; if you lose, you lose nothing. Wager, then, without hesitation that He exists."

When Pascal believed, he did so not as a gambler, but because he recognized that his intellect, brilliant as it was, was no match for the universe. He was convinced that human life is not a helpless trajectory from a filthy birth to an agonizing death. But his faith was unsteady and he was tormented by powerful doubts. He was not like Plato, who, from the Sun-like centrality of his vision, had a faith without a cloud. In his "Pensees", Pascal gives a pessimistic description of the human predicament. He says:

“Picture a number of men in chains, and all condemned to death; each day some are strangled to death in the sight of the rest; those who remain see their own condition in that of these their fellows, looking at one another with sorrow and without hope, each awaiting his turn. This is the picture of the condition of Man.” How shall we redeem this obscene slaughter called history, except by believing with or against the evidence that God will right all wrongs in the end?

Pascal is unable to give a convincing answer to this question. He says, “This is what I see, and what troubles me, I look out on all sides, and every where I see nothing but obscurity. Nature offers me nothing that is not a matter of doubt and disquiet. If I saw no signs of divinity, I would fix myself in denial. If I saw everywhere the marks of a Creator, I would repose peacefully in faith. But seeing too much to deny Him and too little to assure me, I am in a pitiful state, and I would wish a hundred times that if God sustains nature, it would reveal Him without ambiguity.”

As Will Durant says, “it is this profound uncertainty, the paralyzing ability to see both sides, that makes Pascal a fascination to believer and doubter alike.”

Goethe, the great German Poet, speaks of Nature as a mother from whose breast he sucked the sap and zest of life. In a prose poem rhapsody, “Die Natur”, he expressed with religious feeling his humble surrender to, his happy absorption in, the generative and destructive forces that envelop man. He says: “Nature! By her we are surrounded and encompassed — unable to step out

of her, and unable to enter deeper into her. She receives us, unsolicited and unwarned, into the circle of her dance, and hurries along with us, till we are exhausted, and drop out of her arms..... She creates ever new forms; what now is, was never before; what was, comes not again; all is new and yet always the old She seems to have contrived everything for individuality, but cares nothing for individuals. She is ever building, ever destroying, and her workshop is inaccessible. She has thought, and is constantly meditating, not as a man, but as nature. She has an all-embracing mind of her own. No one can penetrate it. She lets every child tinker with her, every fool pass judgment upon her; thousands stumble over her and see nothing; she has her joy in all, she is kindly. I praise her with all her works. She is wise and quiet. One can tear no explanation from her, extort from her no gift which she gives not of her own free will. She has placed me here, she will lead me away. I trust myself to her. She may do as she likes with me. She will not hate her works.”

Let us contrast the attitude of the mystic with that of scientific historians like Gibbon and Herbert Fisher, both of whom have a firm grasp of history, but fail to see through it. Gibbon, in spite of the grandeur and courage of his conception, could see no design in history. According to him, events are the outcome of unguided causes; they are the parallelogram of forces of different origin and composite result. In all this kaleidoscope of events, human nature seems to remain unchanged. Gibbon, however, admits, “In human life the most important scenes will depend upon the character of a single actor. An acrimonious humour falling upon a single fibre of one man may prevent or suspend the misery of nations.”

H.A.L. Fisher in his preface to “The History of Europe”, is more diffident than Gibbon. He says, “The intellectual excitement has been denied to me. Men wiser and more learned than I have discerned in History a plot, a rhythm, a predetermined pattern. These harmonies are concealed from me. I can see only one emergency following upon another, as wave follows upon wave; only one great fact with respect to which, since it is unique, there can be no generalizations; only one safe rule for the historian; that he should recognize in the development of human destinies the play of the contingent and the unforeseen. This is not a doctrine of cynicism and despair. The fact of progress is written, plain and large, in the page of history. But progress is not a law of nature. The ground gained by one generation may be lost by the next.”

Spengler, in his famous book, “The Decline of the West” refers to what he calls the morphology of world history, and says that history is a series of completed cycles. Sisyphus rolls his stone up the hill, and sooner or later, it rolls down again, not as a mere accident, but as an inescapable necessity.

From the bewildering variety of opinions, which I have quoted, it is clear that each man interprets the drama of human life, in terms of his own beliefs, temperament and character.

Some years back the World Student Christian Federation held a study conference in France on the Meaning of history. The crucial issue considered by that Conference was: has the Christian faith a definite significance for the study of history, and for the assessment of its meaning; and if so, what is this significance? The

Conference agreed that in the present predicament of Man it is necessary to reflect upon the Meaning of History. Various questions were put, though answers to the questions could not be agreed upon. One question was: Does man's real nature and destiny become fulfilled in history or not? To put it in other words; is the process of history self-redemptive or does it get its meaning from a transcendental order? The answers to these questions were formulated in the light of Biblical thinking. One speaker went the length of declaring; "Israel occupies a unique place in history. The development of history is directly related to the faithfulness or unfaithfulness of the chosen people. The spiritual condition of Israel is the cause of major historical events."

Though I welcome this attempt at a Christian interpretation of history, the conclusion that Israel is the centre of history appears to be rather short-sighted and extravagant. It may be true of European history, not of world history. While trying to wring meaning out of history, we must take our stand on the eternal verities of religion, and not on a local version of a legend or a purana.

It is legitimate to ask the question; is there such a being as a Christian historian or a Muslim historian or a Hindu historian? There are, of course, Christians, Muslims and Hindus, who are historians, and their interpretations of history in the light of their metaphysical or religious beliefs might supply a meaning to history. In this sense, there can be a Christian, Muslim or Hindu history. It would be interesting, I think, to reinterpret history in the light of the Hindu faith.

The human future is viewed by the Hindu as an unending sequence of cycles of rebirth. The goal of each individual is the attainment, through Gnana, Bhakti or Karma, of release from this cyclical history. The creativity of God is also regarded cyclically; there is a succession of epochs and at the end of each epoch, God reabsorbs the Universe and then creates another. God is sufficiently personal to forgive the sins of man. The law of God's grace is over-riding in its effects, but subject to that law the soul is governed by the inexorable law of cause and effect. Several chances are given to Man to reach out of his ego into Godhood.

In this setting, the Earth is only a Karma bhoomi, the theatre of activity, in which by God's grace a soul is plunged according to its deserts.

Saiva Siddhanta postulates that the world of phenomenon is real, uncreated, beginningless and endless, like the soul and God. According to the law of Karma, each soul is given a particular environment in which to work out its destiny. The soul is subject to causality only so long as he does not invoke the law of grace. The moment he invokes grace he is released from the prison of cause and effect. If he fails to get release in any birth, he is sent to other worlds after death and after waiting there for a period, is given another physical body and sent to the Earth. According to this view, history has a deeper meaning than strikes the eye. All events in history are manipulated by a transcendental law, which doles out joy and grief according to our past actions. This may mean that the great cataclysms of history like war, famine, earthquake and pestilence are sent, by divine arrangement, as a punishment for human sins.

When we ask Tirumoolar why God should have created the Universe and sent a multitudinous number of souls into it and subjected them to weal and woe, he sings, "It is all his Ananda."

ஆனந்தம் ஆடரங்கம் ஆனந்தம் பாடல்கள்
ஆனந்தம் பல்லியம் ஆனந்தம் வாச்சியம்
ஆனந்தமாக அகில சராசரம்
ஆனந்தம் ஆனந்தக் கூத்துகந்தானுக்கே!

Gerald Heard says: 'Beyond tragedy lies Meta-comedy. The central figure of that play is known in Asiatic drama. There is no tragic goal in the Indian theatre. The very word Play they call Lila, the weaving dance that displays arid resumes the universe. The central figure, who dances out of the Cosmos Shiva, consummates laughter and tears in an ecstasy that goes beyond pleasure and pain.'

To look at history as Mega-comedy we must have the joyous detachment of a Jivan Mukta like Tirumoolar. Only in that condition of detachment, we can understand the inner meaning of history, and like Lear, we can

"take upon's the mystery of things
As if we were God's spies."

* * *

THE CULTURE OF TAMILS

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In Mamallapuram, near Madras, stands a rock-hill, carved in the 7th century AD., into more than a hundred pieces of sculpture, which have been described by H. Zimmer (H.Zimmer, *Mythes et symboles dans la civilization dee 'Inde,' Paris 1951*) as the “grandest expression of plastic Indian art, one of the largest, most beautiful and most dramatically striking masterpieces of all times.” Another Frenchman, Leopold Bazou, who was inspired by this description, went to Mamallapuram to study the sculpture and was struck with the powerful master-mind that had conceived the whole scene. He declared, “ Art has reached here its full mastery,” but he was astonished that the artist had nowhere signed his name to authenticate his work. Bazou exclaimed, “Names have never meant much in South India.....Self-depreciation, tempered with a deep sense of humour, has ever been a virtue of the Tamils.” (Leopold Bazou, *A Sculptor's*

Paradise in South India”) Evidently, what he meant by self-depreciation was a sense of humility, deprecatory of the ego. In fact, one would very much like to know the names of the master-sculptors of Mahabalipuram, of the great architects of the temples of Tanjore, Madurai, Srirangam and Chidambaram, of the illustrious authors of Tamil classics like Tholkappiam and Muttollayiram, but all of them preferred the self-denying joy of anonymity to the vulgar glare of publicity. It may be that humility, as Hazlitt says, is the worst of virtues, but it does connote a maturity born of an ancient culture which according to archaeologist, Mortimer Wheeler, is over six thousand years old.

In times of decadence and political subjection, the humility of the Tamilian has occasionally degenerated into an inferiority complex, which, in its turn, has given rise (by way of compensatory process) to moods of vulgar and empty boastfulness. But, during periods of prosperity, the Tamilian has shown unmistakable evidence of dignified humility born of strength and broad understanding.

It is not without significance that the cult of non-violence should have captured the imagination of the Tamils; Gandhiji records the fact that it was a Tamil woman, in an advanced stage of pregnancy, who offered herself first as a volunteer in the Satyagraha movement which he started in South Africa. This recent incident seems to illustrate a dominant note in Tamil culture, for, as long ago as the 1st century AD, *Tirukkural* had emphasized the need for non-violence in thought, speech and action; the theme of the 33rd chapter of the Kural is, “The highest virtue is non-killing; for killing brings in its train every other vice”.

Not that the Tamilian has succeeded in renouncing acts of violence. In fact, in the history of the Tamils, there has been frequent internecine warfare among the Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas. But what is remarkable is that more than once the fratricidal wars were stopped in response to the appeal of a wise poet, who would appear on the battlefield and preach to the rival armies the virtues of peace. In a communal riot, which took place at Tuticorin in 1953, the rioters marched into the colony of a particular community and indulged in looting and acts of vandalism. As one of the rioters invaded a house and rose his bill-hook to cut off the head of a sleeping baby, his fellow-rioters threatened the miscreant with dire consequences if he dare touch the child. Thus they saved the child from slaughter. A strong ethical sense and a responsiveness to finer sensibilities would appear implanted in the consciousness of the Tamils.

Another trait of the Tamilian is his tolerance and cosmopolitan outlook. His refreshing lack of jingoism is evidently due to the intimate international contacts he has had from the earliest times. R. B. Dixon, The celebrated archaeologist and historian, asserts that the Tamils had extensive trade with Malaya, North Borneo and Northern Philippines even in the 1st Millennium B.C and that trade led to colonisation and conquest of those countries by the Tamils. According to Paul Pelliot, there is evidence in Chinese literature of diplomatic relations between South Indian coasts and the Chinese empire as early as the 2nd century BC. A Chinese writer, Pan Kou. Who lived at the end of the 1st century, mentions the fact that in the time of the Hun Emperor, the Chola King sent embassies to China (*vide* K. M Panikkar, "*India and China*," pages 17 and 19). Strabo, a Greek,

who wrote his *Geography* in the 1st century A D , makes mention of the embassy sent by the Pandyan king to Emperor Augustus on the occasion of the latter's accession to the throne. Pliny, who wrote his *Natural History* in 77 A.D, gives an account of a voyage to India and says that passengers preferred to embark at Barake in the Pandyan country rather than at Muziris, which was infested with pirates. Warmington speaks of the ships that sailed from the West with gold, pea-cock, pepper, silk, cotton, ivory and pearls from Tamilnad. In fact, the Tamil word for rice, Arisi, became Oriza in Greek and the Tamil word for peacock 'Thogaimayil' became *toga* in Rome. The Greeks and Romans had trading stations in the Tamil kingdoms and many of them were employed by the Tamil kings as bodyguards or palaceguards. It is not therefore surprising that the Tamils, who had contacts with different nations and races, were singularly free from insularity, and a Sangam poet of the pre-Christian era proclaimed, with incredible catholicity "Every country is my native land and every one my kinsman".

The rudimentary principles of Science were not unknown to the Tamils. Many of them dabbled in alchemy and some of the Siddhas (Mystics) professed to have discovered the three salts (Muppu) with the aid of which they claimed to have converted copper into gold. Compounds of iron, copper, mercury and arsenic were prepared in their crude laboratories. According to certain historians, the Tamils were the earliest users of iron implements in India. The Siddha system of medicine, the secrets of which were jealously and selfishly guarded by the physicians, was in vogue. That arsenic could cure eosinophilia was known to the siddhas and it is well-known that Allopathy recently

borrowed this concept from Siddha medicine and has been effectively eradicating a disease which did not respond to any drug known to it. There is a legend that Bhojar, a Tamil mystic and physician of renown, went to Germany and propagated there the knowledge of the Siddhas system of medicine. Kapilar Ahaval shows that the Tamils practised principles of eugenics from the earliest times. Marco Polo, who was born in Venice and who visited the eastern coast of Tamilnad on his voyage back from China to Venice in the last quarter of the 13th century, refers to the skill of the Tamilians in building vessels and boats of different sizes and in the art of diving for oysters at the bottom of the sea. He adds, "The natives make use of a kind of bedstead or cot of very light cane-work, so ingeniously contrived that when they lie on them and are inclined to sleep, they can draw the curtains about them by pulling a string. This they do in order to keep out tarantulas, which bite severely, as well as to prevent their being annoyed by flies and other small insects, while, at the same time, the air, so necessary for reducing the excessive heat, is not kept out."

It is in engineering that the Tamils reached a high degree of perfection. The network of canals through which the Tamil country was irrigated by gravitational flow has been characterized by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council as evidence of their ancient and glorious civilization. The Chola King Rajarajan (985 AD. to 1016 AD) built the historic 'Grand Anicut-' a long irrigation dam which stopped and stored the Cauvery waters for irrigation during the dry months of the year. The skill of his engineers and the labour of millions of workmen combined to raise this dam of unhewn stone, 1080 feet long and 60 feet broad,

below the island of Srirangam. The same king constructed the temple of Brahadiswara at Tanjore and dedicated it to Siva. The gopuram (tower) of this temple is 216 feet high and is topped by a block of granite 25 feet square and 80 tons in weight. This stone was hauled four miles over an inclined plane and put on top of the tower. The temple carries sculptures depicting the different poses and bhavas of Bharatanatyam. The Encyclopaedia Britannica describes the temple as the “greatest temple in India” and the Tamil-speaking people as ‘perhaps the greatest temple builders in the world.’ The icon of Lord Nataraja in Chidambaram symbolises the dynamics of the cosmic dance and has been described by competent foreign critics as the culmination of Tamilian art.

According to Marco Polo, “In this country, there are many experts in the science of physiognomy, which teaches the understanding of the nature and quality of men and whether they tend to good or evil. These qualities are immediately detected on looking at a man or woman.”

Some gallant attempts were made by the Tamils to correlate the moods of Man with those of Nature. The division of human life into *aham* and *puram* (subjective and objective or introvert and extrovert) is an instance in point. Furthermore, they divided land into five categories (tinai), namely, hills and hilly area, woods and wooded country, fertile plains, sea-board and desert. An elaborate grammar was evolved nearly two thousand years ago defining the customs and manners of those inhabiting the five different areas, the moods of nature in each area and the suitability of each area as background for different aspects of the human

drama, such as love-making, wedding, pangs of separation, re-union, etc. The seasons of the year and the different hours of the day were also correlated to human moods and the interplay between the two was extensively studied. Though these classifications revealed a penetrating study of man and nature, the inability of the later Sangam poets and dramatists to free themselves from the conventional framework of aham, puram and tinai served to stifle their creativity.

Though the Tamils were a practical, realistic and reason loving people, their thinkers held up before themselves almost impossible ideals of chastity, bravery and ethical perfection. They believed that by chastity a woman could command the Elements, bring down rain or burn a city to ashes. One of the tests of chastity of a woman was that no man, however lustful, could cast covetous eyes upon her and, if he did, her chastity was not above board. Although such severe standards were imposed upon women it does not appear that men were subjected to the same rigour. Perhaps, it was thought that from the social point of view, woman's chastity was more important than man's. Even during the Sangam period, the institution of prostitution appears to have been well established and many of the tiffs between married couples were due to the machinations of the harlots. Harlots were taken so much for granted that grammarians laid down rules delineating the behaviour-patterns of the three characters in the eternal triangle. It may, however be observed that harlots were assigned a very low and contemptible status in society.

Life in Tamilnad was characterised by utter simplicity. The basic dress of the Tamilian consisted of two or three pieces of

unsewn cotton cloth, one being used as a loin cloth and the other as a covering for the body. A turban on the head and gold-embroidered silk as covering for the body were used for ceremonial occasions. Kuppayam, (long-sleeved shirt or coat) appears to have been worn by the soldiers whose weapons of war were shields and swords. Woman's dress was a little more elaborate; a long saree and a blouse draped her body gracefully. The women used to wear the saree in such a way that though it brought out the curves of the body it did no violence to their modesty. The simplicity of the Tamilians' dress and their semi-nakedness have very often led the foreigner into misjudging their culture. Marco Polo says in his Travels, "The natives of this part of the country always go naked except that they cover their private parts with a piece of cloth. The king wears no more cloth than the rest except that he has a piece of richer cloth and is distinguished by various kinds of ornaments, such as a collar set with jewels, sapphires, emeralds and rubies of immense value. He also wears, suspended from the neck and reaching to the breast, a fine silken string containing 104 large handsome pearls and rubies." It is possible that the description given by Marco Polo is of the fishermen of the east coast and their chief.

However, the semi-nakedness of the Tamilians did not blind Marco Polo to the greatness of their culture, for he calls the Coromandel or eastern coast of India "the noblest and richest country in the world."

Tamils had a great love of flowers. The atti flower was the emblem of the Cholas, the palmyra flower of the Cheras, and the margosa flower of the Pandyas. Women used to adorn their

hair with flowers whereas men used to wear garlands of flowers around their neck. Their intimacy with flowers was so great that they developed an elaborate flower symbolism. The '*vengai*' flower connoted love. Jilted lovers used to wear *erukkalai*, the most trivial of flowers, and thereby evoke the pity of their beloved. The Tamils conceived Siva as having a *konrai* flower tucked up in his head, *konrai* itself symbolizing the stars of the Milky Way, while the Milky Way, in its turn, symbolised the Infinite.

In his Presidential Address delivered at the All India Oriental Conference, Ahmedabad, in October, 1953, Dr. S. K. Chatterjee said, "The flower ritual of the Tamilians evolved on different lines from the fire ritual of the Aryans." He quotes Mark Collins in support of his thesis, that the word "Puja" of Sanskrit is derived from the Tamil "Pu" meaning flower and the Tamil "Cey" meaning "to do." According to him, the Tamils invoked the divine spirit in an image, a pot, a pebble or a tree, poured water over it and offered it flowers and fruits and incense and music and dance, treating the divine spirit as an honoured guest like a king on a visit to a subject of his. It is the thesis of Dr. Chatterjee that in the ritual of the Homa, the worshipper is not keenly conscious of any force pervading the universe, but only used the fire as a messenger to the Gods of wind, sun, thunder, rain, etc. He further points out that in the flower ritual of the Tamilians there was no place for animal sacrifice, but that such sacrifice was part of the fire ritual. The synthesis of the two rituals took place probably after the 2nd century A.D.

Apart from flowers, the Tamils loved outdoor sports such as cock-fights, ram-fights and bull-fights. Open-air dances by

nautch-girls (Padini) were arranged by kings. The dancers used to interpret, through emotional expression and rhythmic movements of the limbs, the songs sung by minstrels called *Panars*.

Bharata, in his prologue to the *Natya-Sastra* makes the modest statement that he is unequal to the task of codifying the art of dancing which was in vogue in Tamilnad for hundreds of years before him. BalaSaraswati, the greatest living exponent of the art of Bharatanatyam, recently gave a performance in the Ted Shawn theatre in Massachusetts. An American reviewer noted that “it was Hindu dance in its purest form, and she radiated a contagious spirit of calmness.” “The most articulate fore-finger in the world of dance (employing two thousand years of gestural dance development) is the dancer’s special approach to the art, an approach not based on physical virtuosity, but rather, upon nuances, shading, subtleties.” This was the appreciation of another American art critic.

Music also flourished in the Tamil country from ancient times. The wide variety of ragas and musical instruments known to the Tamilians has been graphically described in the *Silappathikaram* of the 2nd century A.D. Music was employed also as a background to manual labour. Tamilian folk-lore is replete with the songs of the plough-man, the boatman, the hunter, the warrior and the hewer.

The people living in the river-valleys in Tamilnad revelled in public baths in the rivers. Marco Polo says, “Both men and women wash their entire bodies in water both morning and

evening. Until this ablution has takes place, they neither eat nor drink; anyone who neglected this observance would be regarded as a heretic ; it ought to be noticed that in eating they make use of the right hand only and never touch their food with the left, reserving the latter for cleansing the private parts of the body. They drink out of a particular vessel, and each individual from his own, never making use of the drinking vessel of another person. When they drink they do not put their lips to their vessel, but hold it above the head and pour the liquid into the mouth, not allowing the vessel to touch the lips. In giving drink to a stranger, they do not hand their vessel to him, but pour the wine or other liquid into his hands from which he drinks as from a cup.”

One of the customs of the Tamils which bespeak their living contact with Nature is that they generally eat food not from plates but from plantain leaves. Their love of trees was so great that they started worshipping them. In fact, in the Sanctum Sanctorum of most of the famous temples in Tamilnad, there is a holy tree which is offered worship. The *vanni* tree, the bamboo tree, the jack fruit tree, the tamarind tree and the *tulasi* plant and even the *arubam-pul* (a kind of grass) are worshipped as symbols of the Cosmic spirit. The miracle of the seed sprouting into stem, leaf, flower and fruit was a profound reminder to them of the miracle of creation, sustenance and destruction.

The average Tamilians lived in mud houses with thatched roofs. The floors would be swept every day and smeared with cow dung which is known to be a better disinfectant than phenyl or dettol. The humblest of the people would beautify the floor of

the house and the courtyard by drawing a variety of designs (mostly floral) with white silicon powder ; the art of *kolam* is an indispensable part of the housewife's equipment.

The eating habits of the Tamils are equally simple. Though the majority of the Tamils are non-vegetarians, the maximum number of vegetarians in India is to be found in Tamilnad. There are thousands upon thousands of Tamils who have been practising abstinence from meat, fish and even eggs for several centuries. Idli is a peculiar Tamil delicacy which has recently become popular in the rest of India. Finely ground pastes of rice and black gram are mixed in a particular proportion and allowed to ferment for about twelve hours and then boiled in steam. The idli so prepared is soft and fragile and readily melts in the mouth. As the late Rasikamani T. K. Chidambaranatha Mudaliar used to say, there are two thousand years of tradition behind the idli which no non-Tamil has so far succeeded in producing.

Reverence for life, in whatever form, appeared conspicuous among the Tamils, at any rate during the Sangam period. Pari, the renowned patron of Tamil letters, found a jasmine creeper lying across his path and refused to ride his chariot over it. The story is that he abandoned his chariot and allowed the plant to creep on it for support. There is also the legend of Pehen, another chieftain, who finding a peacock shivering with cold, covered it with his own silk mantle. As P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar says in his History of the Tamils, "This sane love of Nature was the cause why they beautified their tools, their house, their furniture and their vessels with carvings imitative of creepers, leaves, flowers and animals."

By the first century A.D., as the Romans were codifying their laws, we find Thiruvalluvar codifying ethics in Tamilnad. Although it is wrong to contend that the great ideals of perfection which the Kural preached were being practised by the contemporary Tamils, it must be admitted that a society which gave birth to the Kural in the 1st or 2nd century A.D., must have had something in common between it and the illustrious author of the Kural. As Albert Schweitzer has said in his book, *Indian Thought*, "With sure strokes, the Kural draws the ideal of simple, ethical humanity. On the most varied questions concerning the conduct of man to himself and to the world, its utterances are characterized by nobility and good sense. There hardly exists in the literature of the world a collection of maxims in which we find so much lofty wisdom." According to Schweitzer, in a country which believed in world-and-life-negation, the lonely voice of Valluvar affirmed life and the world, at the same time assimilating all the valuable ethical results of the thought of world-negation. It is the assertion of Schweitzer that this voice of Thiruvalluvar gradually penetrated into Hindu thought through the great religious teachers who had sprung from the lower castes and lived among and felt with the people.

We shall next proceed to examine the language of the Tamils and find out if it gives us any clue to the distinctiveness of the Tamil way of living. It must not be forgotten that a language reflects the character and ability of the people who have forged it. As Milton said, "Show me a language of the people. Without knowing them I can say what they are." Rev. Percival, who was a great student of Tamil, said of Tamil, "Perhaps, no language combines greater force with equal brevity; and it may be asserted

that no human speech is more close and philosophic in its expression as an exponent of the mind. The sequence of things - of thought, action and its results— is always maintained inviolate.” Dr. Schmid declares, “The mode of collating its words follows the logical or intellectual order more so than even the Latin or Greek.” Dr. Winslow, in his Tamil-English-Dictionary, says, “ It is not perhaps extravagant to say that in its poetic form Tamil is more polished and exact than the Greek and, in both dialects, with its borrowed treasures, more copious than Latin. In its fullness and power, it more resembles English and German than any other living language.” Rev. Percival, in *The Land of the Veda*, argues that the Tamil language teems with words expressive of different degrees of affinity, and that where, in a European language, a long periphrasis would be required, Tamil presents the thing in its, own single term and this fecundity extends to all the ramifications of the family tree. He adds, “If I speak of a sister, I may either take a word that gives the relationship subsisting between us or I may select one that will indicate our relative ages. Measures and divisions of time are equally minute and expressive. The language, thus specific, gives to the mind a readiness and clearness of conception, whilst its terseness and philosophic idiom afford equal means of lucid utterance.” Dr. G. Slater makes a legitimate attempt to infer from the Tamil language the character of those who have evolved it, and concludes, “The Tamil language is extraordinary in its subtlety and sense of logic. The perfection with which it has been developed into an organ for precise and subtle thought, combined with the fact that it represents a much earlier stage in the evolution of inflectional language than any Indo-Germanic tongue, suggests the priority of the Dravidians in attaining settled order and regular government.”

The western theory of jurisprudence is that the king can do no wrong because he is above the law. But Tamil jurists have rejected this theory and have always held that the king is as much subject to the law as his citizens. That this theory was translated into practice can be seen from an amazing account given by Marco Polo in his *Travels*. He says that in the Pandya kingdom the creditors could attach the person of debtors by drawing a circle around them, which they should not leave until after the satisfaction of the debt. If the debtor attempted to escape, he rendered himself liable to punishment. Marco Polo claims to have been an eye-witness of a remarkable example of this custom. He says, "The king owed a sum of money to a certain foreign merchant and, although frequently asked for payment, put him off for a long time with promises. One day, when the king was riding on horse-back, the merchant took the opportunity of describing a circle around him and his horse. As soon as the king saw what had been done, he immediately halted and would ride no further until the demand of the merchant was fully satisfied. The bystanders beheld what happened and marvelled at the king, saying that he was most just, for he himself submitted to the laws of justice." The name of the king has been given by Marco Polo as "Sunder- *Bundy*," presumably, Sundara Pandyan.

One vitiating infirmity of the Tamilian is that despite his early contacts with the Greeks and the Romans, he never learnt to record his own history. As Alberuni, a scholar who visited India in the 11th century A.D., observed, "The Indians of the past, despite their high intellectual attainments, lacked the historical spirit." It is possible that the records of history preserved on-palmyra leaves have been lost. The first Tamilian to keep a diary

was Anandarangam Pillai who lived at Pondicherry in the 17th century and who must have learnt from the French the art of keeping a diary. The only evidence of historical events kept by the Tamils is in the shape of stone- inscriptions mostly on temple-walls. But even these inscriptions do not possess the objectivity required of the Muse of History.

The capacity of the Tamils to assimilate the best in other cultures and adapt it to the peculiar genius of the Tamil people is remarkable. Some of the brightest periods of Tamil history were brought about by an apparent clash of cultures and the consequent synthesis thereof. The Kural and the way of living preached by it were the product of the interaction between old Tamil culture and the culture of the Buddhists and Jains. Perhaps, the golden age of the Tamils, which extended from about the 5th century A.D, to the 13th century A.D., was the result of the influx of Sanskrit culture. It was during this period that the Alvars and the Nayanmars were in full swing; Kamban sang the Ramayanam and celebrated it with an orchestral fullness that had never before been attained and that has never since been rivalled, in poetry, which can rank with the greatest that has been achieved in world literature; and the Chola and Pallava architecture and sculpture acquired a new dimension of depth. It was during this period again that Sankara and Ramanuja, who have been aptly called the Sankrithising Dravidians, preached their great gospels throughout the length and breadth of India. The Tamils began to use Sanskrit as their *lingua franca* and propagated the principles of their integrated culture, philosophy and religion not only throughout India, but also in Java, Malaya, Indo-China, China and the Philippines. As Dr. S. K. Chatterjee says, the Tamils

modified the Sanskrit language according to their own speech-habit and then by sheer weight of numbers, swamped the native speakers of Aryan and forced them, through the influence of new environments, to accept these modifications and innovations. Even the syntactical structure of the Sanskrit language was changed and a number of Tamil words were absorbed and assimilated by Sanskrit in the same way as a number of Sanskrit words were absorbed and assimilated by Tamil. *Agamas*, which were Tamilian in origin, were written in Sanskrit even as *Nigamas* which were Aryan in origin were translated into Tamil. A great intercourse of culture took place during this period and the result was a most magnificent efflorescence in the Tamilian way of living. As Dr. Chatterjee remarks, “What struck me long ago was, that inspite of its many obvious and outstanding poems of originality, which furnish some of its most pleasing feature, there cannot be any doubt that Tamil literature cannot be dissociated from Sanskrit and other Indian literature, but belongs very much to the orbit of Pan-Indian Hindu literature , taking ‘Hindu’ in its most comprehensive sense. This is much truer of the compositions of the Saiva Saints, the Nayanmars and the Vaishnava devotees ‘Alvars’ who are the glory of *Tamizhagam* and of India, compositions, which, by their profundity and beauty and their divine and human quality, have enriched the spiritual life and aspirations, not only of Hindus but also the whole humanity. Some of the deepest things in Hindus religious culture like the practice of *Yoga* certainly go back to the pre-Aryan period..... Tamilians have unquestionably made the basic things of Indian culture more profound and more extensive in many departments.”

As Dr. Pope observes in his Preface to the Tamil-English-Dictionary. "I have felt sometimes as if there must be a blessing in store for a people that delight so utterly in compositions thus remarkably expressive of a hunger and thirst after righteousness." - Sir John Elliot, writing in his *Hinduism and Buddhism* (Volume II. page 271) regarding the literature of the Saiva Siddhanta, affirms, "In no literature with which I am acquainted, has an individual religious life-its struggles and dejections, its hopes and fears, its confidence and its triumph- received a delineation more frank and more profound ." It was during this period that the *Tiruvachakam* of Manickavasakar was sung, and the sacred verses of *Tiruppavai* , and *Thiruvembavai* exported from Tamilnad to Thailand, where, according to Father Thani Nayagam, they are sung even to this day during the coronation of kings. It may also be noted that during this period *Kotravai*, the Goddess of the Tamils merged with the Aryan Goddess *Durgai*, and *Siva* of Tamils became identified with *Rudra*. This fusion became more and more intimate and brought to the Tamils, a richness and fullness in their way of living, which is comparable only to the contribution made by the British during their imperial rule over India.

During the golden age, the temple became the centre of all activity in Tamilnad; education, dancing, drama, poetry, sculpture, architecture, philosophy and religion were imparted within its precincts. The heavy veil that usually separates human life from the life of the spirit was lifted and God came to be worshipped as Lover, Beloved, Master, Servant, Friend, Father and Mother; He ceased to be a distant and hazy cloud in the sky and became a plentiful river flowing intimately through the garden of the

spirit, enriching every department of life in Tamilnad. Somerset Maugham, the celebrated novelist, was shocked, as he went round the corridors of the Madurai Meenakshi temple, that people should be bawling out and talking irreverently in the house of God, but he confesses that by the time he completed the round, through the “irreligious” din and bustle of the temple, a spirit of religious ecstasy stole over him. Evidently, the gay abandon of the devotees, the fragrance of flower and sandal-paste, the brass lamps, the incense and the music, the resounding peals of the temple gong, the slow dance of camphor lights, the uninhibited frenzy of the worshippers and the mystic potency of the idols must have induced in Somerset Maugham a state of heightened awareness. His experience emphasizes what is perhaps most outstanding in Tamil culture, namely, that the Tamils in their intimacy with God occasionally forgot to revere him.

John Spiers, the English Editor of Values, wisely says of the religion of the Tamils, “It is linked with the natural pantheism or hylozoism which recognizes deity in stone, river, tree and animal, as well as in men. The messages of its graven images are profounder and more effective to the naturally contemplative Coolie-pariah masses than the mere repetition of fixed creeds. Frenzy is still possible and can be indulged in unashamedly (as for instance by the *Kavadi* dancer). The individual man or woman worshipping can enjoy the numinous or divine shivering to find peace of mind.” He significantly adds, “Indeed a pinch of even a good dose of this genuine ecstasy infused into the hard sin-coated core of modern Christianity would go a long way in making many people healthy, and sane, particularly if they could throw off the heavy weight of guilt, shame and sin. The *Siva*

religion is one of joy. The very name of the Deity means – ‘Auspicious One’.....A religion of happiness and joyous abandon encourages the arts of peace and culture.”

Therottam or the dragging of the temple car round the main streets of a town is an institution which still keeps the religious spirit alive among the Tamils. The bedecked Deity is reverently installed in a massive, stately chariot which is dragged by coir ropes, which are about a furlong in length and six inches in diameter. Thousands of devotees put their hands to the ropes and pull the chariot with concentrated devotion, joyously proclaiming the name of the Deity and the car moves inch by inch over twenty or thirty days before reaching the destination. The thrilling roar of “Arohara” raised by thousands upon thousands of devotees to the accompaniment of *Nadaswaram music* and the blowing of conches and horns, and the sight of the majestic car rumbling slowly along the street furnish an occasion for active community worship, in which the cumulative unconsciousness of the masses breaks down the barriers of the ego and gives them a glimpse, albeit momentary, of the Ultimately Real.

Between the 13th century and the 19th century, however, there was a decadence of Tamil culture and a deterioration in public morals. Poetasters and arid grammarians and uncreative moralists held sway during this period of political chaos, economic instability and religious sterility and, the living faith of the dead became the dead faith of the living.

With the advent of the British, however, a spirit of rationalistic and scientific inquiry influenced the Tamilians as it

influenced every other part of India But,during this period, the Tamil intellectuals lost their moorings and became denatured.

It is only after the advent of freedom that the Tamil- speaking people have begun to rediscover their soul and adapt the blessings of western education to the genius of the soil. They seem ready to absorb the new influences and to contribute their own, as during the golden age, to the composite culture of Bharat.

* * *

TIRUVALLUVAR

(Courtesy: 'Sabithya Akademi', New Delhi, who published this as a monograph under 'Makers of Indian Literature' series)

I. INTRODUCTION

Though Tiruvalluvar lived about 2000 years ago, it does not seem he is dead. He is a contemporaneous presence in the Tamil country, influencing men's thoughts and urging them to bring their conduct into greater and greater conformity with the high ideals he set before them.

None would disagree that he has shaped Tamil literature as no other Tamil has done. He has dominated the intellectual and literary landscape of Tamil Nadu, and never since his time has any man risen to the moral and spiritual height that came to him. There was no one like him before or since. Except, perhaps, Kambar.

He came to think, surely, of mankind as including persons who spoke other languages than Tamil. He taught in the same language as Plato or Aristotle, Confucius or Rousseau did in respect of ideas, in respect of conceptions of right and justice. What did he think of mankind? And what does it matter what he thought of mankind? It matters because therein resides the quintessence for prosperity and peace in the social order, a quest, which still eludes us. If he was right, the rest of us were wrong.

Tiruvalluvar's mind is so extraordinary that we would feel grateful and thrilled to see human life through his eyes. He contemplates the grand spectacle of the phenomenon of Man in its earthly and cosmic contexts and sees it in all its totality in the clear day-light of unclouded faith. He locates whatever makes for disharmony in personal relationships and maps out a detailed code of conduct, which would bring about harmony within the individual and harmony without. He focusses on the emotional reverberations caused by human conduct on every aspect of human relationship, between, say, son and father, husband and wife, citizen and State, and Soul and God.

As one visualises the architectonics of the Tirukkural with its 133 Chapters and 1330 Kurals, and as one grasps it whole, one is reminded of Arnold's description of a Poet;—

Leaned on his gate, he gazes, tears
are in his eyes, and in his ears
the murmur of a thousand years,
before him he sees life unroll,
a placid and continuous whole.

Not only does Valluvar see life unroll as a continuous whole, but also does he see with the eyes of a Seer what impedes the further evolution of Man and how the impediments can be removed. He has eyes that miss nothing, eyes that can twinkle with humour and wit, sarcasm and mischief, eyes which glow with righteous indignation and sparkle with certain and lofty wisdom, eyes which can make men fidget and women blush, eyes which grow misty with tears for the poor and sting the wicked.

Apart from his effort to embrace the human condition in its totality, he communicates his luminous insights in the pure perfection of poetry. He achieves supreme emotional effects, sometimes through drama and sometimes through lyric. He is a cunning technician, who, by prodigious self-restraint and artistic vigilance, super-charges his words with meaning and achieves an incredible terseness and an irreducible density. His commentators have, therefore, to squeeze every word and persuade it to yield its last drop of meaning. The success of each commentator has depended also upon the expertise, which he has brought to bear upon the original.

Dr. Albert Schweitzer in his book on “Indian Thought and its Development,” appraises the Tirukkural and observes, “There hardly exists in the literature of the world a collection of maxims, in which we find such lofty wisdom”. M. Ariel, the great French Savant, in a letter to Burnouf, published in the *Journal Asiatique* (November—December 1848) speaks of Tiruvalluvar’s great work as “a masterpiece of Tamil literature, one of the highest and purest expressions of human thought”. Again, he says :—”That which above all is wonderful in the Kural is the fact that its author

addresses himself, without regard to castes, peoples or beliefs, to the whole community of mankind; the fact that he formulates sovereign morality and absolute reason; that he proclaims in their very essence, in their eternal abstractedness, virtue and truth; that he presents, as it were, in one group, the highest laws of domestic and social life; that he is equally perfect in thought, in language and in poetry, in the austere metaphysical contemplation of the great mysteries of the Divine Nature as in the easy and graceful analysis of the tenderest emotions of the heart”.

The Italian Jesuit missionary, Fr. Beschi (De. 1742) translated most of the Kurals into Latin, and in his commentary, he compared the Kurals of Tiruvalluvar with the maxims of Seneca. The celebrated Englishman, Dr. G. U. Pope translated the Kural into English and published the same in 1886. In his introduction to the English translation, Dr. Pope has compared the Tirukkural to Propertius and to Martial and the Latin elegiac verse. In his commentary on the Kural Dr. Pope has quoted analogous passages from authors like Horace, Aeschyles, Dante, Shakespeare, Browning, Wordsworth, Manu, Burgin and Catullus and adds that what Archbishop Trench said of Saint Augustin is equally true of Tiruvalluvar :—”He abounds in short and memorable, and if I might so call them, epigrammatic sayings, concentrating with a forceful brevity, the whole truth, which he desires to impart, into some single phrase, forging it into a polished shaft at once pointed to pierce, and barbed that it shall not lightly drop from, the mind and memory”.

Poetess Avvayar, who is reputed to have been the sister of Tiruvalluvar and who must consequently have watched Valluvar

in his songsmithy, says in a Tamil song ;—”Valluvar bores an atom, pours the seven seas into its cavity, and cutting the atom, offers its cross-section to us in the shape of the Kural”.*

Rightly has Dr. G. U. Pope hailed Tiruvalluvar as the “Bard of Universal Man” and here are the songs in which Dr. Pope celebrates the universality of Tiruvalluvar ;—

Sage Valluvar, Priest of thy lowly clan,
no tongue repeats, no speech reveals thy name;
yet, all things changing, dieth not thy fame,
for thou art bard of Universal man.

And still thy ‘book’ above the waters wan,
virtue, true wealth and joy, and being’s aim
in sweetest mystic couplets doth proclaim
where winds sea-wafted palmy forests fan.

Haply undreamed of ‘vision’ glad thine eyes
in realms beyond thy fabled ‘seven *fold*’ birth
And clouds of darkness from thy spirit roll;
While lands far-off have heard with strange surprise
faint echoes of thy song, through all the earth
men hail thee brother, seer of spotless soul.

Note: English translations of all the Kurals and other Tamil poems cited in this monograph have been rendered by the Author of this monograph.

II. THE TIMES AND TEACHINGS OF TIRUVALLUVAR

What kind of Tamil Nadu is it that gave Tiruvalluvar his catholicity and universality of outlook, his wisdom, inspiration

and language? There is reason to believe that he lived between the third and the first century B.C. During this period, the dynasties of the Chera, Chola and Pandya Kings, ruling over different parts of Tamil Nadu, had wide international contacts with countries ranging from Egypt, Greece and Rome in the west, Burma, Malaysia and China in the east, Ceylon in the south and the Himalayan kingdoms in the north. A representative of the Pandya King attended the coronation of Emperor Augustus in Rome, as mentioned by Strabo, a Greek who wrote his *Geography* in the first century A.D. R.B. Dixon, the celebrated archaeologist and historian, asserts that Tamils had extensive trade with Malaya, North Borneo and Northern Philippines even in the first millennium B.C. and that **trade** led to colonisation and conquest of those countries by the Tamils. According to Paul Pelliot, there is evidence in Chinese literature of diplomatic relations between the South Indian Coasts and the Chinese empire as early as the 2nd century B.C. A Chinese writer, Pan Kou, who lived at the end of the 1st century, mentions the fact that in the time of the Hua Emperor, the Chola King sent embassies to China (*vide* K. M. Panikkar, 'India and China'— Pages 17 & 19). Greeks were employed as palace guards at Madurai, the capital of the Pandya Kingdom. The pearls that were available on the coastal areas of the Pandya Kingdom were world famous and attracted western merchants, who used to barter western wine for Indian pearls, rice and peacocks. Karikal Chola, a Chola King, invaded Ceylon and brought Gajabahu, the Ceylonese prince, as a prisoner along with 12,000 Sinhalese and engaged the prisoners in the construction of a Dam across the Cauveri river. A spirit of maritime adventure and curiosity characterised the Tamils.

Internally, the life of the Tamils was incarnadined with intermittent war among the Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas.

Whilst Saivism and Vaishnavism were the indigenous religions, they became exposed in the 3rd century, B.C. to three new religions, which invaded Tamil Nadu, and those were Jainism, Buddhism and Vedic Brahmanism. Along with their religious tenets, these religions brought new linguistic influences to bear upon the Tamils. Prakrit, Pali and Sanskrit were the languages in and through which the new religions conducted propaganda in Tamil Nadu. Tamil Nadu was dotted with *Pattimannams* or great debating assemblies in which sensational, metaphysical and religious debates took place. Greek, Roman and Egyptian thought had also intermingled with the thoughts of the Tamils in those great debating assemblies. The champions of different religions vied with one another in obtaining political influence and patronage and were trying by their intellectual and spiritual promises to woo the Tamil kings and win them over to their own denominational religions. The protagonists of each religion claimed to have supernatural powers to cure diseases, wipe out sins and secure bliss for its adherents in this world and the next. The performance of severe austerities, self-immolation and a denial of the reality of this world, marked the teachings of the invading religions. Vedic Brahmanism, in addition to its life negation, preached the caste system and advocated different Dharmas for the different castes. Even in its method of punishment for crimes, it was highly discriminatory, prescribing for the crime of murder the punishment of death for the Sudras and that of banishment for the twice-born. While the invading religions regarded existence as something sorrowful and advocated

renunciation of the world and its activities on the basis that the world itself is an illusion and existence itself something sorrowful, the Tamils had built up an independent value system of their own long before the 3rd century B.C. It was strongly egalitarian in character, ethical in temperament and emphasized what Albert Schweitzer would call “World and Life Affirmation”, which urges men to serve their fellowmen, Society, the nation, mankind and indeed all that lives with the utmost love, whereas ‘world and life negation’ takes no interest in the world and regards man’s journey through the earth, “either merely as a stage play in which it is his duty to participate or only as a puzzling pilgrimage through the land of Time to his Home in Eternity”. The indigenous system of values was under attack and was in danger of mutilation or even extinction. The intermittent peace in Tamil Nadu was thus riven by great disputations about it and about.

Internally and externally, it was an age of great ferment in Tamil Nadu; the dominant Tamilian of the age was a charge of energy exposed to conflicting views and ideologies; he was boundless in ambition, longing to develop his capacities, given to violence of action and speech.

As it was a period of disputations, religious, and philosophical, orators developed in the Tamil Country and resorted to all the tricks of successful eloquence. They excelled in passionately presenting one side of a question, sometimes suppressing the truth and suggesting the falsehood. Rhetoricians stalked the country and stirred the air of Tamil Nadu with ingenious fallacies and pernicious shibboleths. Pali and Sanskrit which were struggling for supremacy over Tamil, the language of

the people. In fact, Pali appears to have succeeded in becoming the administrative language of the Pandya Kingdom. The protagonists of Tamil, it is reasonable to presume, agitated for the restoration of Tamil as the administrative language of the Pandya Kingdom. Vices, cruelties and violence must have been the by-products of this conflicting age.

The voyages of conquest and discovery expanded the horizon of the Tamilian mind. All the influences of those exciting times operated upon the Tamils.

Excessive theological debates led men from superstition to reason, from the denominational religions to the quintessence of spirituality. The III Tamil Sangam was a literary Academy, which had forty nine members, and sat at Madurai, the capital of the Pandya Kingdom, and like the Academic Francaise, with its forty eight members, stood sentinel over the Tamil language, guided its growth and reflected through its productions, the cream of Tamilian thought. This Academy enjoyed such prestige throughout the Tamil world that no new literary production would pass muster unless it received the imprimatur of its approval.

There was a large body of Sangam poetry, which preceded Tiruvalluvar's Kural Tholkappiam, a well-known Tamil Grammar, had been produced in the 2nd century B.C. and there was Agathiyam, a grammar which had been compiled even earlier. These are the germs and antigens that made Tamil Nadu big with Tiruvalluvar. What Tiruvalluvar did was to preserve, codify and enlarge the value system of the Tamils after assimilating into it

the best in the thoughts of Buddhism, Jainism and Vedic Brahmanism. Valluvar, who lived amidst the conflicts of dogma, achieved his intellectual enfranchisement by rising above the trivialities of controversy of his times and seeing the principles that unified and synthesized all religions. He had the wisdom to see the part in the light of the whole and the insight and the faculty of grasping at once the essential out of the non-essential, the eternal out of the temporal and the whole out of the part. He attacked the most powerful customs of the age with a force unparalleled in poetry. He had the courage to declare:-

By birth all men are equal;
it is by the differences in their action
that their worth is rendered unequal. (972)

பிறப்பொக்கும் எல்லா உயிர்க்கும் சிறப்பொவ்வா
செய்தொழில் வேற்றுமை யான். (972)

He was charged indeed with a colossal energy of affirmation. In support of his affirmation of life, he argued that the world is real, because such eternal verities as compassion formed an integral part of earthly existence.

The sun of warm humanism and intense love and compassion shines over the entire work of Tiruvalluvar. Says Tiruvalluvar :—

The loveless ones belong all to themselves;
the loving ones belong to others—their bones and all.
(72)

அன்பிலார் எல்லாந் தமக்குரியர் அன்புடையார்
என்பும் உரியர் பிறர்க்கு. (72)

This is a remarkable exposition of love in its self-sacrificing and redemptive character. Valluvar proceeds to ask:—

Of what avail are the outer organs
to those
who don't have love, the inner organ of the body. (79)

புறத்துறும் பெல்லாம் எவன்செய்யும் யாக்கை
அகத்துறும்பு அன்பி லவர்க்கு. (79)

The dominating theme of Valluvar throughout his work is that love is the highest manifestation of the human spirit and that living in accordance with love is the highest virtue accessible to man. In fact, he lays stress on this truth in the following Kural:—

Existence has its root
in the very nature of love,
and those who have no love
are but skeletons covered over with skin. (80)

அன்பின் வழியது உயிர்நிலை அஃதிலார்க்கு
என்புதோல் போர்த்த உடம்பு. (80)

It is Valluvar's view that an act of love must be spontaneous and shall not be in expectation of a compensating reward in the future life. According to him, an act of love is to be valued for the present joy it gives. He says:—

To beg is evil
even if it were declared a virtue,
but to give is good, even if by giving,
future heavenly bliss is denied. (222)

நல்லாறு எனினும் கொளல்தீது மேலுலகம்
இல்லெனினும் ஈதலே நன்று. (222)

The spontaneity of love is further explained by him in the following Kural:-

In what way can the Earth recompense the clouds,
which, without any thought of return,
shower benevolence upon the Earth! (211)

கைம்மாறு வேண்டா கடப்பாடு மாரிமாட்டு
என்ஆற்றுங் கொல்லோ உலகு.(211)

It will be found that Valluvar evolved a commanding synthesis of the best in every religion, selecting from each the doctrines which he found most wholesome, and dovetailing it into the Tamilian system of spiritual and ethical thinking. This synthesis has been effected so adroitly that it has not come into apparent conflict with the quintessence of any religion. The result is that the adherents of every religion began to claim Tiruvalluvar as a practitioner of their own religion.

Of all the competing claims made by the different claimants, that made by the Christian scholars seems the quaintest. The wrong notion that compassion, love and active service to fellow-men were not preached by any pre-Christian thinker seems to be the basis of this claim. Stephen Neill, a distinguished English theologian, gives the quietus to the Christian claim in the following words: “Dr. Pope’s enthusiasm for this Tamil author has led him, however, into quaint speculations as to possible Christian influences in this great work. ‘We are quite warranted in imagining Tiruvalluvar, the thoughtful poet. . . . whose one thought was to gather knowledge from every source.... We may fairly, I say, picture him passing along the sea-shore with the

Christian teachers and imbibing Christian ideas, tinged with the peculiarities of the Alexandrian School, and working them into his own wonderful Kural' (G. U. Pope: *The Sacred Kural*, 1886, III). I am afraid that we are warranted by nothing other than a powerful and pious imagination, spreading its wings beyond the limits of what sober scholarship will underwrite. The literary critic uses the word "impossible" with caution—so many unlikely things have proved to be true. But I must confess that I regard any Christian influence in the Kural as so *unlikely as to border on the impossible*" [vide *Bhakti; Hindu and Christian* (1974)—Stephen Neill—Pages 43 and 44]. Another reason which reinforces this conclusion is that Tiruvalluvar lived in pre-Christian times. In certain respects, he not only anticipated Jesus Christ but also went beyond his teachings, as will be shown later.

The Age of Valluvar

It is difficult to fix with any degree of precision the age of Valluvar. In the world of Tamil scholarship, the age of Tiruvalluvar has been a theme for wildly differing speculations. But there is some literary and historical evidence in this behalf, which is not conclusive but only indicative. *Silappathikaram* and *Manimekalai* are two wellknown epics of the Sangam age. Ilango Adigal, the author of *Silappathikaram* and Sathanar, the author of *Manimekalai*, were contemporaries, and there is internal evidence in these two epics to attest to that fact. According to Sathanar, the Chera King Senguttuvan built a temple for Kannagi, the heroine of *Silappathikaram*. In the 3rd Canto of *Silappathikaram* it is reported that Gajabahu, the King of Lanka, personally

attended the worship at the Kannagi temple along with the Chera King Senguttuvan. The question arises, when did Gajabahu live? The *History of Ceylon* (Volume I, Part I, pages 183—185) shows that there had been two kings by the same name Gajabahu; one ruled Ceylon from 114 to 136 A.D., whereas the other ruled Ceylon in the 12th Century A.D. Most Tamil scholars agree that *Manimekalai* and *Silappathikaram* were written in the 2nd Century A.D. and the Gajabahu, who worshipped at the temple of Kannagi, is the Gajabahu of the 2nd Century A.D. In *Manimekalai*, Tirukkural has been quoted with adoration and the author of Tirukkural is referred to as ‘Poyyil Pulavan’. (the poet who is free from untruth). In *Silappathikaram* also, several Tirukkural have been quoted with reverence. Some Sangam works, which demonstrably belong to the 2nd Century A.D. refer to Tiruvalluvar as the ‘Divine Poet’. These evidences show that Tiruvalluvar must have lived sometime before the 2nd Century A.D. In those days, dissemination of information was necessarily tardy. It may not be wrong, therefore, to assume that it would have taken one or two centuries for the reputation of Tiruvalluvar to be established so firmly that Sathanar of the 2nd Century should have called him ‘The Divine Poet’. According to Dr. M. Rajamanickanar, Tiruvalluvar must have lived at some time between the 3rd Century B.C. and the 1st Century B.C. (*vide* his *History of Tamil Language and Literature*, page 123). His cautious and wide-ranging estimate may be accepted.

III. TRANSLATIONS & CITATIONS

Tirukkural, the work of Tiruvalluvar, is the most translated, the most cited, and the most citable of Tamil literary works.

An arrestingly astute couplet of the poet was explained in English to Dr. Graul, a great German Scholar; and he was so much taken up with it that he learnt the Tamil language in order to enjoy the Kural in the original and then proceeded to translate it into German in 1854 and into Latin in 1856. Here is my rather inadequate English translation of the Kural (No. 1091) that startled the German Scholar:—

Two are the looks
the in-drinking eyes of this maid have—
the one that makes you ill
and the other that cures you.

இருநோக்கு இவளுக்கண் உள்ளது ஒருநோக்கு
நோய்நோக்கொன் றந்நோய் மருந்து. (1091)

After translating a good portion of the Tirukkural, Dr. Graul declared, “No translation can convey any idea of its charming effect. It is truly an apple of gold in a net-work of silver.”

In about 1730 A.D., Books 1 and 2 of the Kural were translated into Latin by Fr. Beschi, one of the greatest of European Tamil scholars. Fr. Beschi came to Tamil Nadu as a proselytizing missionary and he had the unshakeable conviction that all Pagans were destined to go to Hell. After translating the Kural and steeping himself in the lofty and ennobling sentiments of Tiruvalluvar, Fr. Beschi felt constrained to concede that the tongue of Tiruvalluvar, that sang these aphorisms, could not have gone to Hell, even though, being a Pagan, he must have gone there!

M. Ariel, a great French Savant, translated in 1848 some fragments of the Kural into French and he referred to an earlier

French translation of the Kural made by some unknown author in 1730 A.D. and kept in the Bibliotheque Nationale of France.

The translation of the Kural into the European languages seems to have gone a long way to dispel from the minds of European thinkers, especially European missionaries, their misgivings about the character and culture of the Indian people. Rev. Dr. J. Lazarus, a missionary himself, proclaimed, "The Kural cannot be improved nor its plan made more perfect. It is a perfect mosaic in itself. A slight change in the size, shape or colour of a single stone would mar the beauty of the whole. It is refreshing to think that a Nation, which has produced so great a man and so unique a work, cannot be a *hopeless despicable race*. The morality he preached could not have grown except out of an essentially moral soil". Fr. J. Lazarus added by way of caution to his fellow missionaries, "To those, therefore, who labour for the consolidation of the Tamil people, the Kural must be a work of peculiar and intense interest."

There was a notion among the European Christian missionaries that humility, charity and forgiveness of injuries are virtues which have not been preached by the non-Christian nations. Rev. Dr. G. U. Pope, who translated the Kural into English in 1886, exploded this prejudice and observed, "Grant says that humility, charity and forgiveness of injuries are not described by Aristotle. Now these three are everywhere forcibly inculcated by this Tamil moralist (*Tiruvalluvar*). The Kural owes much of its popularity to its exquisite poetic form. The brevity rendered necessary by the form gives effect to the utterances of the great Tamil "Master of Sentences". They are the choicest of

moral epigrams. Their resemblance to gnomic poetry of Greece is remarkable as to the subjects, their sentiments and the state of Society when they were uttered. Something of the same kind is found in Greek epigrams, in Martial and the Latin elegiac verse. There is a beauty in the periodic character of the Tamil construction in many of these verses that reminds the reader of the happiest efforts of Propertius.”

Rev. Percival, a perceptive English critic, proclaimed: “Nothing certainly in the whole compass of human language can equal the force and terseness of the sententious distichs in which the author conveys the lessons of wisdom he utters.”

It is, therefore, no surprise that Tirukkural is the most translated of the Tamil works. It has been translated into Latin, German, French, Dutch, Finnish, Polish, Russian, Chinese, Fiji, Malay and Burmese and into such Indian languages as Sanskrit, Urdu, Marathi, Bengali, Hindi, Telugu and Malayalam. There are in fact as many as 82 translations of the Tirukkural in foreign languages.

The thoughts of Valluvar have dominated the intellectual scene of the Tamils for over two millennia. The Tamil people regard the Tirukkural as the Tamil Veda. The Tiruvalluvar Malai (*The Garland of Tiruvalluvar*) is a compilation of Panegyrics sung partly by the contemporaries of Tiruvalluvar and partly by those who came long after him. Kapilar, who might have been a contemporary of Tiruvalluvar, sang as follows:

The droplet of water

that is tinier than a grain of *Tinai*,
reflects the tall and stately palmyrah tree;
equally vast is the tiny Kural's
range of reflection.

Pavanar, another poet said:

Vishnu came in the form of a Dwarf,
and growing taller and taller,
took two giant steps
and measured the whole of the Universe;
the omniscient Valluvar, with the two feet of his Kural,
has measured all the thoughts
that have ever crossed the mind of Man.

Tothamanar said:

The Brahmins stand by the four Vedas,
but they would not reduce the same to writing
lest the evocatory power of the Vedas should be
destroyed;
but Valluvar reduced his scripture to writing
and its potency will not be impaired, whether it is
recited
by the mighty or the weak.

Mankudi Maruthanar in his poem says:

The Kural is a scripture,
which is easy to recite,
but difficult to comprehend;
the more it is reflected upon by men without evil,
the more it would melt their hearts and minds.

Vannakkam Sathanar said:

If we examine Sanskrit and Tamil,
it would be difficult to judge
which is greater than which;
for Sanskrit possesses the Veda and
Tamil possesses the Tirukkural of Valluvar.

Avvaiyar said:

May that Lamp of Spiritual Truth, (*the Divine Poet,*
Tiruvalluvar)
burn bright for ever, as he does today,
and dispel the darkness from the human heart.

Theni Kudi Kiranar has, in a rare song, expatiated upon the effect of Tiruvalluvar's thoughts on his contemporaries. Evidently Tiruvalluvar lived in times when there was great conflict of ideas and a good deal of dialectical warfare, and in the resulting confusion, people had mistaken the false for the true. Tiruvalluvar tore the mask of Truth from the face of Untruth and exposed its falsity convincingly to his contemporaries. He also re-enthroned Truth, which had been over-powered by falsehood, and was lying in the dust, unrecognised. It is this transformation that Theni Kudi Kiranar refers to in a song, which may be translated as follows:

The Divine Tiruvalluvar by uttering the Tirukkural
worked a transformation in the minds of living men,
and it was this:-that which was false and belonged
to the realm of falsehood
was demonstrated by him to be false,
and that which was not false, but was true and
belonged to the realm of truth,
was proved by him to be luminously true.

In the poetry of the third Sangam, which lasted for 300 years

till the end of the 1st century A.D. Tirukkural has been quoted with great reverence and approval. Kambar, who was the greatest Tamil poet and who lived in the 9th century A.D., assimilated the ideas of the Kural and wove them into the fabric of his poetry after giving them an original twist of his own. Most of the major Tamil poets including those of the 20th century have in several ways celebrated in song their indebtedness to Tiruvalluvar. Kural has so deeply penetrated the thinking of the Tamils that even unlettered Tamils may be heard quoting the Kural. When Dr. C. N. Annadurai, the former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, directed selected Kurals to be inscribed on the panels of nationalised buses, a Member of the Tamil Nadu State Legislature asked him cynically, for whose edification are these Kurals inscribed on the buses? Is it for the benefit of the bus crew or the bus passengers? Dr. Annadurai retorted, 'It is for the benefit of all those who have eyes to see'. Dr. Xavier S. Thani Nayagam has drawn attention to the earliest record of a non-Indian use of the Tirukkural, which is to be found in Fernao de Queyroz's *Conquest of Ceylon* in which the Franciscan Missionary Fra Joam de Vila Conde, in a religious debate at the Court of Bhuvanaika Bahu of Kotte, Ceylon (1521-1551) cited the Tirukkural in support of the doctrines which he preached: "Read one of the books you have which you have maliciously hidden, composed by Valuer, (*evidently Valluvar*) a native of Melipur (*Mylapore*) and the contemporary of St. Thomas. There you will find the union of the Trinity, the Incarnation of the Son, the Redemption of Man, the cause of his fall, the remedy for his faults and miseries and finally the preservation of his state." This quotation shows that the Kural was so popular even in Ceylon as to attract the notice of the Portuguese Missionary, Joam de Vila Conde.

IV. THE PERSONALITY OF TIRUVALLUVAR

There is no contemporaneous record from which we could reconstruct the personality of Tiruvalluvar. But there are good many legends about him, which have been handed down from generation to generation, and there is also some internal evidence in his work, from which one may perhaps visualise what Tiruvalluvar was like.

According to legend, Tiruvalluvar was a weaver by profession. 'Valluvar' is the title of a caste of men who were either soothsayers or priests, and who used to mount upon the backs of elephants and proclaim royal notifications by tom-tom. 'Tiru', which is the prefix to Valluvar, connotes in Tamil anything that is holy. Tiruvalluvar means the holy man belonging to the Valluva community and the Tirukkural means the 'Holy Couplet'. Neither of these words is a proper noun, and a French author noting this anomaly, remarked, 'This is a book without a name by an author without a name'.

It may however be taken as certain that Tiruvalluvar lived in Mylapore (*town of peacocks*), which is a part of the present city of Madras. Nowhere in Tamilnadu, except in Mylapore, is there a temple dedicated to the memory of Tiruvalluvar. The poet's home, it may be fancied, was a place near this temple, around which, according to Rev. G. U. Pope, "there still lingers a strange oriental beauty, and which has probably not changed much since the time when the passer-by might have heard the click of the shuttle mingling with the low chaunt of his melodious words... There is a sacred tank still with a belt of cocoanut palms and leaf-covered houses, in any one of which the poet might have lived".

The sea-shore is close by and we can imagine Tiruvalluvar walking hand in hand with Greek, Roman, Buddhist, Jain, Vedic, Vaishnavaites and Saivaite philosophers along the sea-coast discussing the eternal verities of life and the nuances of the art of living. Savants and sages from far and near used to visit Tiruvalluvar, sojourn with him, bathe with him in the sea close by, discuss with him, sitting on the pial of his house, and eat with him the simple and the wholesome food served by Vasuki, Valluvar's wife. He had a great genius for friendship and parting with the enlightened men after their sojourn with him for some days gave him great anguish. One day after seeing off his friends and standing in the street corner till they had disappeared in the dim distance, Valluvar came back with a heavy heart, sat on the pial of his house and brooded over the departure of his friends. Then he decided good-humouredly to befriend, not the cultured and the enlightened, but only the fools and the idiots. In one of his Kurals, he supports this decision with the following words:—

Supremely sweet is the friendship of fools;
for
when they depart you shed not a tear. (839)

பெரிதினிது பேதையார் கேண்மை பிரிவின்கண்
பீழை தருவதுஒன்று இல். (839)

One Margasahayam was struck with the simplicity of Valluvar's living and the loftiness of his thought. He, therefore, proposed that Valluvar might marry his daughter, Vasuki. While willing to marry her, Tiruvalluvar wished to put Vasuki's temper to the test. He told Margasahayam, "If Vasuki will take this quantity of sand and boil it into rice for my meal, I will take her as my wife". Vasuki unquestioningly took the basket of sand given

to her and proceeded to boil it in the conviction that the holy man's wishes would materialise. A miracle was wrought on her behalf, and as she brought the baked sand, it became the rice for which Valluvar had asked. At once, Valluvar accepted her for his wife and lived with her in joy and peace.

Their married life was the embodiment of all the house-hold virtues to which the Kural refers in ennobling terms. According to the Kural, the ideal householder leads on earth a dedicated life, keenly conscious of his duties to the living and to the departed; his wife, who is his partner in life and who is the author of all his glory, lives a modest and frugal life, adores her husband as her God and guards her chastity with unsleeping vigilance.

Apparently, the couple had a number of children, who were treated as the treasures of the home. Their prattling voices were music to their parents, more musical than the lute and the flute. Tiruvalluvar loved children with great tenderness. He sang:

To touch the body of children
is pleasure to the body;
to listen to their babble
is pleasure to the ear. (65)

மக்கள்மெய் தீண்டல் உடற்கின்பம் மற்றுஅவர்
சொற்கேட்டல் இன்பம் செவிக்கு. (65)

The cooked food that the children's tiny fingers had played with became transmuted into ambrosia for the parents, and the one aim of the father of the family was to make the children worthier than himself. Affection permeated the family.

Valluvar's house had an open door and he welcomed with smiling face and with sweet speech every guest and shared with him his meal. Courtesy in speech, gratitude for every little act of kindness, justice in all his dealings, mastery of every one of his impulses, quickness in the performance of every duty, purity, patience, and a forbearing disposition, marked his daily life.

His heart was free from envy and he was moderate in his desires. He spoke no evil of others. He refrained from unmeaning words; he dreaded the touch of evil; he was liberal in benefactions. This is a picture of an ideal householder which Valluvar portrays and of which, according to legend, Valluvar was an exemplar.

Years after the marriage of Valluvar, a stranger came to his cottage and asked the question, "Which is greater-domestic life or a life of asceticism?" The sage made no verbal reply to the question but he entertained the stranger as his guest for some days and left him to see his domestic life for himself and find an answer to his question.

One day while Vasuki was drawing water from the well, Tiruvalluvar suddenly called her and the obedient wife came forth leaving the bucket hanging midway in the well. The stranger was surprised that the power behind the bucket could defy the laws of gravity.

Another day as Vasuki brought to her husband his morning meal of cold rice. Tiruvalluvar complained that it burnt his fingers. Vasuki did not argue; she took her husband on trust and began to fan the cold rice.

Another day in the glare of the noon-day sun, Tiruvalluvar let fall his shuttle and called for a light to search for it. The obedient Vasuki promptly lit a lamp and brought it to him.

The stranger, who watched all these incidents, found a decisive answer to his question: Where one could have a wife like Vasuki, domestic life would be the best. Where the wife is the reverse of what Vasuki was, the life of the ascetic should be preferred.

Valluvar and Vasuki lived a peaceful wedded life for a long time. As Vasuki was about to die, a question, which she dare not put to her husband all those years, was troubling her, and Valluvar lovingly coaxed her to formulate her question without hesitation. She said “Ever since our marriage, I have been, at your bidding, placing a cup of water and a needle by the side of the leaf, which I have been spreading out for your meal. May I know, my Lord, why it was.” The husband replied, “I wanted the cup of water and a needle because, if you spilt a grain of rice while serving me, I might pick it up with a needle and purify it in the water. There was no occasion, however, for using the needle and the water”. As soon as this doubt was cleared, Vasuki breathed her last.

After her death and after cremating her mortal remains, the Divine poet sang a soul-stirring song in lamentation over the death of Vasuki and the song may be translated as follows:-

Oh, my beloved, who is sweeter than my daily food,
Oh, my darling, who has never once disobeyed me,
Oh, gentle one, who chafing my feet, would go to bed

after me and would be the earlier to rise,
art thou gone!
how can slumber ever come to my unslumbering eyes?

We know a trifle or two about Valluvar's personal taste. But then we must not mistake our guess-work for biography. In Kural No. 1191, Tiruvalluvar says:

The women, who love their husbands and
are loved by them -
it is they who have procured the seedless fruit of sexual
delight. (1191)

தாம்வீழ்வார் தம்வீழ்ப் பெற்றவர் பெற்றாரே
காமத்துக் காழ்இல் கனி. (1191)

When we masticate a fruit like the pomegranate, which is full of seeds, the enjoyment of the pulp by the palate is often annoyingly interrupted by the irrelevant seeds. But when we dig our teeth into the plantain or the seedless grape, nothing intercepts the sensuous pleasure of eating it. That Tiruvalluvar must have compared the empathy between a well-tuned pair to the eating of a seedless fruit would suggest that he had an undoubted preference for seedless fruits.

He was full of benevolence and bonhomie. Addressing a foulmouthed vituperator, he would tell him with a genial smile:

Why use foul words
when there is an abundance of sweet words to choose
from?
it is just like going out of the way
to pilfer unripe fruits
when sweet ripe fruits are within your reach. (100)

இனிய உளவாக இன்னாத கூறல்
கனியிருப்பக் காய்கவர்ந் தற்று. (100)

After arresting his attention by this homely simile, Valluvar would appeal to his selfish interest and say:

Sweet words produce sweet results.
Will any one, who has
observed these results, ever use harsh and repellent
words? (99)

இன்சொல் இனிதீன்றல் காண்பான் எவன்கொலோ
வன்சொல் வழங்கு வது. (99)

The gift of laughter seems to give Valluvar an elevation from which he looks at the frailties and incongruities of human life with universal understanding and forgiveness of Shakespeare. Laughter ensures Valluvar against a sour pessimism. In fact, he advises us to cultivate the divine gift of laughter and adds:—

To him, who knows not to laugh,
this infinite universe would,
in broad day light,
seem steeped in darkness. (999)

நகல்வல்லர் அல்லார்க்கு மாயிரு ஞாலம்
பகலும்பாற் பட்டன்று இருள். (999)

His intense compassion for his fellowmen often brought tears to his eyes and his anger with evil was something to behold. He asks:— “ Do you know what is more pernicious than poverty?” Then he pauses for a while and answers the question by saying, “It is poverty that is more pernicious than poverty”.

He had learnt the all too rarely learnt lesson of pointed brevity in a few luminous words. He would go to the bottom of his question, and then take his seat, like a forensic giant. He understood the laws of social being so well that he could offer the same to us like an ambrosial drink.

In the age-long controversy between environment and heredity, he threw his weight in support of environment. He believed a man owes the growth of his personality to the environment in which he lives rather than to the genes he has inherited. In his Chapter on the 'Avoidance of Mean Company', he says:

Even as water takes on the nature of the soil through
which it
flows
men take on the wisdom of the environment in which
they live. (452)

நிலத்தியல் பால்நீர் திரிந்தற்றாகும் மாந்தர்க்கு
இனத்தியல்பு தாகும் அறிவு. (452)

In another Kural, he says :—

Wisdom, which appears to reside inside the mind of
man,
actually exists in his environment. (454)

மனத் துளதுபோலக் காட்டி ஒருவற்கு
இனத் துளதாகும் அறிவு. (454)

Valluvar was generous and considerate, usually cheerful, good humoured and vivacious; he was capable of warm and steadfast

friendship; quick to forgive and forget. He had a flair for epigram, for compressing reams of wisdom in a line.

Tiruvalluvar was a highly sensitive man and he said :

The world will regard him as the sanctuary of virtuous sensitivity, who would shrink in shame as much for other's guilt as for his own. (1015)

பிறர்பழியும் தம்பழியும் நாணுவார் நாணுக்கு
உறைபதி என்னும் உலகு. (1015)

A delicate sense of refinement marks him out. He wrote in Kural No. 1012:

Food, clothing and the rest mark all men in common;
it is only a delicate sense of shame
which separates the few from the many.

ஊணுடை எச்சம் உயிர்க்கெல்லாம் வேறல்ல
நாணுடைமை மாந்தர் சிறப்பு. (1012)

Valluvar was in love with every branch of knowledge. Ideas were his food and drink. He gathered them, savoured them, sampled them and poured them out into his diary and after cogitating over them for years, coordinated them and systematized them and then distilled them into poetry. Seldom have ideas or sentiments been honoured with such painstaking art.

In one Kural he speaks of “Vazhuvam ennum serukku” or the “the magnificent pride in being alive”. This reminds us of the Frenchman's “Joie de vivre” (Joy of living).

Legend asserts that Tiruvalluvar came in the prime of manhood to Madurai, to get his Tirukkural approved by the

Tamul Sangham (The Tamil Academy of Letters). The Academicians were so strict and jealous that they would not easily accord recognition to Valluvar. They pilloried him with questions but Tiruvalluvar discomfited them by answering their questions with effortless ease. Ultimately, they said, “Listen, oh, Tiruvalluvar, we will put you to the final test. If the golden bench floating in the tank inside the Meenakshi Temple will accept your book, we will accept it; if it will not, we will reject it”. Thereupon they spread themselves out on the floating bench and sat pressing against one another without leaving the smallest space for the Tirukkural. Undaunted, Tiruvalluvar approached the floating bench with the Kural in hand. As soon as he came near, the golden bench stretched itself so that Tiruvalluvar could sit on it comfortably along with his book. Then the book commenced to swell so enormously that it shoved one Academician after another off the bench until the entire Academy was sunk in the tank. The golden bench thus adjudged Tiruvalluvar as greater than all the Academicians put together. Ever since Tiruvalluvar has been known as the divine Poet. What a parable to conjure up and conjure with!

To read the divine poet’s Kural as it should be read, it is necessary to appreciate the many-sided genius of its author and his place in the canonical succession of the high priests of thought. One must therefore come back to the Kural in the fullness of knowledge and the ripeness of age. The Tirukkural should be read, not in one huge gargantuan gulp, but in small homoeopathic doses, as one would taste a priceless elixir, in which case the reader will realise that Valluvar’s writings call for increased participation in the human adventure and are in themselves a reverential celebration of the joy of life.

V. INTERPRETATION OF THE KURAL

The Kural is so terse and profound that it would yield its secret only to those who meditate upon it with reverence; traditionally, there have been 10 Tamil commentators of the Tirukkural. The best known among them is Parimelazhagar. Some of the commentators have been reading into the Kural what they desired to discover. There are certain Kurals, which even the accumulated wisdom of the ancient commentators has been unable to unravel. The late lamented Rasikamani T. K. Chidambaranatha Mudaliar, who was the greatest aesthete produced by Tamil Nadu in the 20th Century and who could compare favourably with Saint Beauve of France, has been able to throw new light upon many of the Kurals. Take, for instance, the following Kural :—

Udavi Varaithanru Udavi; Udavi
seyappattar salbin varaithu.

I may translate this Kural as follows :—

The act of kindness is bounded,
not by its own boundaries,
but by those
of the culture of the recipient. (105)

உதவி வரைத்தன்று உதவி உதவி
செய்ப்பட்டார் சால்பின் வரைத்து. (105)

Perhaps, this translation of mine does not bring out the terse and elliptical character of the original text. It was given to the late Rasikamani to delve into this Kural and bring out the real meaning of it. He used to illustrate the truth embedded in this

Kural with an imaginative anecdote :—A rich man, who was a contemporary of Valluvar, died and the rich man's son celebrated the first anniversary of his death by feasting a number of needy and poor Brahmins. After the feast, the Brahmins came out of the mansion one after another. Valluvar stationed himself at the street corner and put a question to each of the outcoming guests, "Did your host give you any money in addition to the feast". The first Brahmin said sourly, "He gave me five beggarly coins". The description of the golden coins as "beggarly" was noted down by Valluvar in his diary—"5 golden coins are equal to five beggarly ones". Valluvar put the same question to the next Brahmin and he said "Well, Sir, he gave me five golden coins". Valluvar noted, "In this man's estimate, five gold coins are just equal to five gold coins". The third man answered, "I am a man in need. The five coins given by that noble man are as precious to me as 500 gold coins". When Valluvar repeated the question to the fourth Brahmin, his eyes glistened with gratitude and he danced with joy and said, "If that gentleman had kept these coins safely locked up in his box, they would not refuse to remain inside. What a generous giver he is! My wife and I and our dozen children have been starving for a week and these five gold coins will sustain us for a month. I regard this as a gift of five million crowns". Tiruvalluvar noted down these answers and pondered for long over the different values assigned by the different recipients to the same number of coins. Then it flashed upon him that an act of kindness has no intrinsic value of its own and that its value depends upon an extrinsic factor, namely, the culture of the recipient; the higher the culture of the taker, the higher the value of the aid rendered by the giver. This is a truth of psychology, which ranks among the great discoveries and insights of

Tiruvalluvar. If after listening to this exposition of T. K. Chidambaranatha Mudaliar, we re-read the Kural, it is ready to yield its inner-most meaning:

The act of kindness is bounded,
not by its own boundaries,
but by those
of the culture of the recipient (105)

உதவி வரைத்தன்று உதவி உதவி
செய்ப்பட்டார் சால்பின் வரைத்து. (105)

Rasikamani used to say that for 1000 years after the Kural was written, nobody in Tamil Nadu understood this Kural till Kambar, the Emperor of Tamil Poesy came on the scene in the 9th Century A.D. and quoted this Kural in his Ramayana, but with a twist characteristic of his genius.

Kambar makes Visvamitra tell Rama and Lakshmana the dramatic story of Mahabali. Lord Vishnu took the form of Vamana, a dwarf, and went to the Court of the King, Mahabali, and said, "Give me three feet of land, if you have it". "Granted", said the generous king and confirmed the gift by pouring water over the outstretched palm of the dwarf. As soon as the water touched his palm, the dwarf grew taller and taller, and with his raised foot, measured the three worlds and having outcompassed the Heavens and finding no room to put it in, brought it down on the head of Mahabali, wiped out his ego and absorbed him in its Ultimate Substance. In this context, Kambar quotes Valluvar and explains "The dwarf's figure grew taller and taller and outcompassed the Heavens, like the little help rendered to a great personage". Three feet donated by Mahabali, though very small

in extent, had been expanded by the Infinite Donee to the dimensions of the whole cosmos, ultimately destroying the giver himself. Kambar gives thus an exquisitely ironical twist to the Kural of Valluvar, at the same time showing that he had fully understood the dimensions of this epigrammatic Kural. If this Kural had to wait for a thousand years before it could be understood and appreciated by Kambar, Kambar's re-interpretation of the Kural had to wait for another thousand years before it could be understood and appreciated by the Rasikamani. Another Kural, which could not be understood without the loving interpretation of T. K. C., runs as follows :—

“Love supports virtue alone,” say the fools;
it supports vice as well. (76)

அறத்திற்கே அன்புசார் பென்ப அறியார்
மறத்திற்கும் அஃதே துணை. (76)

The commentators have been saying that love helps us to extricate ourselves from vice. But T.K.C. gave a different interpretation and illustrated it by an incident of common occurrence. A habitual thief was required to attend a police station at 6 a.m. every day. Having half a dozen children and his wife starving at home he would go running 30 miles to a distant place in the night, see a festival crowd sleeping in the open, risk his life by stealing into the crowd and robbing the women of their jewels, run back to his village with his booty and after depositing the same, he would be back at the police station on time to make his appearance. What is it that has given him the courage, the skill and the adroitness to go on this escapade staking his very life? It is undoubtedly his love for his starving wife and children.

According to T.K.C., Tiruvalluvar says in this Kural that love is at the bottom, not only of virtue, but also of vice.

VI. WORD-WORSHIP

No thinker, ancient or modern, has, like Valluvar, pointed to the precise and discriminating use of words as a means of spiritual illumination.

In the Chapter on eloquence, Valluvar says:

Utter not a word
without making sure
there is no other word to beat it. (645)

சொல்லுக சொல்லைப் பிறிதோர்சொல் அச்சொல்லை
வெல்லுஞ்சொல் இன்மை அறிந்து. (645)

Adherence to this injunction calls for a new discipline of a very arduous and vigilant kind in the use of words. Before reducing a thought to words, Valluvar would require us to marshal before the mind's eye all the apparently synonymous words available in the language for the expression of the given idea, make a survey of the same and reject the words incapable of expressing all the nuances of the idea, let the remaining words compete with one another in the function of expression and finally choose just that word, which beats all others in putting across the idea in all its subtlety. In this process of choosing, the thinker would have to forbid himself the use of many a seductive but imprecise word, and in a spirit of yogic concentration, ferret out the inevitable word and then use it. Valluvar was keenly aware of the esoteric connection between language and thought and he

knew that even as thought influenced language, language could influence thought. He also knew that when words were chosen with so much care and deliberateness, those words would contain something of the wordless in them and such words would become the gates through which one could enter Silence. When words express what Silence conceives, they become the guides to meditation. Valluvar regarded the abuse of words as a sacrilege. When words express, not the chatterings of a distracted or frivolous mind, but the deeper silences of the soul, they would lift the speaker and the listener alike to a plane of spiritual awareness. Consequently, Tiruvalluvar called upon speakers to cultivate a reverence for words—a word-worship. In Kural No. 644, Valluvar makes a declaration of his faith:—

There is no greater virtue
and indeed, no greater Wealth,
than the ability
to use words
with the fullest cognizance of their power.

திறன்றிந்து சொல்லுக சொல்லை அறனும்
பொருளும் அதனினூ உங்குஇல். (644)

Even Marcus Aurelius, who advocated sobriety of speech, did not go so far as to say that the skill and discrimination involved in the use of the inevitable word constituted the greatest human virtue.

It is not every one, who, in the struggle for self-expression, acquires perfect mastery over words, and Valluvar refers with acid scorn, to those men, learned and unlearned, whose tragi-comic lust for words is out of all proportion to their ability to use them.

Those who have learnt not
to utter a few faultless words
lust, alas!
after myriad-worded speech. (649)

பலசொல்லக் காழுறுவர் மன்ற மாசற்ற
சிலசொல்லல் தேற்றா தவர். (649)

Men, who know not
to communicate their learning to their listeners
are like flowers
which spread not their perfume
even after they blossom. (650)

இணைநுழ்த்தும் நாறா மலரனையர் கற்றது
உணர விரித்துரை யாதார். (650)

In the chapter on “Understanding of the Audience”, Valluvar describes those, who choose their words according to the character of their audience, as “those men of purity who know the genius of words” (Kural No. 711). The men, who employ words with an intimate awareness of their meaning, are, according to Tiruvalluvar, “the benevolent men who know the gait of words”. (712). “Pre-eminent among all the acts classified as good is the act of reticence, which restrains a man from rushing to speak first in an assembly of elders”. (715). In Kural No. 716, Valluvar reinforces his tremendous concern for the right word by saying that a verbal error committed by a speaker before a gathering of erudite scholars is as bad as going astray from the path of virtue.

The learning of the learned
will shine all the brighter
before men,
who are unerring
in the choice of words. (717)

கற்றறிந்தார் கல்வி விளங்கும் கசடறச்
சொல்தொரிதல் வல்லா ரகத்து. (717)

Conversely, men who can speak penetratingly before an august assembly, would not care to speak even inadvertently before an assembly of fools (No. 719).

Valluvar must have been holding discourses before a variety of audiences; insensitive and unresponsive audiences angered Valluvar into asserting with remorseful indignation,—

To discourse before men,
who are not intellectually your equals, is like
draining nectar down the drain (720)

அங்கணத்துள் உக்க அமிழ்தற்றால் தங்கணத்தர்
அல்லார்முன் கோட்டி கொளல். (720)

One wonders if the soap-box orator and the tub-thumper of the Hyde Park variety infected the public life of Tamil Nadu 2000 years ago. For Tiruvalluvar devotes one whole chapter of 10 Kurals to the paramount need for abstaining from uttering unproductive and wasteful words and slogans. He admonishes the speakers of his times in these terms :-

You may even
utter words productive of evil;
but utter not words,
which are barren and fruitless. (197)

நயனில சொல்லினுஞ் சொல்லுக சான்றோர்
பயனில சொல்லாமை நன்று. (197)

Valluvar knew that an uncritical public opinion was responsible for the growth and development of trash and piffle and nonsensical talk on the public platform. Consequently, he turned his anger from the talkers to their hysterical admirers, and said :—

The one, who applauds empty words,
is miscalled a man;
he must be called the chaff among men. (196)

பயனில்சொல் பாராட்டு வாளை மகன்னனல்
மக்கட் பதடி யெனல். (196)

The Tamil Society, which drew such opprobrium from Tiruvalluvar two millenia ago, must have had something in common with the sophisticated inanities of the current times.

Public speaking is a democratic virtue and flourishes best in a democratic set-up. The Uthiramerur stone inscription of the 10th Century refers to the prevalence in Tamil Nadu of elections to various administrative and legislative bodies by resorting to the ballot box; the voter used to inscribe the name of his favourite candidate in a palm leaf and drop the same into pots which were used as ballot boxes. In the 77th Stanza in Ahananuru (of the 1st Century A.D.) there is also reference to Kudavolai (the palm leaf ballots dropped into pots). It is, therefore, fairly clear that during the age of Valluvar orators galore stalked the Tamil Country and attempted not only to proselytize men but also to capture the electorate and influence their voting.

Outraged by speeches, which illustrated many of the infirmities Valluvar has vehemently denounced, it is small wonder

that Tiruvalluvar, who performed Tapas with words, should have called for a rigorous discipline in the use of words and declared that there was no greater ideal for men than the pursuit of exactness and discrimination in the use of language.

VII. SENSUAL LOVE

The third canto of the Kural, Kamathu Pal, has a sensual temperature fusing all life into love. But in the Kurals in this canto, love rises above the coarse physical basis of mutual itching for mutual titillation. A prudish Englishman, who translated the first two parts of the Kural, refrained from translating the third, saying, "It could not be translated into any European language without exposing the translator to infamy". Another Englishman refuted this statement and said, "I am persuaded that it is perfectly pure in its tendency and in the intention of its wise and high-souled composition". Such difference of opinion only illustrates the kind of misunderstanding which enshrouds the central fact of human existence. Valluvar had a wholesome regard for sex and had no inhibitions in his attitude towards it. As he himself says :—

Softer than flower is love
and but a few
can indulge in its delicacy. (1289)

மலரினும் மெல்லிது காமம் சிலர்அதன்
செவ்வி தலைப்படு வார். (1289)

A lover, who has sunk his soul in the infinite varieties of his beloved, makes this arresting and memorable reflection :—

The more you know,
the more you know that you don't;
likewise, the more you enjoy this lass,
the more you know you haven't. (1110)

அறிதோறு அறியாமை கண்டற்றால் காமம்
செறிதோறும் சேயிழை மாட்டு. (1110)

The idea that the fresh knowledge acquired today reveals our ignorance of yesterday, has been applied by the Sage with incredible propriety to the domain of love, and the lover in his voyage of discovery, finds that yesterday's pleasures are as nothing compared to today's.

A lover and his beloved are in an intoxicated intimacy. Says the lover:—

In one simultaneous moment,
she gives the pleasures
of the senses five—
touching, tasting,
seeing, smelling, hearing. (1101)

கண்டுகேட்டு உண்டுகிர்த்து உற்றறியும் ஐம்புலனும்
ஒண்டொடி கண்ணேஉள. (1101)

In this union, there is no distinction between the enjoyer, the enjoyed and the enjoyment. Naturally, the lover, who has passed from sex into super-consciousness, asks:-

Is heaven sweeter
than slumbering
on the soft shoulders
of the woman you love? (1103)

தாம்வீழ்வார் மென்றோள் துயிலின் இனிதுகொல்
தாமரைக் கண்ணான் உலகு. (1103)

Valluvar tilts his kaleidoscope and enables us to see the ever-changing patterns of love. The lover, who is about to go abroad, comes to take leave of his beloved. Unable to bear the prospect of separation, she shouts in anguish:—

Of your decision
not to depart,
you may tell me;
of your hard-hearted return after your departure,
tell those who survive it. (1151)

செல்லாமை உண்டேல் எனக்குரை மற்றுநின்
வல்வரவு வாழ்வார்க்கு உரை. (1151)

In Homoeopathy, a medicine that produces a disease is itself given to the patient to cure that disease, unlike in allopathy where the opposite principle is applied. Tiruvalluvar's lover would seem to be aware of both these principles and he says of his beloved:—

The medicine that cures a disease
is its opposite;
but for the malady this girl induces,
she alone is the cure. (1102)

பிணிக்கு மருந்து பிறமன் அணியிழை
தன்னோய்க்குத் தானே மருந்து. (1102)

He proceeds to say:—

The friendship between this girl and me
is like that
between the body and the soul. (1122)

உடம்பொடு உயிரிடை என்னமற் றன்ன
மடந்தையொடு எம்மிடை நட்பு. (1122)

A separated lover tells her mate :—

Fire burns you if you touch it;
can it, like love-sickness,
burn you when you keep yourself away from it? (1159)

தொடிற்சுடின் அல்லது காமநோய் போல
விடிற்சுடல் ஆற்றுமோ தீ. (1159)

In her sleep, the sweet-heart is continuously dreaming of her lover; but when she wakes up, the dream is rudely interrupted and her poignant separation is brought home to her.

She laments;

“if that blasted condition of waking were not there,
lovers will, in dreams,
remain for ever inseparate.” (1216)

நனவென ஒன்றில்லை யாயின் கனவினான்
காதலர் நீங்கலர் மன். (1216)

Thinking of her husband, who has gone to a far-off land in search of livelihood, the wife complains;—

While I am asleep,
he lies on my shoulders,
but the moment I awake
he rushes into my heart! (1218)

துஞ்சங்கால் தோள்மேல ராகி விழிக்குங்கால்
நெஞ்சத்தர் ஆவர் விரைந்து. (1218)

The different moods of pre-marital love are brought out by Valluvar with great intensity. The hero of a thousand battles falls in love with a slender girl and finds all his hard-hearted courage ebbing away at the sight of the girl, and he complains :—

My majestic manhood,
at which my foes in the battle field tremble,
how does it break down at sight of this girl
with the luminous forehead! (1088)

ஒண்ணுதற் கோலு உடைந்ததே ஞாட்பினுள்
நண்ணாரும் உட்கும்என் பீடு. (1088)

The girl was shy at first sight, but ultimately yielded to the overtures of the lover. She ruminates over it in retrospect and marvels:-

Manifold are the wiles of the stealer of my heart;
is not his language of surrender
the weapon
that breaks down the defences of maiden-hood!
(1258)

பன்மாயக் கள்வன் பணிமொழி அன்றோநம்
பெண்மை உடைக்கும் படை. (1258)

At the first encounter, after a long spell of separation between the two, the girl is both angry and aggrieved that her beloved has not met her and she breaks out:—

Those whose hearts melt like fat in the fire—
how dare they say
“we will stand rooted in separation”. (1260)

நிணந்தீயில் இட்டன்ன நெஞ்சினார்க்கு உண்டோ
புணர்ந்தாடி நிற்பேம் எனல். (1260)

The girl suspects that her lover's love is not as intense as her own. Addressing her own heart, she says:—

Thou seest his heart clinging to *him*,
oh! heart, why dost thou not cling to me. (1291)

அவர்நெஞ்சு அவர்க்காதல் கண்டும் எவன்நெஞ்சே
நீஎமக்கு ஆகா தது? (1291)

The lover, on his part, is no less in torment, He speaks out anguish in the following Kural :—

I knew not before that thing called Death;
now I know it;
it has the form of a woman with large and
battling eyes. (1083)

பண்டறியேன் கூற்றென் பதனை இனியறிந்தேன்
பெண்டகையால் பேரமர்க் கட்டு. (1083)

He recollects the face of his sweet-heart as it blushed in modesty and he says :—

She wears modesty and the guileless look of the fawn;
why mar her charm
by loading her with jewels. (1089)

பிணையேர் மடநோக்கும் நாணும் உடையாட்கு
அணிஎவனோ ஏதில தந்து. (1089)

He reminisces over her sweet, little gestures that go to strengthen his love. He recollects :—

She looked, and looking, she lowered her head,
that gesture is the thing that watered our
plant of love. (1093)

நோக்கினாள் நோக்கி இறைஞ்சினாள் அஃதவள்
யாப்பினுள் அட்டிய நீர். (1093)

It seemed as if her modesty was only a device to attract his
attention :—

As I gazed at her,
she would gaze downward at the ground
and as I gazed away,
she would gaze at me
and softly smile (1094)

யான்நோக்குங் காலை நிலன்நோக்கும் நோக்காக்கால்
தான்நோக்கி மெல்ல நகும். (1094)

Sex and jealousy are twin sisters and the girl, who is in love,
wishes to possess her lover solely and exclusively. But she finds
that he exposed to the gaze of other women, who drink of his
beauty. This rouses her jealousy and she complains:—

All women's eyes in common
drink of your beauty;
so, I would clasp not your promiscuous breast. (1311)

பெண்ணியலார் எல்லாரும் கண்ணின் பொதுஉண்பர்
நண்ணேன் பரத்தநின் மார்பு. (1311)

It is a psychological paradox that whenever she is away from
her lover, she is thinking only of his faults, but the moment she
sights him, all his faults melt away. She observes:—

When he is in my presence
I see nothing in him that is faulty,
but when he goes out of my presence,
I see nothing in him that is not faulty. (1286)

காணுங்கால் காணேன் தவறாய காணாக்கால்
காணேன் தவறல் லவை. (1286)

She gives an odd explanation for managing to live in the absence of her lover:—

You know why I live?
To live in remembrance of the days
I lived in union with him. (1206)

மற்றியான் என்னுளேன் மன்னோ அவரொடுயான்
உற்றநாள் உள்ள உளேன். (1206)

As for the lover, his sweetheart's jealousy is expressed by him in the following words:—

I told my beloved
“I love you more than the rest”
and she fretted and fumed, muttering
“Than the rest? ‘Than the rest’?
Than whom? Than whom?” (1314)

யாரினும் காதலம் என்றேனா ஊடினாள்
யாரினும் யாரினும் என்று. (1314)

This jealous mistress, during separation, beholds her lover's messenger in a dream and waking up, she wishes to express her gratitude to the dream and says :—

With what banquet
shall I celebrate the dream
which brought me
the messenger of my beloved. (1211)

காதலர் தூதொடு வந்த கனவினுக்கு
யாதுசெய் வேன்கொல் விருந்து. (1211)

The Kurals in Kamathu Pal mirror forth all the possible facets of sexual love and its temperament.

VIII. ARCHITECTONICS OF THE KURAL

It is fascinating to study the architectonics of the Kural, which consists of 133 Chapters of 10 Kurals each. These 133 chapters themselves are classified under three broad headings. The first heading is *Arathu Pal*, that is to say, the book relating to *Aram or duty* and it consists of 380 Kurals. The second is *Porut Pal* or the book relating to wealth and it consists of 700 Kurals. The third and the last is *Kamathu Pal* or the book relating to sexual love and it consists of 250 Kurals. Most critics approach the Kural on the unproved assumption that it is founded on the Sanskritic concept of *Dharma, Artha, Kama* and *Moksha*. Those, who have been propounding this theory, have been hard put to explain why Tiruvalluvar omitted to deal with *Moksha* (Liberation), of which the Tamil equivalent is *Veedu*. A Christian Missionary was so cynical as to say that Tiruvalluvar did not deal with *Moksha or Veedu*, perhaps because he thought that the Tamil people were not prepared for the highest. Some others have explained the omission by saying that *Veedu* was not specifically dealt with because it would arise as a natural sequence to the

practice of Aram, Porul and Kamam as expounded by Tiruvalluvar. G. U. Pope wondered if Tiruvalluvar refrained from any exposition of *Veedu* or *Moksha* because he resolved to take only the practical view of things. He also supposed that Valluvar was not perhaps satisfied with glimpses he had obtained of man's future and consequently, waited for the light. The proper inference to draw is that Tiruvalluvar's classification was based on different principles altogether from those in the Sanskritic classification. The content of Aram, as expounded by Tiruvalluvar, is radically different from that of Dharma as expounded in the Dharma Sastras. Tiruvalluvar does not, like the Dharmasastras, prescribe different Arams for different castes. His concept of Aram is universal in character. He prescribes different duties for the same individual as he passes through different stages of evolution. He prescribes the duties of an individual, as a member of his family, in relation to his parents, wife and children, and as a member of his community, in relation to his fellow members of the community, good, bad and indifferent, and as a citizen of the State, in relation to the ruler of the State. In all these relationships, he is required to manifest loving thought and indulge in right action.

It would thus be seen that the Aram of Tiruvalluvar connotes a purely Tamilian concept which has little in common with the Sanskritic concept of Dharma.

The *Porut Pal* of Tiruvalluvar does not parallel the Artha concept of Sanskrit either. Unlike the Artha Sastra, which deals mainly with the art of Government, only a few chapters in *Porut Pal* deal with the art of Government and with sovereignty, and

whenever references are made in the Kural to the King, it is to a King without any divine right, a King who is required never to swerve from virtue and who is expected to refrain from vice. The sovereign is portrayed as an embodiment of the ideals and virtues of the people. Several chapters have been devoted in this section to the self-respect, the truthfulness, the good character and honour of the citizen and the special virtues required for preserving and improving interpersonal relationships in the social polity. It is important to note that Valluvar, after discussing in the first book, the inner spiritual growth of the individual, proceeds to discuss in the second book on *Porul*, the public life of such an individual, vis-a-vis Society. Evidently, it is the concept of Tiruvalluvar that only a man, who has demonstrated by his moral, cultural and spiritual ripeness, his value as an individual, is fit to enter the wider arena of public life and play a fruitful role therein. It will thus be found that the *Porut Pal* of Valluvar is infused with the spirit of secularism and social ethics, which are a far cry from the divine right theory of sovereignty and the Varnashrama Dharma.

Turning to the third book on *Kamathu Pal*, it is utterly different in content from the Kama Sastras of Sanskrit. It is divided into two sub-sections, *Kalavial* and *Karpial*. *Kalavial* refers to a marital union unaccompanied by any ritual or sacrament, and preceded by pre-marital love. This is something which is uniquely Tamilian. *Karpial* refers to marital love. Unlike the Kama Sastras, which deal with an objective and scientific analysis of sex and sexual poses, *Kamathu Pal* of Tiruvalluvar contains a highly poetic exposition of the love between man and woman in its multitudinous aspects and set in different dramatic and lyrical

situations. Never before in the literature of the world has the emotion of sexual love been expounded in such diverse fullness or with such penetrating insight. Himself happily married, Valluvar derived a serene satisfaction from drawing tender portraits of lovers. He asks:—

Can wine, which intoxicates only when drunk,
intoxicate, like love,
at mere sight? (1090)

உண்டார்கண் அல்லது அடுநறாக் காமம்போல்
கண்டார் மகிழ்செய்தல் இன்று. (1090)

His lover longs to singe himself in the fire of his beloved,
and what kind of fire is it?

Tiruvalluvar's lover is baffled and perplexed by this fire;-

If I withdraw from her,
it burns me
if I go close to her, it cools me;
whence did she obtain this mysterious fire! (1104)

நீங்கின் தெறாஉம் குறுகுங்கால் தண்ணென்னும்
தீயாண்டுப் பெற்றாள் இவள். (1104)

It will thus be seen that there is no parallelism between the Kama Sastras of Sanskrit and the Kamathu Pal of Tirukkural. It is wrong, therefore, to assume that the *Aram*, *Porul* and *Inbam* classification of Valluvar is in any manner patterned upon or akin to the Dharma, Artha, Kama, Moksha classification of Sanskrit and further to assume that for some unexplained reason, Tiruvalluvar omitted to deal in a separate section with Moksha or spiritual emancipation. It seems clear that Tiruvalluvar was

more concerned with living fully and richly in the Eternal Now than with metaphysical speculations about the uncertain future. It is not as if he failed to cater to the needs of the human spirit. His chapters in *Arathu Pal* on possession of spiritual grace, abstinence from meat, non-killing, performance of penance, truthfulness, renunciation, eradication of desire and the realization of the Ultimate Truth, give a clear spiritual conation to the secular life of the individual, and would have the effect of bringing Heaven down to the Earth and making egoless bliss a present reality instead of a distant dream.

He says in one Kural :—

He, who lives on the earth,
in the manner he should,
will be placed among the gods dwelling in Heaven. (50)

வையத்துள் வாழ்வாங்கு வாழ்பவன் வானுறையும்
தெய்வத்துள் வைக்கப் படும். (50)

Tiruvalluvar regarded spiritual bliss as a state of consciousness to be achieved Here and Now and not Hereafter. He, therefore, takes the reader gently by the hand through the various stages of his inner and outer developments until in Chapters 35 to 37 of *Arathu Pal*, he directly deals with the highest illumination, which releases men from pain and pleasure, birth and death. He says:—

From whatsoever you detach yourself
you become free from the pain it can cause. (341)

யாதனின் யாதனின் நீங்கியான் நோதல்
அதனின் அதனின் இலன். (341)

He, who cuts off the feelings of 'I' and 'mine',
enters a world
superior to that of the celestials. (346)

யான்எனது என்னும் செருக்குஅறுப்பான் வானோர்க்கு
உயர்ந்த உலகம் புகும். (346)

In Kural No. 350, he advocates attachment to God for
overcoming attachment to the things of the world:—

Attach yourself to Him,
in order that
you may detach yourself from all attachment.

பற்றுக் பற்றற்றான் பற்றினை அப்பற்றைப்
பற்றுக் பற்று விடற்கு. (350)

He adds:—

To the clear-sighted,
who have rid themselves of doubts,
Heaven is nearer than Earth. (353)

ஐயத்தின் நீங்கித் தெளிந்தார்க்கு வையத்தின்
வானம் நணிய துடைத்து. (353)

In the Chapter on *Mei Unarthal* (Awareness of Reality) he
says:—

Darkness vanishes from,
and rapture descends upon
the men of spotless vision,
who have extricated themselves from illusion. (352)

இருள்நீங்கி இன்பம் பயக்கும் மருள்நீங்கி
மாசறு காட்சி யவர்க்கு. (352)

Valluvar propounds the theory that those who are bound by attachment and desire have no real freedom, though they delude themselves into thinking they are free. In Kural No. 365, he proclaims:—

The free are those
who are free from desire;
the others are never completely free.

அற்றவர் என்பார் அவாஅற்றார் மற்றையார்
அற்றாக அற்றது இலர். (365)

In Kural No. 369, the sage gives the assurance :—

Here on this Earth itself
you will enjoy unceasing rapture,
if you destroy desire,
which is the woe of woes.

இன்பம் இடையறா தீண்டும் அவாவென்னும்
துன்பத்துள் துன்பங் கெடின். (369)

He winds up the Chapter on *Avavaruthal* (Liquidation of Desire)

Achieve a condition in which all insatiate desire is
rooted out;

in that very condition
immortality will be conferred upon you. (370)

ஆரா இயற்கை அவாநீப்பின் அந்நிலையே
பேரா இயற்கை தரும். (370)

It will thus be seen that Tiruvalluvar omitted to write a separate book on Moksha, because, in his vision, Heaven and Earth were not separate compartments, and right earthly conduct could ensure immediate Heavenly bliss, because there was a brotherly nearness of Earth to Heaven.

Turning to the meaning of the word ‘Tirukkural’, ‘Tiru’ means ‘holy’ and ‘Kural’ means ‘anything short’. Each Kural is a couplet, the first line having four metric feet and the second line having three. This kind of couplet is called *Kural Venba* in Tamil.

Venba is a metrical piece consisting of four lines. It is admitted on all hands that it is the most difficult form in which to compose poetry. The Kural, which is a dwarfed Venba, puts even greater restraints upon its practitioner.

“Vers Libre”, which is the anti-thesis of the Kural, has been compared to playing tennis with the net down. The “Vers Libertines” by breaking loose from the restrictive influence of metre have sustained a conspicuous loss in the power and capacity of verbal expression. Valluvar, on the other hand, wilfully submitted himself to the tyranny of the specially evolved Kural metre, and by mastering it, achieved maximum tension between matter and form; he supercharged words with meaning by indulging in a kind of concentrated verbal yoga.

The Kural is not a “clanging couplet” like Alexander Pope’s, for there are no pompous drum-beats in it. Here poetry had become no rhyming rivulet of gay garrulity but a work of intense and compact art as painstakingly carved as the figures on the rock

temples of Mamallapuram. The rhythm of the Kural is rather restrained and noble, sparkling with bold thought and sprightly style. The Kural is not a mechanically sliced inorganic thing. It is rather like a perfectly coordinated organism, which has been alive and kicking for 2000 years.

No wonder, not even Kambar himself has equalled Valluvar in gathering infinite riches in a little nutshell. Here in 1330 couplets are more memorable lines than in any equal area of literature in any language known to the writer. G. U. Pope was right to say in his introduction to his translations of the Kural, "Nothing, not even a corrupt Greek chorus, so defies the efforts of the student as does very much of the high Tamil poetry. The poetical dialect of Tamil allows every kind of ellipsis, so that a line is often little less than a string of crude forms artfully fitted together. The best compositions are quatrains or couplets each containing a complete idea, a moral epigram. Their construction resembles that of a design in mosaic. The materials fitted together are sometimes mere bits of coloured glass, but sometimes also very precious stones and pure gold. And the design? Why, you walk round it and try to catch it in all lights and feel at first, and often for a long time, as if it meant nothing at all, till you catch some hint, and at once it lies revealed, something to be thought of again and again, some bit of symbolism, it may be, not infrequently grotesque, often quaint, but sometimes also of rare beauty."

IX. SOME GLIMPSES OF TIRUVALLUVAR

Laughter and Tears

Tiruvalluvar treats us to the therapy of laughter as well as the therapy of tears.

He knew that a knowing tranquil smile is the beginning and the end of all wisdom.

He declares:-

To those, who have not the faculty of laughter,
the vast cosmos remains plunged in darkness,
even in broad day light. (999)

நகல்வல்லர் அல்லார்க்கு மாயிரு ஞாலம்
பகலும்பாற் பட்டன்று இருள். (999)

A deep under-current of humour marks most of the sayings of Valluvar. After pointing out that envy is punishment enough for the envious, he asserts that no envious man has ever become prosperous and no man, free from envy, has fallen from prosperity.

He proceeds to examine the rare exceptions to this rule and says with a chuckle in his sleeves:—

The prosperity of the envious
and the adversity of the non-envious
are phenomena worth researching about? (169)

அவ்விய நெஞ்சத்தான் ஆக்கமுஞ் செவ்வியான்
கேடும் நினைக்கப் படும். (169)

Dowered with a profound natural wisdom, Valluvar notes with a twinkle in his eye the uneducated man's vulgar attempt to pass off his 'learning' and says :—

The illiterate man's lust for words
is verily like the lust of a woman,
who has neither of her breasts? (402)

கல்லாதான் சொற்கா முறுதல் முலையிரண்டும்
இல்லாதாள் பெண்காமுற் றற்று. (402)

In Valluvar's view, the virtuous man is one who has received the proper kind of education and all uneducated men, not having been properly educated, are vicious. He would however make a good-humored exception to this rule and say:-

Even the unlearned may be deemed highly virtuous,
if only
they can keep their traps shut
in the presence of the learned. (403)

கல்லாதவரும் நனிநல்லர் கற்றார் முன்
சொல்லா திருக்கப் பெறினீ. (403)

In his chapter on Folly, Valluvar shows his poignant contempt for fools. In Kural No. 843, he observes:-

How many sufferings do fools inflict upon themselves!
even their enemies find it hard
to inflict so many.

அறிவிலார் தாந்தம்மைப் பீழிக்கும் பீழை
செறுவார்க்கும் செய்தல் அரிது. (843)

Valluvar regarded the wealthy fool with a special kind of disdain. He says:—

Should a fool gift a thing to another heartily,
it is due to nothing else
than the penance of the recipient. (842)

அறிவிலான் நெஞ்சுவந்து ஈதல் பிறிதுயாதும்
இல்லை பெறுவான் தவம். (842)

Valluvar proceeds to say—

If it is asked, “What is stupidity?”
it is the arrogance which shouts,
“I am wise”. (844)

வெண்மை எனப்படுவது யாதெனின் ஒண்மை
உடையம்யாம் என்னும் செருக்கு. (844)

Valluvar, who appreciated the friendship of the great and the wise, seems to have suffered greatly from the company of fools. Valluvar says;-

The entry of an idiot into an assembly of sages
is like putting an unwashed foot
upon a white-washed bed. (840)

குழாஅக்கால் பள்ளியுள் வைத்தற்றால் சான்றோர்
குழாஅத்துப் பேதை புகல். (840)

As a rule, most of the humor of Valluvar is tinged with pathos, and most often Valluvar laughs through his tears.

Speaking of villains, Tiruvalluvar focuses all his irony and sarcasm upon them. Though they belong to a sub-human species,

how like men those scoundrels are! The wonder and profound amazement of Valluvar are reflected in Kural No. 1071.

The wicked look utterly like men;
such close mimics we have never seen.

மக்களே போல்வர் கயவர் அவரன்ன
ஓப்பார் யாங்கண்டது இல். (1071)

Schopenhawer refers to this Kural in one of his essays and says such exquisite humor it is rare to come across.

The Jolly Juggler

Occasionally, Valluvar would play with his themes like a jolly juggler, throwing them up into the air, turning them inside out, tumbling them upside down, and setting them on their feet again. He held the Marxist view that even virtue has an economic foundation. In fact in Kural No. 757, he says:—

Compassion, the child of love,
is nurtured
by that loving foster-mother, wealth.

அருளென்னும் அன்புநன் குழவி பொருளென்னும்
செல்வச் செவிலியால் உண்டு. (757)

Though he regarded wealth as having no permanent value, he realized that it was the necessary means for the achievement of great ends. Consequently, he pondered deeply over the inequitable distribution of wealth and over the unworthy character of those in whose hands wealth had a knack of accumulating. For instance, he says in scandalized shock:—

Disastrous is the ample wealth
of the man,
who neither enjoys it
nor gives it to the worthy. (1006)

ஏதம் பெருஞ்செல்வம் தான்றுவ்வான்
தக்கார்க்கொன்று
ஈதல் இயல்பிலா தான். (1006)

At another place, he appeals to the stingy by saying:-

The wealth of the one,
who helps not the poor,
is like a girl of enormous charm
growing, unwed,
into the loneliness of age. (1007)

அற்றார்க்கொன்று ஆற்றாதான் செல்வம் மிகநலம்
பெற்றாள் தமிழள்மூத் தற்று. (1007)

He trounces the misers by giving what appears to be advice to the beggars. In Kural No. 1067, he says:—

I beg of you,
oh! beggars of the world,
if beg you must,
beg not of those,
who would not ungrudgingly give.

இரப்பன் இரப்பாரை எல்லாம் இரப்பின்
கரப்பார் இவரன்மின் என்று. (1067)

Here Valluvar makes beggars angle characters through whom he reflects his contempt for the un-giving rich. He shifts the camera to a different angle and takes the snapshot of the manly poor, who are too proud to beg:—

It's worth a million-million
to refrain from begging
even from those
who give with joy and ungrudgingly. (1061)

கரவாது உவந்தீயும் கண்ணன்னார் கண்ணும்
இரவாமை கோடி யறும். (1061)

Next he pats the generous rich on the back by saying:—

Begging is as good as giving,
when you beg of those
who would not think of refusing alms
even in their dreams. (1054)

இரத்தலும் ஈதலே போலும் கரத்தல்
கனவிலும் தேற்றாதார் மாட்டு. (1054)

Getting into the skin of the beggars, the sage says
tremblingly: —

Will it come,
today, too—the poverty
that well-nigh
killed me yesterday? (1048)

இன்றும் வருவது கொல்லோ நெருநலும்
கொன்றது போலும் நிரப்பு. (1048)

Now Valluvar's horror turns into incandescent anger as he
thinks of the dispensation which necessitates begging :—

If even by begging
one has to make both ends meet,
may the Author of the Universe
go a-begging far and wide and perish. (1062)

இரந்தும் உயிர்வாழ்தல் வேண்டின் பரந்து
கெடுக உலகியற்றி யான். (1062)

Then he turns to the rich men and admonishes them for failing to derive the great joy which giving alone can bring. He asks:—

Don't they know the joy
that comes from giving— those hard-hearted boors
who guard their treasure just to lose it? (228)

ஈத்துவக்கும் இன்பம் அறியார்கொல் தாமுடைமை
வைத்திழக்கும் வன்க ணவர். (228)

Valluvar puts the problem of begging against every conceivable background and tries to solve it by appealing, on the one hand, to the self-respect of the beggars, and on the other, to the compassion of the Haves.

He expects the rich to have a sense of contemporary tragedy and to possess an empathetic understanding of the agonies of the Have-nots. Any sensitive soul must feel the humiliation and degradation of the human spirit brought about by circumstances which necessitate begging. In one Kural, the Saint says :-

To be begged is agonizing,
till you give
and see the smile lighting up the face of the beggar (224)

இன்னாது இரக்கப் படுதல் இரந்தவர்
இன்முகங் காணும் அளவு. (224)

Next he proceeds with delightful sensitivity to measure the power of bearing hunger against the power of appeasing it, the

power of the Have-nots to suffer hunger against the power of the Haves to wipe it out.

Kural No. 225 says:—

The most powerful of all powers
is the power to bear hunger
but even that power is next only
to the power of those, who can appease hunger.

ஆற்றுவார் ஆற்றல் பசிஆற்றல் அப்பசியை
மாற்றுவார் ஆற்றலின் பின். (225)

Valluvar next speaks of the safety vault in which all the rich should deposit their wealth. Here is the Kural;-

Wiping out
the hunger of the Havenots
is the treasury
in which the Haves should deposit their wealth.(226)

அற்றார் அழிபசி தீர்த்தல் அஃதொருவன்
பெற்றான் பொருள்வைப் புழி. (226)

The sage winds up his chapter on *Eehai* (Alms giving) by directing his scornful invective against the rich whose insensitivity disables them from giving. Says he:—

There's nothing more calamitous than Death;
but death itself becomes sweet
once one is disabled from giving alms. (230)

சாதலின் இன்னாத தில்லை இனிததூஉம்
ஈதல் இயையாக் கடை. (230)

On Monarchy

Valluvar was keenly aware of the fact that the sanction behind all virtue and morality was the might of the sovereign of the State.

In Kural No. 543, he says:—

That which furnishes basic support
to virtue and to scripture
is the sceptre of the king.

அந்தணர் நூற்கும் அறத்திற்கும் ஆதியாய்
நின்றது மன்னவன் கோல். (543)

He made it clear that the scripture is not a symbol of brutal might, but a symbol of uprightness and justice.

He says :-

That which secures victory for the king
is not his lance, but his sceptre,
and that, too, if it stands upright. (546)

வேலன்று வென்றி தருவது மன்னவன்
கோலதூஉம் கோடாது எனின். (546)

He further emphasises this concept by saying :—

The King stands sentinel over the Earth
and the Law stands sentinel over the King. (547)

இறைகாக்கும் வையகம் எல்லாம் அவனை
முறைகாக்கும் முட்டாச் செயின். (547)

As for the punitive jurisdiction of the King, he says:—

Killing by the king of the murderously cruel
is like pulling out weeds from the tender paddy field.
(550)

கொலையிற் கொடியாரை வேந்தொறுத்தல் பைங்கூழ்
களைகட் டதனொடு நேர். (550)

Valluvar discourages the King from making collections from the citizens by abusing the power of the State. Here are his words of admonition :—

The King that goes a-begging
is like the dacoit, who, armed with a spear,
shouts, “Give”. (552)

வேலொடு நின்றான் இடுஎன் றதுபோலும்
கோலொடு நின்றான் இரவு. (552)

Speaking of a King, who is unable to maintain law and order, he says

“Wealth is worse far than poverty,
in a realm where the King renders no justice.” (558)

இன்மையின் இன்னாது உடைமை முறைசெய்யா
மன்னவன் கோற்கீழ்ப் படின. (558)

He calls upon the State to temper justice with mercy and not to terrorize the people. He tells the King:—

Raise the rod high
but let it fall gently upon the criminal. (562)

கடிதுஓச்சி மெல்ல எறிக நெடிதுஆக்கம்
நீங்காமை வேண்டு பவர். (562)

Of what avail is a tune
if it isn't *en rapport* with the song?
of what avail is the eye
if it doesn't move to and fro with compassion. (573)

பண்ணன்னாம் பாடற்கு இயைபுஇன்றேல்
கண்ணன்னாம்
கண்ணோட்டம் இல்லாத கண். (573)

Giving advice, which is applicable both to the king and to the citizen, he presses into service a simile and says:—

The flower of the floating plant
is as high as the level of the water;
a man's greatness is as high
as the level of his mind. (595)

வெள்ளத் தனைய மலர்நீட்டம் மாந்தர்தம்
உள்ளத் தனையது உயர்வு. (595)

Speaking of fortitude, he says:—

He who desires not joy
and says, "Grief is natural",
is never to sorrow subject. (628)

இன்பம் விழையான் இடும்பை இயல்பென்பான்
துன்பம் உறுதல் இலன். (628)

He adds:—

He, who, in pleasure,
exults not in pleasure,
does not, in sorrow,
suffer from sorrow. (629)

இன்பத்துள் இன்பம் விழையாதான் துன்பத்துள்
துன்பம் உறுதல் இலன். (629)

On Agriculture

Agriculture is lauded by Tiruvalluvar not only as the noblest of the professions but also as the most fruitful and independent way of life. He says:—

The earth, though rotating, is still behind the plough;
therefore, though toilsome,
agriculture is the noblest toil. (1031)

சுழன்றும்ஏர்ப் பின்னது உலகம் அதனால்
உழந்தும் உழவே தலை. (1031)

In the next Kural, he says:—

The plough-men are
the linchpin of the world,
for they give support to all others,
who cannot till the soil. (1032)

உழுவார் உலகத்தார்க்கு ஆணிஅஃ தாற்றாது
எழுவாரை எல்லாம் பொறுத்து. (1032)

He goes farther in Kural No. 1033 and says:—

They alone live
who live by the plough;
all others live cringing before others
and eating what they give.

உழுதுண்டு வாழ்வாரே வாழ்வார்மற் றெல்லாம்
தொழுதுண்டு பின்செல் பவர். (1033)

Seeing those idlers,
who say, “I am a have-not,”
the virtuous dame called the Earth will laugh. (1040)

இலமென்று அசைஇ இருப்பாரைக் காணின்
நிலமென்னும் நல்லாள் நகும். (1040)

On Friendship

It is characteristic of self-renewing sages like Valluvar to have mutual and fruitful relations with other beings. They are capable of accepting love and capable of giving it.

Friendship dissolves the rigidities of the isolated self and forces new perspectives. On the other hand, people who have become strangers to themselves, cannot return for sustenance to the springs of their own being, because they have lost their capacity for self-renewal. Valluvar is therefore right to ask:—

Is there anything more difficult to achieve
than friendship?
Is there anything as protective against foes
as friendship? (781)

செயற்கரிய யாவுள நட்பின் அதுபோல்
வினைக்கரிய யாவுள காப்பு. (781)

In his home at Mylapore, he warmed his heart with the friendships of many great sages and philosophers :—

The more you cultivate the classics,
the more delightful they become;
Likewise
the more you move

with men of virtue,
the more sweet becomes
their friendship. (783)

நவில்தொறும் நூல்நயம் போலும் பயில்தொறும்
பண்புடை யாளர் தொடர்பு. (783)

Befriending is not
for the purpose of laughter,
but for the purpose of coming down
heavily upon your friend
when he strays away from the right path. (784)

நகுதற் பொருட்டன்று நட்டல் மிகுதிக்கண்
மேற்சென்று இடித்தற் பொருட்டு. (784)

Affinity of feeling makes for friendship,
and not
frequent intercourse or living together. (785)

புணர்ச்சி பழகுதல் வேண்டா உணர்ச்சிதான்
நட்பாம் கிழமை தரும். (785)

Friendship saves you from ruin,
takes you to the right path,
and in adversity, shares your sorrow. (787)

அழிவி னவைநீக்கி ஆறுய்த்து அழிவின்கண்
அல்லல் உழப்பதாம் நட்பு. (787)

According to Valluvar :—

Even as your hand rushes to hold your dhoti
when it slips down from your waist,
friendship rushes to your rescue
when you are in grief. (788)

உடுக்கை இழந்தவன் கைபோல ஆங்கே
இடுக்கண் களைவதாம் நட்பு. (788)

Tiruvalluvar thinks that Friendship is tested best in adversity because most friends cluster around you in prosperity and desert you in adversity.

It is with a rueful smile that Tiruvalluvar throws out this gem of wisdom:—

There is some good even about adversity,
for it gives you a measuring rod
with which
you may unstintingly measure your real friends.(796)

கேட்டினும் உண்டுஓர் உறுதி கிளைஞரை
நீட்டி அளப்பதோர் கோல். (796)

Friends,
who are descended out of the true stock of love,
cease not to love
even those who have betrayed them. (807)

அழிவந்த செய்யினும் அன்பறார் அன்பின்
வழிவந்த கேண்மை யவர். (807)

Solitude is better
than the company of those
who, like the unbroken colt,
throw the rider down to the ground
in the midst of the battle-field. (814)

அமரகத்து ஆற்றறுக்கும் கல்லாமா அன்னார்
தமரின் தனிமை தலை. (814)

Valluvar perceived a telling difference between the friendship of the fool and the hatred of the wise man and said:—

The hatred of the wise man is
ten million times worthier
than the friendship of the fool. (816)

பேதை பெருங்கெழீஇ நட்பின் அறிவுடையார்
ஏதின்மை கோடி உறும். (816)

Valluvar strongly discourages the friendship of those, who would love you in private but revile you in public. (Kural No. 820).

In fact there are five chapters in the Kural, in which Valluvar investigates in depth the psychology of friendship, flays the surface of life and shows us its bloody reality.

On Learning

Valluvar, like Karl Marx, Nietzsche and Jean Paul Sartre, was an existentialist, because like them, he held that the *only* knowledge worth having is knowledge that bears directly upon the human experience. According to Valluvar, the entire purpose of learning is to make you live the better. Any learning unconnected with, and irrelevant to living was discarded by him as useless. In Kural No. 391, he says:—

Learn with utter clarity
whatever has to be learnt;
after learning, conduct yourself according to what
you have learnt.

கற்க கசடறக் கற்பவை கற்றபின்
நிற்க அதற்குத் தக. (391)

The discovery of numbers and letters in the history of man was a discovery of the greatest importance for human progress. So Valluvar says:-

Numbers and letters are like the two eyes of the highest of living beings. (392)

எண்ணென்ப ஏனை எழுத்தென்ப இவ்விரண்டும்
கண்ணென்ப வாழும் உயிர்க்கு. (392)

It is education that opens the eyes of man, and Valluvar says:—

Those who are said to have eyes are the learned but the unlearned have merely two sores upon their face. (393)

கண்ணுடைய ரென்பவர் கற்றோர் முகத்திரண்டு
புண்ணுடையர் கல்லா தவர். (393)

That Tiruvalluvar was not unaware of the modern theory of education can be seen from the following Kural:-

The more you delve into the sandy spring, the more its water spouts; likewise the more men study, the more their knowledge spouts. (396)

தொட்டனைத் தூறும் மணற்கேணி மாந்தர்க்குக்
கற்றனைத் தூறும் அறிவு. (396)

The sage had pity for those, who, though they knew the honour that learning brings, never care to acquire it till their death.

“Any country and any town will become the country
and the town of the learned men, and yet
why do they not learn even till they die?” (397)

யாதானும் நாடாமால் ஊராமால் என்னொருவன்
சாந்துணையுங் கல்லாத வாறு. (397)

Learning gives joy to the learned and the learned distribute their joy by passing it on to the world. Says Valluvar :-

The enlightened like to see the world
taking part in the joy which learning gives them. (399)

தாமின் புறுவது உலகின் புறக்கண்டு
காழறுவர் கற்றறிந் தார். (399)

The sage thinks that the uneducated men belong to a different species altogether from that of the educated men.

As beasts are to men,
so are
the unlearned to the learned. (410)

விலங்கொடு மக்கள் அனையர் இலங்குநூல்
கற்றாரொடு ஏனை யவர். (410)

Valluvar was rightly convinced that learning can be better acquired and assimilated through the ear-gate than through the eye-gate.

According to him, to listen to an exposition of truth by a learned man is by far more fruitful than to read it in cold print.

In ancient Tamil Nadu books were not available in print and most works were inscribed and stored in palm leaves. A man might not be able to read the palm leaf script, but still he might be a learned man having heard for long years truths expounded by men of understanding and experience. That is why Valluvar says in Kural No. 411:—

The Wealth of wealth is wealth acquired through the ear;
it is the noblest among all the wealths.

செல்வத்துள் செல்வம் செவிச்செல்வம் அச்செல்வம்
செல்வத்துள் எல்லாம் தலை. (411)

Valluvar proceeds to rank food for the stomach very much below the food for the ear.

When there is no food for the ear,
a little food might be given even to the stomach. (412)

செவிக்குணவு இல்லாத போழ்து சிறிது
வயிற்றுக்கும் ஈயப் படும். (412)

Let him, who has no learning,
at least listen to the learned;
it will prove a supporting staff in times of distress. (414)

கற்றில னாயினும் கேட்க அஃதொருவற்கு
ஒற்கத்தின் ஊற்றாந் துணை. (414)

According to Valluvar, the power of the word differs according to the character of the man who utters it.

He says:—

The words that fall from the lips of the man of character
are like a supporting staff
in slippery ground. (415)

இழுக்கல் உடையுழி ஊற்றுக்கோல் அற்றே
ஒழுக்கம் உடையார் வாய்ச்சொல். (415)

Valluvar was aware of the fact that listening to another with concentration is as difficult as making a cogent speech. The art of listening has therefore to be cultivated; otherwise what is received by the one ear will pass through the other without making any impression upon the mind. So says Valluvar in Kural No. 418;

The ear, which has not been bored open
by continual listening,
listens not, though appearing to listen.

கேட்பினுங் கேளாத் தகையவே கேள்வியால்
தோட்கப் படாத செவி. (418)

Tasting a thing by the mouth is something which man shares with the animal. So Valluvar indignantly asserts:-

Those boors, who know
only to taste with the mouth,
but not to taste with the ear—
what does it matter if they live or die? (420)

செவியின் சுவையுணரா வாய்உணர்வின் மாக்கள்
அவியினும் வாழினும் என். (420)

Villainy

Valluvar distils his hatred for the villain in the following Kural :—

The villains look exactly like men;
such close mimics
we have never set eyes upon. (1071)

மக்களே போல்வர் கயவர் அவரன்ன
ஒப்பார் யாங்கண்டது இல். (1071)

He sarcastically envies the villains for their utter freedom from compunction:—

Richer are the villains
than the practitioners of Virtue;
'for their hearts suffer from no qualms of conscience.
(1072)

நன்றறி வாரிற் கயவர் திருவுடையர்
நெஞ்சத்து அவலம் இலர். (1072)

The villains have no scruples and nothing can move them except fear or hope of gain. Says the Kural :—

Fear is the one thing that is a restraining influence
upon the villains,
and next to fear, hope of gain
sometimes restrains them. (1075)

அச்சமே கீழ்களது ஆசாரம் எச்சம்
அவாஉண்டேல் உண்டாம் சிறிது. (1075)

Valluvar says the fruit tree is tended by men because it does not secrete its sweetness but yields it up in the form of fruits,

but the sugar-cane stores all its sweetness within its body and people have therefore to crush it and extract its sweetness. Kural No. 1078 says:

The great will become helpful to you,
the moment you speak out to them your grievance;
the villains will become helpful,
like sugar-cane,
the moment you crush them.

சொல்லப் பயன்படுவர் சான்றோர் கரும்புபோல்
கொல்லப் பயன்படும் கீழ். (1078)

The contempt that Valluvar has for villains is as intense as his admiration for the Sages:—

For what are the villains fit
except to sell themselves
while in trouble? (1080)

எற்றிற்கு உரியர் கயவரொன்று உற்றக்கால்
விறற்றற்கு உரியர் விரைந்து. (1080)

Friendship with evil men gives the shudder to Valluvar, evidently because many of them had wormed their way into his heart and ultimately betrayed him. Here is a gem of a Kural, which has precipitated from his bitter experience:—

It is horrid even in dreams
to hobnob with men,
in whom there is a dichotomy
between their deeds and their words. (819)

கனவினும் இன்னாது மன்னோ வினைவேறு
சொல்வேறு பட்டார் தொடர்பு. (819)

Valluvar's Similes

Valluvar is famous for his analogies and similes, which are incredibly original. Addressing ministers as to how they should behave with fickle-minded kings, he says :—

Behave with them as you would whilst
warming yourselves at the fire;
if you go too near,
the fire will burn you,
if you go too far,
it will cease to protect you from the cold. (691)

அகலாது அணுகாது தீக்காய்வார் போல்க
இகல்வேந்தர்ச் சேர்ந்தொழுகு வார். (691)

It is found that a man, who occupies a high office, is adored, but the moment he vacates that office, those adoring him start despising him. Valluvar finds an extraordinary simile to explain this phenomenon.

When the hair remains rooted in the head, it is tended with great devotion, but the moment it falls down from the head, it becomes an object of contempt and is swept rudely away. Valluvar says:-

Like unto the hair,
that has fallen from the head,
is a man
who has fallen from his status. (964)

தலையின் இழிந்த மயிரனையர் மாந்தர்
நிலையின் இழிந்தக் கடை. (964)

As a linguist, Valluvar knows that the sound “a” is the substratum of all other sounds. As he thinks of the genesis of this world, an uncommon simile passes across his mind:-

All word-sounds have their genesis
in the sound—‘a’;
likewise
the whole of the world has its genesis in God. (1)

அகர முதல எழுத்தெல்லாம் ஆதி
பகவன் முதற்றே உலகு. (1)

Purity of Means

Valluvar did not think that pure ends could be achieved by impure means.

Wealth attained by proper means
and without foul practice
will generate virtue as well as joy. (754)

அறன்ஈனும் இன்பமும் ஈனும் திறனறிந்து
தீதின்றி வந்த பொருள். (754)

Valluvar insists on our remaining constantly in the company of men of purity in order that we may acquire purity of mind and purity of action. (455)

This Kural occurs in the Chapter on Avoidance of bad Company.

In the Chapter on ‘The manner of Accumulation of Wealth’, the poet says:-

Let the man cast off from his embrace all wealth,
which comes not out of grace or love. (755)

அருளொடும் அன்பொடும் வாராப் பொருளாக்கம்
புல்லார் புரள விடல். (755)

In his chapter on 'Impartiality' Valluvar says :-

The wealth of the man of justice
will, without frittering away,
stand even his Posterity in goodstead. (112)

செப்பம் உடையவன் ஆக்கம் சிதைவின்றி
எச்சத்திற் கேமாப்பு உடைத்து. (112)

X. VALLUVAR AT THE WORLD VEGETARIAN CONGRESS

The World Vegetarian Congress having its Headquarters in Holland sent in 1961 a goodwill mission to India. The mission consisted of Oxford Dons, French Savants, Dutch and German Scholars. They were confirmed believers in vegetarianism and the object of their visit to India was to receive inspiration from the land of vegetarianism. After visiting several places in India, they came to Coimbatore and convened a public meeting. The author of this monograph, who happened to preside over the meeting, quoted a Kural expounding the basis of vegetarianism. At the end of the meeting, the European Savants rushed to the platform and shouted, "This is the 151st meeting we have held in India. At each meeting a vegetarian Indian presided and as a rule, had nothing to say which could inspire us. On the contrary, those men were pessimistic and said the future of vegetarianism in India was bleak,

but the Kural you have quoted throws a new light on vegetarianism and inspires us to stick to it". The Kural that captivated the European visitors was the one on non-killing. Usually the merits and demerits of vegetarianism are canvassed from the economic, hygienic, medical and cultural points of view. Valluvar went to the bottom of the question and said, "Unless we eschew violence from our minds and hearts, we cannot show compassion to our fellow creatures". Violence is disruptive of the unity of life, and subversive of the reverence for life, without which there can be no peace on the earth. Virtue has, therefore, to be defined broadly so as to exclude all irreverence for lives. If man practises non-killing, not mechanically, but out of genuine respect for all life, he practises a supreme virtue, but if man resorts to killing, whether the victim of the killing is man, bird or beast, he shows an irreverence for life which would form the basis of all other vices, such as theft, dacoity, rape and murder. This idea has been most pithily put by Valluvar in Kural No. 321, which can be translated as follows :—

What is virtue except non-killing?
 for
 killing brings in its train
 all the other vices.

அறவினை யாதெனில் கொல்லாமை கோறல்
 பிறவினை எல்லாந் தரும். (321)

The representatives of the World Vegetarian Congress left Coimbatore, saying that their Indian visit had been worthwhile, because they had heard the voice of Valluvar lending a new dimension to vegetarianism.

XI. VALLUVAR'S BLUE PRINT FOR THE EVOLUTION OF MAN

Tiruvalluvar has a fascinating blue print for the evolution of Man. He knows that the average house-holder is usually self-centred and narrow in his vision. He must, therefore, dangle before him an ideal which he would think worth achieving. He places before him the ideal of '*Puhazh*' or fame and prescribes certain virtues by practising which the house-holder can achieve fame.

By the time the house-holder has achieved fame, he has, by practising the prescribed virtues, become less self-centred and more fit to work for a higher ideal than fame. At this stage Valluvar places a greater ideal before him. He wants him to become a man possessing perpetual inner joy and peace. For that purpose, he wants the house-holder, who has achieved fame, to become a contemplator, a meditator, a man of sacrifice, a renunciant who will be in perpetual joy. After he achieves this ideal, he becomes fit to play a significant and fruitful role as a member of the community, as a citizen of the State and as a universal man. At this stage Valluvar places before him the ideal of the sage or the Superman and calls upon him to achieve this ideal by practising certain loftier virtues.

It would indeed be edifying to study how Tiruvalluvar takes us kindly by the hand and persuades us, by resorting to all the tricks of psychiatry, to rise from a lower stage to the higher, till at last we achieve the ideal of becoming a '*Sanror*'.

It is difficult to translate the Tamil word ‘Sanror’ into English because ‘Sanror’ is a man who possesses many different but great virtues. According to Tiruvalluvar, ‘Salbu’, that is to say, the virtue of the Sanror consists of a group of five distinguished virtues, namely, universal love, sensitivity, helpfulness to all, compassion and truth speaking. (Kural No. 983).

What are the qualities of the ‘Sanror’ as conceived by Tiruvalluvar? He would be a man so full of love that he would love even his enemy. In Kural No. 987, Tiruvalluvar asks :-

Of what avail is your Salbu,
if you do not do good
even to those who have done you evil.

இன்னாசெய் தார்க்கும் இனியவே செய்யாக்கால்
என்ன பயத்ததோ சால்பு. (987)

This goes farther than the doctrine of “turning the other cheek”. Sanrors would be clear-sighted and, therefore, firm in their determination to maintain their ideals.

“Even if the final deluge swirls around them,
the Sanrors will stand upright and unshakeable.
(Kural No. 989).

ஊழி பெயரினும் தாம்பெயரார் சான்றாண்மைக்கு
ஆழி எனப்படு வார். (989)

It is the view of Tiruvalluvar that only the moral dynamics of the Sanrors enables the earth itself to bear its huge burden. Says the Kural:-

The earth will cease to bear its burden
if the Sanrors deteriorate in their virtues. (990)

சான்றவர் சான்றாண்மை குன்றின் இருநிலந்தான்
தாங்காது மன்னோ பொறை. (990)

The Sanrors will not be distracted by the frolics of the ego. In fact, they will have achieved the egoless condition by wiping out the delusions of 'I' and 'Mine'. They would, therefore, have the magnanimous quality of accepting defeat even at the hands of inferiors. (986)

As has been pointed out elsewhere, Tiruvalluvar thinks that every man must be sensitive enough to realise that it is his duty to raise himself to the level of a Sanror and that it is the duty of every Sanror to do all those good acts which time and place require him to do.

Before becoming a Sanror, the individual is required to undergo probation, first as a house-holder, and then, as a self-denying renunciant.

What, according to Valluvar, are the virtues that the householder must practise? He has given a very broad and unconfusing definition of virtue:-

All virtue consists in being mentally free from dirt;
all else is pompous show. (34)

மனத்துக்கண் மாசிலன் ஆதல் அனைத்தறன்
ஆகுல நீர பிற. (34)

How are we to keep the mind free from dirt? Kural No. 35 says:—

Virtue consists in acting
in eradication of four evil qualities,
namely,
jealousy, covetousness, anger and evil speech.

அழுக்காறு அவாவெகுளி இன்னாச்சொல் நான்கும்
இழுக்கா இயன்றது அறம். (35)

These are qualities which are difficult to eradicate. But Tirvulluvar tells us that unless we do so, we cannot achieve happiness or fame. (39)

Dealing with the married life of the individual, Valluvar says that if it is marked by love and virtue, it would receive an ennobling quality and fulfil itself. (45)

The house-holder, who is frequently called upon to discharge the onerous duties laid down by Valluvar, is made to look upon these duties as interesting because Valluvar tells him frequently:-

The man, who lives the life of a house-holder
as it ought to be lived,
will be placed among the gods of Heaven. (50)

வையத்துள் வாழ்வாங்கு வாழ்பவன் வானுறையும்
தெய்வத்துள் வைக்கப் படும். (50)

The duties of the house-holder will be frustrated if he does not have a virtuous wife. The wife, is described by Valluvar as the life mate of the husband. In the Chapter on the virtues of

the wife, Valluvar regards chastity as the highest of all the virtues and says :—

She, who possesses chastity,
will develop miraculous powers. (54)

பெண்ணிற் பெருந்தக்க யாவுள கற்பென்னும்
திண்மையுண் டாகப் பெறின். (54)

Another Kural says:-

A woman, who, while waking up from sleep,
worships not God, but worships her husband,.....
when she says, 'Let it rain',
it will rain. (55)

தெய்வம் தொழாஅள் கொழுநன் தொழுதெழுவாள்
பெய்யெனப் பெய்யும் மழை. (55)

Kural No. 57 says:—

It is chastity that can give protection to a wife
and not any protective custody.

சிறைகாக்குங் காப்புளவன் செய்யும் மகளிர்
நிறைகாக்குங் காப்பே தலை. (57)

The wife is the queen of the home and her role in married life is supreme. That is why in Kural No. 53, Valluvar asks:—

Whatever do you not possess,
if your wife is eminent in virtue?
if she be without virtue,
whatever can you be said to possess?

இல்லதென் இல்லவள் மாண்பானால் உள்ளதென்
இல்லவள் மாணாக் கடை. (53)

The right kind of married life breaks down the barriers between the couple and gives them training in the noblest acts of self-sacrifice and selfless love. The entry of children into the home expands the circle of the home and consequently the ambit of selflessness. When the child of a stranger puts its dirty hands into a cup of coffee, you feel repugnant, but when the dirty fingers are those of your own children, they add a new dimension to the taste of the coffee they have dabbled in. Rightly did Valluvar say:—

The gruel that has been dabbled in by the tender
hands of children
is sweeter far to their parents
than divine Nectar. (64)

அமிழ்தினும் ஆற்ற இனிதேதம் மக்கள்
சிறுகை அளாவிய கூழ். (64)

The prattle of the children is music for him, superior indeed to that of the flute and the lyre.

“They, who have not heard the sweet prattle of their
own children,
say, “The flute is sweet and the lyre is sweet”. (66)

குழல்இனிது யாழ்இனிது என்பதம் மக்கள்
மழலைச்சொல் கேளா தவார். (66)

In this atmosphere of love and devotion, the children are brought up in the family.

Now Valluvar delineates the responsibility of the father in bringing up his child and says:—

The father's duty towards the son
consists
in making him sit in the front benches of a learned
assembly. (67)

தந்தை மகற்கு ஆற்றும் நன்றி அவையத்து
முந்தி யிருப்பச் செயல். (67)

and the son should co-operate with his father in the discharge of
his duties. The son's ideal should be to become a Sanror.

The mother who hears her son has become a Sanror
will be happier, at that moment,
than when she gave birth to him. (69)

ஈன்ற பொழுதிற் பெரிதுவக்கும் தன்மகனைச்
சான்றோன் எனக்கேட்ட தாய். (69)

The best way a son can repay the kindness of his father is to
make men say:—

By what great penance
did his father beget him? (70)

மகன்தந்தைக்கு ஆற்றும் உதவி இவன்தந்தை
என்னோற்றான் கொல்எனும் சொல். (70)

After indicating the warmth of the inter-personal relationship
that must exist among father, mother and son, Valluvar wants that
the love that sustains the members of the family should not get
atrophied in selfish pursuits but should become universal by
transcending the limits of the individual, the family, the
community and the country. In Kural No. 72, the differences
between genuine love, which redeems itself by the highest and

noblest acts of sacrifice, and the utter lack of love, which marks the stony-hearted are exemplified. Says the Kural :—

The loveless men belong all to themselves;
but men of love
belong to others-their bones and all. (72)

அன்பிலார் எல்லாந் தமக்குரியர் அன்புடையார்
என்பும் உரியர் பிறர்க்கு. (72)

Having emphasised the importance of love, Valluvar calls upon the house-holder to show hospitality to guests. 2000 years ago, there were not many inns or hotels in Tamil Nadu. It was full of villages of varying sizes. Pilgrims, men of business and scholars in pursuit of Truth and poets would be performing their long journeys by foot, breaking their journey, at dusk and resuming it by dawn the next day. The climate of Tamil Nadu is such that except for two or three months in the year, anybody could lie down under the open sky on the pials of houses without having to pay any rent for such user. It is against this background we have to understand the great emphasis that Tiruvalluvar has placed upon hospitality to guests. The guests might be known or unknown persons and if they come within the house, they should be warmly and respectfully taken in and looked after. They were not all mendicants who lived by taking alms. Ordinarily, they would be hypersensitive persons like poets, artists, philosophers. So says Kural No. 90:—

If we smell the Anicha flower,
it will wither and wilt away;
like wise, if you look at the guest with an un welcoming
face,
he will wither and wilt away.

மோப்பக் குழையும் அனிச்சம் முகந்திரிந்து
நோக்கக் குழையும் விருந்து. (90)

Sweet speech lubricates the wheels of life and keeps the atmosphere positively creative. In fact a hearty gift with an unsmiling face is much less productive of good than sweet speech with a beaming face. (92)

Valluvar is surprised that people, who reap rich dividends by indulging in sweet speech, should be so unbusinesslike as to use harsh words and incur certain loss.

Another virtue, which Valluvar wants the householder to cultivate, is the virtue of gratitude. He knew the liberating influence of gratitude upon the human mind. He says:—

It is not good
to forget the good done to us,
but it is good forthwith
to forget the evil done to us. (108)

நன்றி மறப்பது நன்றன்று நன்றல்லது
அன்றே மறப்பது நன்று. (108)

To remember an act of kindness done to us by another will give us mental joy and physical pleasure. It is neither good for the body nor for the mind to remember mental or physical pain caused to us. That is why the Sage says, 'It is better forgotten forthwith'.

Valluvar advises us as to how we should react to evil. Even if a man has inflicted upon us a murderous injury, the effect of it will be wiped out by thinking of some good he might have done us before. (109)

Another quality which Tiruvalluvar calls upon the householder to pursue is impartiality. It is the ornament of the wise to remain impartial without inclining to either side like the level rod of the balance loaded with equal weight on both of its pans. (118)

Next in order comes the possession of humility. Tiruvalluvar says :—

Humility will place you among the gods
but the lack of it will engulf you in the deepest darkness.
(121)

அடக்கம் அமரருள் உய்க்கும் அடங்காமை
ஆரிருள் உய்த்து விடும். (121)

This idea goes counter to Hazlitt's statement 'Humility is the worst of virtues'. Evidently, Hazlitt must have confused timidity with humility. Humility is the mark of the man of learning, who has realised how ignorant he is. As Valluvar says:-

Humility is good for all,
but when it is shown by the rich
it shines like a special wealth. (125)

எல்லார்க்கும் நன்றாம் பணிதல் அவருள்ளும்
செல்வார்க்கே செல்வந் தகைத்து. (125)

The man, who has no humility, may get angry, easily wag his tongue needlessly and thereby come to grief. That is why Valluvar says:

A wound caused by a burning fire
may heal internally,
but not a wound caused by a blistering tongue. (129)

தீயினாற் சுட்டபுண் உள்ளாறும் ஆறாதே
நாவினாற் சுட்ட வடு. (129)

Valluvar next asks the householder to cultivate character. He does not say that character will give him postmortem paradise. All that he says is “Character gives a man an honourable place in Society and, therefore, it should be valued more than life itself”. (131)

In Kural No. 137, he says:-

A man of character achieves greatness;
but a man who has no character achieves infinite
disgrace.

ஓழுக்கத்தின் எய்துவர் மேன்மை இழுக்கத்தின்
எய்துவர் எய்தாப் பழி. (137)

Valluvar persuades us to cultivate good character by saying:-

“Character alone produces happiness”. Kural No. 138 says:-

Good character sows the seed,
out of which happiness sprouts forth,
but bad character will give eternal sorrow.

நன்றிக்கு வித்தாகும் நல்லொழுக்கம் தீயொழுக்கம்
என்றும் இடும்பை தரும். (138)

Valluvar is particular that a man, who lives the life of a householder, shall not covet another man’s wife. He says:-

Of all the fools that stand
on the out-skirts of virtue,
there is no fool greater

than the one who stands
on the outskirts of another man's home. (142)

அறன்கடை நின்றாருள் எல்லாம் பிறன்கடை
நின்றாரின் பேதையார் இல். (142)

Valluvar knows what a tremendous amount of courage is required not to covet another mans wife. He also knows that when once that courage is achieved, great dignity will go with it. In Kural No. 148, he says:-

That supreme courage of manliness,
which looks not at the wife of another,
is not merely a virtue for the great;
it lends them a great dignity. (148)

பிறன்மனை நோக்காத பேராண்மை சான்றோர்க்கு
அறனொன்றோ ஆன்ற ஒழுக்கு. (148)

Turning to the quality of forbearance, Valluvar tells the householder:-

Just as the Earth bears
even those who cut into it,
it is important to bear
even those who revile us. (151)

அகழ்வாரைத் தாங்கும் நிலம்போலத் தம்மை
இகழ்வார்ப் பொறுத்தல் தலை. (151)

In Kural No. 153, he gives us an interesting and thought-provoking epigram:

Poverty in poverty
is
to turn a guest away without feeding him;
Might of might
is
to suffer fools.

இன்மையுள் இன்மை விருந்தொரால் வன்மையுள்
வன்மை மடவார்ப் பொறை. (153)

Hospitality and forbearance go hand in hand in this Kural.
In Kural No. 160, he says:—

Those, who endure fasting as a penance,
are great,
but they are next only to those,
who endure the evil words of others.

உண்ணாது நோற்பார் பெரியர் பிறர்சொல்லும்
இன்னாச்சொல் நோற்பாரின் பின். (160)

Valluvar next asks the house-holder to be free from jealousy,
which Shakespeare points to as that “green-eyed toad”. In Kural
No. 165, Valluvar says:-

To those who have envy
it is punishment enough;
even without enemies it can bring them destruction.

அழுக்காறு உடையார்க்கு அதுசாலும் ஒன்னார்
வழுக்கியும் கேடன் பது. (165)

The next advice that Tiruvalluvar gives the householder is
not to covet another man’s property. We know how Prime
Minister Gladstone’s kleptomania brought disgrace to an

otherwise magnificent personality. Next to non-coveting, Valluvar places the virtue of abstinence from back-biting. Back-biting is the very reverse of the way of love and is disruptive of friendship and unity. Kural No. 187, says:—

Those, who know not
to cultivate friendship with laughter,
will, by back-biting,
estrangle the closest of relatives.

பகச்சொல்லிக் கேளிர்ப் பிரிப்பர் நகச்சொல்லி
நட்பாடல் தேற்றா தவர். (187)

Valluvar pours contempt upon the back-biters by wondering:—

Is it out of charity
that the Earth bears the burden
of the one who slanders people behind their backs. (189)

அறன்னோக்கி ஆற்றுங்கொல் வையம் புறன்னோக்கிப்
புன்சொல் உரைப்பான் பொறை. (189)

In Kural No. 190, the poet asks:—

If people should detect their own faults,
even as they detect the faults of others,
would any evil happen to mankind?

ஏதிலார் குற்றம்போல் தங்குற்றங் காண்கிற்பின்
தீதுண்டோ மன்னும் உயிர்க்கு. (190)

Next, Valluvar proceeds to instruct the house-holder, not to indulge in profitless words, and to learn to dread even the performance of evil deeds. In Kural No. 205, he says:—

Don't commit evil, saying, "I am poor";
if you do, you will become poorer still,

இலன்என்று தீயவை செய்யற்க; செய்யின்
இலனாகும் மற்றும் பெயர்த்து. (205)

In Kural No. 204, he observes:—

Think not even forgetfully,
of ruining others;
Virtue will engulf in evil
the man, who thinks of doing evil to others.

மறந்தும் பிறன்கேடு சூழற்க; சூழின்
அறஞ்சூழும் சூழ்ந்தவன் கேடு. (204)

In a separate chapter, Valluvar commends benevolence to all:-

Benevolence seeks not
any return;
how can the Earth repay the clouds
for their benevolence! (211)

கைம்மாறு வேண்டா கடப்பாடு, மாரிமாட்டு
என்ஆற்றுங் கொல்லோ உலகு. (211)

It is the confirmed judgement of Valluvar that neither in the world of the gods nor here upon the Earth, can we come across a virtue which is greater than benevolence.

The wealth of those, who distribute it to others, is like
the lake, supplied by springs,
being filled to the brim with drinking water. (215)

ஊருணி நீர்நிறைந் தற்றே உலகவாம்
பேரறி வாளன் திரு. (215)

Wealth, when it is in the hands of a benevolent man,
is like
the ripening of a fruit tree right in the midst of a town.
(216)

பயன்மரம் உள்ளூர்ப் பழுத்தற்றால் செல்வம்
நயனுடை யான்கண் படின. (216)

If it were said that evil will emerge out of benevolence, it
is worth procuring such benevolence even by selling
oneself. (220).

ஓப்புரவி னால்வரும் கேடெனின் அஃதொருவன்
விற்புக்கோள் தக்க துடைத்து. (220)

Valluvar has a thousand ways of persuading the Haves to help
the Have-nots. Kural No 225 says :—

The power of enduring hunger is a mighty power
but it is next only to the power of those,
who can remove that hunger by giving.

ஆற்றுவார் ஆற்றல் பசிஆற்றல் அப்பசியை
மாற்றுவார் ஆற்றலின் பின். (225)

Valluvar pities those hard-hearted misers, who hoard their
riches all life long and then die leaving all their hard-earned riches
behind. He asks with smiling sensitivity:—

Don't they know the joy of giving—
these hard-hearted men who hoard
just to lose their hoarding? (228)

ஈத்துவக்கும் இன்பம் அறியார்கொல் தாமுடைமை
வைத்திழக்கும் வன்க ணவார். (228)

Valluvar climaxes his chapter on 'Giving' with the following Kural:-

There is nothing more evil
than dying;
even dying will be sweet
if you have lost the capacity to give. (230)

சாதலின் இன்னாத தில்லை இனிததூஉம்
ஈதல் இயையாக் கடை. (230)

Having catalogued all the virtues above discussed and commended them to the house-holder, Valluvar tells him that the outcome of practising all these virtues is renown, (Puhazh). He makes this ideal attractive by saying:—

There is nothing immortal in this world
except fame, which exalts you in the eyes of the world.
(233)

ஒன்றா உலகத்து உயர்ந்த புகழல்லால்
பொன்றாது நிற்பதொன்று இல். (233)

Valluvar underlines the need for achieving fame by saying:—

If you are born into this world,
be born with qualities,
which make for fame;
those, who have not those qualities,
had better remain unborn. (236)

தோன்றின் புகழொடு தோன்றுக அஃதிலார்
தோன்றலின் தோன்றாமை நன்று. (236)

We can hear Valluvar gnashing his teeth as he adds :—

The soil, which bears the burden of an infamous man,
will become barren and infertile. (239)

வசையிலா வண்பயன் குன்றும் இசையிலா
யாக்கை பொறுத்த நிலம். (239)

Kural No. 240 embodies the ultimate verdict of
Tiruvalluvar:—

They alone live,
who live without infamy;
and they alone live not,
who live without fame.

வசைஒழிய வாழ்வாரே வாழ்வார் இசையொழிய
வாழ்வாரே வாழா தவர். (240)

It is true that love of fame is not entirely an unselfish virtue. But then Valluvar knows that it is a sufficiently sound psychological incentive for the ordinary man to practise such graceful and unselfish virtues as hospitality, gratitude, impartiality, humility, character, patience, etc.

After tempting the house-holder to cultivate these virtues and to secure fame in the eyes of society, Valluvar places before him the loftier ideal of living in the world with eternal and incessant joy. In order to achieve this ideal, the house-holder must renounce, not the world, but certain egoistic habits and tendencies. He appeals to the house-holder to become a *Thuravi* or a renunciant by cultivating certain special and difficult virtues.

First he must acquire spiritual grace:—

Acquire grace by pursuing the path of goodness;
whatever system you may explore,
you will find that grace alone is your companion. (242)

நல்லாற்றான் நாடி அருளாள்க பல்லாற்றல்
தேரினும் அஃதே துணை. (242)

They will never enter the evil world of darkness whose hearts ooze with grace (Kural No. 243). Rightly does Valluvar declare:—

Those who help others by exercising grace,
will never fear for their lives. (244)

மன்னுயிர் ஓம்பி அருளாள்வாற்கு இல்லென்ப
தன்னுயிர் அஞ்சும் வினை. (244)

This Kural appears to be both a commentary upon and an illustration of the life and conduct of martyrs like Mahatma Gandhi.

The other world is not for those who have no grace,
even as this world is not for those who have no wealth.
(247)

அருளில்லார்க்கு அவ்வுலகம் இல்லை
பொருளில்லார்க்கு
இவ்வுலகம் இல்லாகி யாங்கு. (247)

Those, who lose their wealth,
may, at some future time, blossom again;
but those, who have lost grace,
have lost it for ever and for ever and can never recover it.
(248)

பொருளற்றார் பூப்பர் ஒருகால் அருளற்றார்
அற்றார்மற் றாதல் அரிது. (248)

The man, who performs a virtuous act without grace,
is like a muddle-headed man
securing a glimpse of Reality. (249)

தெருளாதான் மெய்ப்பொருள் கண்டற்றால் தேரின்
அருளாதான் செய்யும் அறம். (249)

Cultivation of grace necessarily leads, in the view of Valluvar, to compassion for all lives. That is why he calls upon the householder to renounce the eating of meat, in order that he may become a man of grace. Kural No 251 Says:—

How can he be possessed of grace,
who, to swell his own flesh,
eats the flesh of others!

தன்னூன் பெருக்கற்குத் தான்பிறிது ஊனுண்பான்
எங்ஙனம் ஆளும் அருள். (251)

The wily argument “I only eat the flesh of animals killed by others; I don’t kill animals myself”, is met by Valluvar in the following Kural (No. 256).

If the world were to refuse
to kill for the purpose of eating,
there would be none to sell flesh
for the purpose of gaining money.

தின்ற்பொருட்டால் கொல்லாது உலகெனின் யாரும்
விலைப்பொருட்டால் ஊன்தருவார் இல். (256)

Here in this context, Valluvar takes the opportunity to

denounce the enormous number of sacrifices of animals, which were made in the name of religion during his time. Kural

Not to kill an animal and eat its flesh
is better far
than pouring ghee into a thousand sacrificial fires. (259)

அவிசொரிந் தாயிரம் வேட்டலின் ஒன்றன்
உயிர்செகுத் துண்ணாமை நன்று. (259)

All lives will,
with folded hands, worship him,
who would neither kill an animal nor eat its flesh. (260)

கொல்லான் புலாலை மறுத்தானைக் கைகூப்பி
எல்லா உயிரும் தொழும். (260)

The next thing that Valluvar commends is the practice of *Thavam* or meditation. Performance of austerity and non-infliction of injury to other lives are said to be part of *Thavam*. A man who has increased his spiritual power by *Thavam*, gets enormous powers of changing his very environment:—

Destruction of the enemies
and elevation of friends
can be wrought by the mere thoughts of the man
who performs penance. (264)

ஒன்னார்த் தெறலும் உவந்தாரை ஆக்கலும்
எண்ணின் தவத்தான் வரும். (264)

As whatever one wishes
can be attained
in the manner one wishes,
Thavam must be practised here and now. (265)

வேண்டிய வேண்டியாங் கெய்தலால் செய்தவம்
ஈண்டு முயலப் படும். (265)

Those who performs *Thavam*
are really those who perform their proper duties;
the others get entangled in desire
and toil in vain. (266)

தவஞ்செய்வார் தங்கருமஞ் செய்வார்மற் றல்லார்
அவஞ்செய்வார் ஆசையுட் பட்டு. (266)

Those who perform austerities by going through the
crucible of agony
will shine all the brighter like gold heated in
the crucible of fire. (267)

சுடச்சுடரும் பொன்போல் ஒளிவிடும் துன்பஞ்
சுடச்சுட நோற்கிற் பவர்க்கு. (267)

All souls will worship him,
who, losing his Ego,
gets control of his own soul. (268)

தன்னுயிர் தான்அறப் பெற்றானை ஏனைய
மன்னுயி ரெல்லாம் தொழும். (268)

Those who have attained in full
the power derived from penance
can successfully pummel even the Lord of death. (269)

கூற்றம் குதித்தலும் கைகூடும் நோற்றலின்
ஆற்றல் தலைப்பட் டவர்க்கு. (269)

The have-nots have increased and multiplied,
because
those, who practise penance are a few,
and those, who practice it not, are many. (270)

இலர்பல ராகிய காரணம் நோற்பார்
சிலர்பலர் நோலா தவர். (270)

While commending the practice of penance, Valluvar takes care to denounce those wicked men who pretend and pass off for men of penance.

Looking at the secret sin of the wicked-hearted
the elements five (of which the body is composed)
will laugh inwardly. (271)

வஞ்ச மனத்தான் படிற்றொழுக்கம் பூதங்கள்
ஐந்தும் அகத்தே நகும். (271)

It is here that Valluvar warns us against being misled by the outer shape of things :—

Though the lute (yazh) is crooked,
it produces wholesome music,
unlike the arrow, which, though straight,
is cruel in the effect it produces. (279)

கண்கொடிது யாழ்கோடு செவ்விதுஆங் கன்ன
வினைபடு பாலால் கொளல். (279)

So, says Valluvar :—

We must judge men, not by their appearance,
but by the actual deeds that they perform. (667)

உருவுகண்டு எள்ளாமை வேண்டும்
உருள்பெருந்தோர்க்கு
அச்சாணி அன்னார் உடைத்து. (667)

Valluvar has a dig at the external paraphernalia of men who are not really spiritual in conduct.

There is no need to shave the head
nor elongate the face with a beard,
if you have liquidated acts which the world condemns.
(280)

மழித்தலும் நீட்டலும் வேண்டா உலகம்
பழித்தது ஒழித்து விடின். (280)

Valluvar next pleads for non-covetousness:—

Stealth stands steadfast in the heart of the covetous,
even as Virtue stands steadfast
in the heart of those who have a sense of measure. (288)

அளவறிந்தார் நெஞ்சத் தறம்போல நிற்கும்
களவறிந்தார் நெஞ்சில் கரவு. (288)

The renunciant is next required to practise truthful speech (Vaimai).

If you ask what truth-speaking means
it is speaking words,
which are untainted
by the least trace of evil. (291)

வாய்மை எனப்படுவது யாதெனின் யாதொன்றும்
தீமை இலாத சொல்லு. (291)

It may be remarked that Valluvar tests even truth on the touch-stone of goodness. Supposing the uttering of truth is likely to produce evil, what shall we do? Valluvar anticipates this question and answers it in the following Kural :—

Even falsehood belongs to the realm of truth,
if it can produce faultless good. (292)

பொய்ம்மையும் வாய்மை யிடத்த புரைதீர்ந்த
நன்மை பயக்கும் எனின். (292)

Valluvar says that the man of truth will be universally
acclaimed, He declares in Kural No. 294:—

He who lives by renouncing falsehood from his heart,
will live enshrined
in the hearts of all mankind.

உள்ளத்தால் பொய்யா தொழுகின் உலகத்தார்
உள்ளத்து ளெல்லாம் உள்ளன். (294)

Valluvar thinks that truth-speaking is even superior to the
making of gifts and the performing of penance. Valluvar is so
convinced of the spiritual quality of truth-speaking that he goes
to the extent of asserting :—

If one can be free from falsehood,
it is needless for him to practise any other virtue. (297)

பொய்யாமை பொய்யாமை ஆற்றின் அறம்பிற
செய்யாமை செய்யாமை நன்று. (297)

External cleanliness can be procured
by a wash with water;
but internal cleanliness can be secured
only by truth-speaking. (298)

புறந்தூய்மை நீரான் அமையும் அகந்தூய்மை
வாய்மையால் காணப் படும். (298)

To the wise,
all the lights of the world are not lights,
the light of truth
is the only guiding light. (299)

எல்லா விளக்கும் விளக்கல்ல சான்றோர்க்குப்
பொய்யா விளக்கே விளக்கு. (299)

In the concluding Kural on Veracity, Tiruvalluvar gives a magisterial summation of his entire life's experience in the following words :—

Of all the verities
we have scrutinized,
there is nothing more productive of good
than truth-speaking. (300)

யாமெய்யாக் கண்டவற்றுள் இல்லை
எனைத்தொன்றும்
வாய்மையின் நல்ல பிற. (300)

The sage next asks us to refrain from anger. A man may not be angry with his master, because he dare not, but he may lose his temper very often, while dealing with his servant. So Valluvar tells us which kind of restraint is proper:

He is the real restrainer of anger
who restrains it where it can hurt;
where your anger cannot hurt,
what does it matter if you restrain it or give it free rein.
(301)

செல்லிடத்துக் காப்பான் சினங்காப்பான்
அல்லிடத்துக்
காக்கின்என் காவாக்கால் என். (301)

In Kural No. 304, it is said:—

Can there be a greater foe than anger
which would kill laughter as well as joy?

நகையும் உவகையும் கொல்லும் சினத்தின்
பகையும் உளவோ பிற. (304)

Valluvar next refers to the destructive effect of anger upon
the human body :—

If you want to guard yourself,
guard against anger;
if you guard not,
anger will kill yourself. (305)

தன்னைத்தான் காக்கின் சினங்காக்க காவாக்கால்
தன்னையே கொல்லும் சினம். (305)

In the next chapter on ‘Non-doing of evil’, Valluvar calls
upon the Man of penance :-

Not to do evil,
in any manner,
at any time,
to any one -
even mentally. (317)

எனைத்தானும் எஞ்ஞான்றும் யார்க்கும்
மனத்தானாம்
மாணாசெய் யாமை தலை. (317)

A man knows what pain evil inflicts upon him.
Why, then, should he think of inflicting evil upon
others? (Kural No. 318)

தன்னுயிர்க்கு இன்னாமை தானறிவான்
என்கொலோ
மன்னுயிர்க்கு இன்னா செயல். (318)

If you do evil to others in the forenoon,
evil will come of its own accord
and inflict itself upon you
in the afternoon. (319)

பிறர்க்குஇன்னா முற்பகல் செய்யின் தமக்குஇன்னா
பிற்பகல் தாமே வரும். (319)

The next Chapter on non-killing embodies the central concept of Tiruvalluvar. He thinks that man should have reverence for all lives and that if he shows irreverence to life in any form, he will be sowing the seeds of vice. In Kural No. 323, it is said:—

“The greatest good is, without doubt, ‘Non-killing’,
next to it in rank comes freedom from falsehood”.

ஒன்றாக நல்லது கொல்லாமை மற்றுஅதன்
பின்சாரப் பொய்யாமை நன்று. (323)

Valluvar’s luminous insight in this behalf is expressed by him in a myriad ways. In Kural No. 324, Valluvar says:-

If you ask what is the perfect way,
it is the way by which
the killing of any life is avoided.

நல்லாறு எனப்படுவது யாதெனின் யாதொன்றும்
கொல்லாமை சூழும் நெறி. (324)

In the estimation of those, who know the nature of
vileness,
men, who destroy life, are the vilest. (Kural No. 329)

கொலைவினைய ராகிய மாக்கள் புலவினையர்
புன்மை தெரிவா ரகத்து. (329)

After calling upon the house-holder to practise these virtues, he reminds him of the evanescence of things so that he may not procrastinate and postpone the practice of the recommended virtues.

In Kural No. 331, he says:—

To mistake the evanescent for the Eternal
is the quality of the meanest intellect and has to be
disdained.

நில்லாத வற்றை நிலையின என்றுணரும்
புல்லறி வாண்மை கடை. (331)

Referring to the transience of wealth, he says :—

Accumulation of great wealth
is like
the accumulation of a vast crowd
in a dramatic theatre;
wealth disappears as quickly as the crowd
that melts away
after the theatrical play ends. (332)

கூத்தாட்டு அவைக்குழாத் தற்றே பெருஞ்செல்வம்
போக்கும் அதுவிளிந் தற்று. (332)

Though wealth itself is impermanent, Valluvar tells us that works of permanent value can be rendered with the aid of wealth.

Perishable is the nature of wealth;
if you obtain it,
forthwith do something imperishable. (333)

அற்கா இயல்பிற்றுச் செல்வம் அதுபெற்றால்
அற்குப ஆங்கே செயல். (333)

As regards the evanescence of human life, Valluvar says:-

The one, who existed yesterday,
is no more today;
that is the glory of earthly life. (336)

நெருநல் உளனொருவன் இன்றில்லை என்னும்
பெருமை உடைத்துஇவ் வலகு. (336)

And what about the passage of time? Every day that passes
brings death closer by a day:—

To the wise,
that which appears to be a day
is but a saw
which cuts down the term of human life. (334)

நாளென ஒன்றுபோல் காட்டி உயிர்ஈரும்
வாளது உணர்வார்ப் பெறின். (334)

Hence the need to do the right thing and that, too,
quickly:—

Do virtuous deeds quickly,
before the tongue becomes powerless,
and the fateful hiccup supervenes. (335)

நாச்செற்று விக்குள்மேல் வாராமுன் நல்வினை
மேற்சென்று செய்யப் படும். (335)

Those who know not
to live richly even for a moment
occupy their minds with a million-million fancies,
nay, even more. (337)

ஒருபொழுதும் வாழ்வது அறியார் கருதுப
கோடியும் அல்ல பல. (337)

Here is a cameo by Tiruvalluvar on the relationship between
the body and the soul.

The hunter puts a basket over a bird
and thinks he has imprisoned it;
but the wily bird burrows into the ground
and out of the basket and flies away.
That is the kind of friendship, which exists between the
body and the soul. (338)

குடம்பை தனித்துஒழியப் புள்பறந் தற்றே
உடம்பொடு உயிரிடை நட்பு. (338)

Death is like unto sleep
and birth is like a waking up from slumber. (339)

உறங்கு வதுபோலும் சாக்காடு உறங்கி
விழிப்பது போலும் பிறப்பு. (339)

Looking at the phantasmagoria of souls tenanting one body
after another in the succession of births, Valluvar pitifully says:—

Is there no permanent refuge for the soul,
which takes a temporary shelter in the body! (340)

புக்கில் அமைந்தின்று கொல்லோ உடம்பினுள்
துச்சில் இருந்த உயிர்க்கு. (340)

It is thus found that by pointing to the transience of wealth and mortality of man, Valluvar appeals to the renunciant to make spiritual hay while the bodily sun shines by practising all the virtues which he has prescribed for him.

In the chapter on renunciation, Valluvar says;—

Whatever it is that you have renounced
you are sure to be liberated from the pain that it can
cause. (341)

யாதனின் யாதனின் நீங்கியான் நோதல்
அதனின் அதனின் இலன். (341)

This is a profound thought which has been most pithily expressed. A man, who renounces his motor car, becomes free from the trouble and expenditure of maintaining it. The man who renounces his cook is no longer subjected to the suffering that the cook can inflict upon him. It is thus manifest that renunciation of anything whatsoever brings about liberation from the pain and mischief that that thing can cause. This Kural reminds us of the simplicity of Socrates, who was content with one simple, shabby robe throughout the year and liked bare feet better than sandals or shoes. He had freed himself from the fever of possessiveness which agitates mankind. Looking at the multitude of articles displayed for sale in the market place, he remarked, "How many things there are in this world that I do not want?" In fact, he felt himself immensely rich in his self-imposed poverty.

In Kural No. 342, Valluvar says that this renunciation gives man the capacity to rejoice in this very world and to celebrate life with eclat ;—

A man, who destroys the arrogance of 'I' and 'mine',
will enter a world
superior even to that of the denizens of Heaven. (346)

யான்எனது என்னும் செருக்கு அறுப்பான்
வானோர்க்கு
உயர்ந்த உலகம் புகும். (346)

Sorrows will not lose hold,
of those who do not lose hold of attachment. (347)

பற்றி விடாஅ இடும்பைகள் பற்றினைப்
பற்றி விடாஅ தவர்க்கு. (347)

In Kural No. 350, the Saint says;—

Attach yourself to the One,
who has no attachments;
cling fast to that paramount attachment,
in order to get free from all attachments.

பற்றுக் பற்றற்றான் பற்றினை அப்பற்றைப்
பற்றுக் பற்று விடற்கு. (350)

The renunciant is next called upon to become aware of the
Ultimate Reality;—

Darkness disappears from,
and bliss descends upon,
those who rid themselves of delusion
and develop an unclouded vision. (352)

இருள்நீங்கி இன்பம் பயக்கும் மருள்நீங்கி
மாசறு காட்சி யவர்க்கு. (352)

For those that have dispelled doubts and achieved clarity
Heaven is nearer than Earth. (353)

ஐயத்தின் நீங்கித் தெளிந்தார்க்கு வையத்தின்
வானம் நணிய துடைத்து. (353)

According to Valluvar, even the knowledge obtained through
the five senses is useless except for those who have acquired
knowledge of Ultimate Reality.

The moment that a man's mind becomes aware of the
Real,
it can be said with certainty
that there is no birth again for him. (357)

ஓர்த்துள்ளம் உள்ளது உணரின் ஒருதலையாப்
போர்த்துள்ள வேண்டா பிறப்பு. (357)

Let the very names of lust, anger and delusion
perish;
at once all pain shall perish. (360)

காமம் வெகுளி மயக்கம் இவைமூன்றன்
நாமம் கெடக்கெடும் நோய். (360)

In the next chapter, the sage calls upon the renunciant to root
out desire;—

If desire, that woe among woes, is destroyed,
joy will become eternal even in this world. (369)

இன்பம் இடையறா தீண்டும் அவாவென்னும்
துன்பத்துள் துன்பங் கெடின். (369)

Most men think that they are free merely because they are politically, economically or socially free. The truth is that in spite of all these freedoms, they continue to be victims of their own impulses, and have no greater freedom than sleep-walkers. Says Valluvar ;—

They alone are free,
who are free from desire;
the others are not really free. (365)

அற்றவர் என்பார் அவாஅற்றார் மற்றையார்
அற்றாக அற்றது இலர். (365)

It is only after the individual has achieved real, spiritual, freedom and awareness of the Real and has become an ideal renunciant that Valluvar expects him to play the more important role of the member of the community and the citizen of the State.

In the concluding portion of the *Porutpal* or Canto on Wealth, which comes after the Canto on Virtue, Valluvar delineates the features of the sage or the superman and holds him up as the ideal for the renunciant. In other words, renunciation of desire, self-sacrifice, performance of penance, perception of reality, etc. are all qualities, which, according to Valluvar, are not ends in themselves, but qualities which make the individual fit to become a *Sanror* (Sage) and serve Society the better. Let it be clearly understood that the sage is not a person who runs away from life or renounces worldly duties, but a person who has eradicated his ego, discovered his own soul, achieved inner harmony and is, therefore, spiritually, temperamentally and instinctively fit to help people in distress and to spread peace and

joy among men, and on the basis of the Reality of the world and life affirmation, to celebrate the whole of life.

From the house-holder to the renunciant, from the renunciant to the sage or superman—that is the direction in which, according to Valluvar, Man is bound or destined to evolve. With the realization that he is one with all life, the duties and responsibilities of the sage or the superman increase enormously. In the last chapter in the Canto on Wealth, Tiruvalluvar deals with *Sanranmai* or the character of the sage; says he;—

It is the duty of all Sages
to perform all that is good;
And it is the duty of all men to realize
they should become Sages. (981)

கடன்என்ப நல்லவை எல்லாம் கடன்அறிந்து
சான்றாண்மை மேற்கொள் பவர்க்கு. (981)

After reaching the level of consciousness of the super-man, doing good in return for evil may become to him as natural as breathing. That is why Tiruvalluvar asks ;—

Of what avail is the character of the sage
if he cannot confer benevolence
even upon persons who have done him evil. (987)

இன்னாசெய் தார்க்கும் இனியவே செய்யாக்கால்
என்ன பயத்ததோ சால்பு. (987)

Thus Tiruvalluvar conceives his *Sanror* to be a sage, who has liquidated his ego, who has an unclouded vision of Ultimate Reality, who is in a perpetual state of bliss, who is full of

compassion for his fellow men, who has a profound concern for all lives that are in distress on the earth, and who, without any limitations of caste, creed, community or nation, rushes to help any one in distress and thus practises universal love. This concept developed by Tiruvalluvar 2000 years ago is singularly refreshing and surprisingly modern.

A bird's eye view of the Tirukkural shows that Valluvar had the wisdom to see the part, not in isolation, but in the light of the whole and to suggest methods by which the tempo of the individual's evolution could be accelerated. The blue print that he has handed down to posterity is both bold and detailed in conception.

XII. THE BARD OF UNIVERSAL MAN

The weaver of Mylapore had a wholesome world-view; the pattern in his carpet becomes visible as we look at his multiple-tinted Kurals in the light of the whole. He was essentially an optimist. At a time when the religions around him had developed profound misgivings about the reality of the world and started concerning themselves with man's redemption from the world, Valluvar concerned himself with the improvement of the human predicament through love and compassion. While the Protagonists of Maya taught others to say 'No' to life, Valluvar with all his might said 'Yes'. He opposed inactivity and indifference to the world and declared, "Evil *Karma* (action) is better than no *Karma*". He said so because a man, who did evil deeds, was at least in touch with reality, and there was, therefore, the possibility of his correcting himself; but there was no such possibility for the

man who believed in non-activity. He demanded of man not only an inner perfection but also an outer activity in the shape of selfless service to others. The people, who believe in world and life affirmation, are usually preoccupied with worldly activity and are indifferent to their spiritual welfare. On the contrary, those who believe in world and life negation, put their spiritual welfare in the forefront and neglect the activities of the world. In fact, while the BhagavadGita said, "Be unconcerned *in* action", those accustomed to life negation became unconcerned *with* action. The Kural, on the other hand, struck the golden mean between the two schools of thought and called for external activity as much as for internal freedom. Dr. Albert Schweitzer in his 'Indian Thought and its Development' at page 16 says; "World and Life Negation are found in the thought of Jesus in so far as he did not assume that the Kingdom of God would be realized in this natural world. He expected that this natural world would very speedily come to an end and be superseded by a super-natural world in which all that is imperfect and evil would be overcome by the power of God". On the contrary, Valluvar believed that in this very natural world, the liberated man can find his heaven and said that perfect bliss could be attained by an individual in this natural world itself and it is unnecessary to wait indefinitely for the transformation of the world in order to transform oneself. Thus he took life and world affirmation to a loftier plane than *Christ*. In Jain and Buddhistic thought, non-violence was originally advocated out of an eagerness to keep oneself uncontaminated by the world; in fact, the principle of non-violence originated in those religions from the principle of non-activity. But in Valluvar, positive love and compassion are the basis, upon which non-violence is justified. Another contribution

Tiruvalluvar made to the world of thought is equally original. He said: "Whatever is good conduces to happiness and whatever is productive of good is the truth". This theory of truth is an important event in the history of philosophy. Yet another contribution made by Tiruvalluvar was to free the concept of God from the trammels put upon it by denominational religions. Diderot, the 18th Century French Philosopher, rejected with scorn the God revealed in the Bible and pleaded with his countrymen to rise to a conception of God worthy of the Universe that science had revealed: "Enlarge and Liberate God", he demanded. Nearly two millenia before Diderot, Tiruvalluvar had enlarged and liberated God by equating Him with pure and absolute love. In fact, Tirumoolar, one of the spiritual descendants of Tiruvalluvar expounded this theory of love in Tirumandiram, a collection of 3000 immortal songs in Tamil. In one of his songs, he says;—

They are fools, who say
that Love and God are two;
they know not that Love and God are one;
after knowing that Love and God are one,
they remain rooted in Love-as-God.

While Western thought was in the main concerned with Man and Society and tended to ignore his relationship to his Maker, oriental thought reversed the process and was concerned more with man's relation to his Maker than with man's relation to man. Valluvar absorbed the best from both these schools. His chief glory is that he effected a synthesis of the two for the first time in the history of thought. This is obviously why Dr. Albert Schweitzer, one of the greatest philosophers and humanitarians

of the 20th Century, says in his “Indian Thought and its Development” as follows :—

“That the idea of active love did arise in the popular ethics of India in fairly ancient times we know from many stories we meet in her literature and especially through the ethical maxims found in the Kural, a work which probably belongs to the 2nd Century A.D.”

* * *

“What a difference between the Kural and the Laws of Manu which originated some four centuries before it! In the latter, under the dominance of the Brahmanic spirit, world and life affirmation is still just tolerated alongside world and life negation. In the Kural, world and life negation is only like a distant cloud in the sky.”

* * *

“In the ethics of the Kural, as in those of the Laws of Manu, the idea of reward has a place. The way of virtue is recommended because it leads to a better reincarnation or to liberation from rebirth. Alongside of this is found also the naive view, which is so conspicuous in Chinese ethics, that moral behaviour results in earthly welfare and immoral in misfortune. Nevertheless, ethics in the Kural are not so entirely dominated by the idea of reward as in Brahmanism, Buddhism and the Bhagavad-Gita. We already find here the knowledge that good must be done for its own sake. It shines out from various maxims.”

* * *

“Even though one should say there is no higher world, it is still good to give” (222)—“True liberality asks nothing in return. What does the world give in return to the cloud that gives it rain?” (211)

* * *

“Whilst the Bhagavad Gita in a forced and chilly manner gives as a motive for remaining in active life that it is in accordance with the order of the Universe, the Kural justifies it—what an advance! —by the idea of ethical activity. Work and profit place a man in a position to do good.”

* * *

“According to the Kural, duty is not confined, as in the Bhagavad-Gita to what the caste alling involves, but consists in general in “all that is good”.

* * *

“Maxims about joy in activity, such as one would not expect from Indian lips, bear witness to the strength of the world and life affirmation present in the Kural”.

* * *

“Like the Buddha and the Bhagavad-Gita, the Kural desires inner freedom from the world and a mind free from hatred. Like them it stands for the commandment not to kill and not to damage. It has appropriated all the valuable ethical results of the

thought of world and life negation. But in addition to this ethic of inwardness there appears in the Kural the living ethic of love.”

* * *

“With sure strokes the Kural draws the ideal of simple ethical humanity. On the most varied questions concerning the conduct of man to himself and to the world its utterances are characterised by nobility and good sense. *There hardly exists in the literature of the world a collection of maxims in which we find so much lofty wisdom.*”

* * *

“So a natural and ethical world and life affirmation of this kind was present among the people of India at the beginning of our era, although nothing of it can be found in Brahmanism, Buddhism and Bhagavad-Gita Hinduism. It gradually penetrates into Hindu thought through the great religious teachers who had sprung from the lower castes and lived among and felt with the people.”

Thus Dr. Albert Schweitzer puts Tiruvalluvar on the highest peak of Indian thought. Shri Aurobindo in his book, “The Foundations of Indian Culture”- (Page 358) refers to the Tirukkural as “the Gnostic Poetry, the greatest in plan, conception and force of execution, ever written in this kind, of the Tamil Saint, Tiruvalluvar.”

The man, who has earned such compliments, must have spent the greater part of his life thinking about Man, about

human conditions and about the best way of leading life while on this planet. He worked out his concepts in a pragmatic manner so that they could be applied to the details of daily living.

In the great systole and diastole of history, an age of licentiousness is succeeded by an age of severe discipline. From the way Valluvar condemns the vices of man, it may not be far wrong to presume that the society in which he lived was profligate, given to tall talk, violence and triviality. At the same time, it may be noticed that Valluvar presents a many-toned picture of a society, which had a high culture, which was sophisticated and well-ordered and which had an opulent religious, aesthetic, economic and political activity and had an abundant life-movement.

While dealing with such a society and commenting upon it, he reveals his clairvoyant intelligence as well as the fact that he was a masterly mixture of wisdom and learning, idealism and pragmatism, gravity and humour, austerity and romance. He salted his profound observations with kindly humour, and occasionally, with biting sarcasm.

Tiruvalluvar left little to be said on any major problem of life. The accumulated impression that one receives from what he has said is that the sage rather than the warrior was the ideal of Valluvar, and his ideal man (Sanror) not only talked philosophy but also lived it. His writings leave us the impression that he had a strong conviction that compassion is the power that holds the different parts of the Universe together and the greatest happiness can only come from, and the perfect morality would consist in, a sensitive loyalty to this whole. The witchery of Valluvar enables

him to give himself wisely both to the pursuit of Truth and to the creation of Beauty. He not only founded a new philosophy but also gave expression to it in poems of such sculptured power that no man has equalled them. The Kurals, as a whole, have just enough lightness to float the burden of Valluvar's thought.

Tiruvalluvar coined phrases and invented expressions, which have put both language and philosophy heavily in his debt. The very composure and majesty with which he sums up immense things reflect the confidence, poise and grace with which he met the problems of life. No mistiness, vagueness, sophistry, prevarication or indecision clouds his writings. There is a vital inwardness and ripeness about his couplets arising from his extraordinary maturity and mellowness. He, therefore, drops his fruits of wisdom like a ripe tree. Above all, his colossal and loving inclusiveness gives him a vision that refuses to recognise the trivialities of caste, community or nation. His is a cosmopolitanism, which he shared with another Tamil Poet, Poon Kundranar, who was probably co-eval in time with Tiruvalluvar and who showed similar catholicity by proclaiming;—

Every country is my native land
and every man my kinsman.

In the great republic of letters, Valluvar had few equals. Rightly did G. U. Pope hail him as "The Bard of Universal Man'.

Transliteration of Tamil words used in this Monograph, with diacritical marks:

1. Tiruvaḷḷuvar
2. Tirukkuraḷ
3. Kambar
4. Avvayār
5. Chēra
6. Chōla
7. Pāndyā
8. Tamiḷ
9. Karikāl Chōḷā
10. Gajabāhu
11. Siḷappatikāram
12. Manimēkalai
13. Sāttanār
14. Kapilar
15. Paraṇar
16. Kōtamanār
17. Māngudi Marudanār
18. Tēṇikkudi Marutanār

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* * *

KAMBAN

(Courtesy: 'Sahithya Akademi', New Delhi, who published this as a monograph under 'Makers of Indian Literature' series)

FOREWORD

It is clear to me even from a cursory reading of these excerpts that the translator is working with both a Poet and an epic poem of high caliber indeed. The characteristic reach of the Poet Kamban for cosmic personification in his poetry clearly ties these high and abstract matters to very human detail. It is the world of human experience he deals with, and it is through the exaltation of poetic song that he achieves what all the world's great poetry attempts to achieve—a marriage of the divine and timeless with the earthly and experiential.

I am impressed by the skill of the translation, which, although it recognizes and laments the impossibility of fully adequate translation from the Tamil to the harsh and alien English, still reflects with taste and remarkable verve what is obviously the peculiar quality of the original. His execution into English is effective and welcome. Kamban is clearly a poet the English-speaking world will be enriched by knowing through Mr. Maharajan's careful and loving translation.

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EDWARD LUEDERS

INTRODUCTION

JUDGING from the fantastic popularity that Kamban enjoys in Twentieth Century Tamil Nadu, a foreigner may be tempted to guess that Kamban is a contemporary poet who has sung of the absorbing problems of today. Such a guess would be eleven centuries off the mark, for Kamban lived and died in the Ninth Century A.D. His great poetry keeps its hold firmly on the centuries, because he gives poetic articulation to those timeless problems, which arise at all times and the answers to which will continue to fascinate the spirit of Man till the end of Time.

Kamban had behind him an unbroken poetic tradition of over a thousand years. He did not have the advantage, which the Tamil Poets of early Spring had. Before his arrival, the Tamil language had been handled by scores of masters; while it was still malleable and responsive, the Sangam Poets of the pre-Christian era had conferred upon the language a delicate reticence and austerity. Tiruvalluvar, of the 2nd Century A.D., had given it a lucidity, precision and terseness, which forced Dr. Grail to describe his couplets as 'apples of gold in a network of silver'. The Vaishnavite Saints (Alvars) and the Saivite Saints (Nayanmars) had, between the 6th Century and the 9th, given the language an extraordinary suppleness and a warm and moving song quality. It appeared as if all the potentialities of the language had been thoroughly exploited before Kamban's arrival. But, in spite of these handicaps, Kamban's genius gave to the language fresh powers of articulation and made it serve the pure perfection of poetry.

He chose the *Ramayana*, because the simple story of Rama, unlike the Mahabharata, was free from the complexities which would distract the reader from the liberating influence of poetry. The Tamils had known for many centuries the broad outlines of the story and enjoyed the different situations in the story through the devotional songs of the Alvars. Kamban knew that the advantage of such a familiar setting was that he could divert the entire attention of the reader from the story and focus it upon the marvels of his own creative, narrative, dramatic and lyrical genius. In fact, in the prologue to his *Ramayana*, he proudly declares that he has chosen the *Ramayana* for his theme in order that the greatness and divinity of poetry may be demonstrated. This claim he makes good with astonishing success.

In fact, with the birth of *Kamba Ramayana* the whole future of Tamil poetry was altered, and this masterpiece has been exercising the most profound impact upon the poetic sensibility of the Tamils during the last eleven centuries. A long series of learned men have been thrilling the masses, from the time of Kamban down to our own, with recitations from, and exposition of the *Kamba Ramayana*. Land grants have been made by the Tamil Kings for the maintenance of these rhapsodists and reciters. Stone inscriptions in the neighbouring territories of Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra show that *Kamba Ramayana* was being expounded to, and enjoyed even by people whose mother tongue was not Tamil. Thus Kamban became one of the most potent instruments of popular education and culture; he shaped the outlook, character and the aesthetic and religious attitudes of the people in the South; his *Ramayana* became part of the abiding national memory. He was acclaimed by all poets and scholars as

KAVI CHAKRAVARTI or the Emperor of Poesy and he has passed into history as the most learned of Poets. Popular exponents of *Kamba Ramayana* hold discourses continuously for months and it is a marvel that even today mammoth crowds of twenty to forty thousand men, women and children attend these discourses and listen with rapt attention and delight to the songs of Kamban. There must be something timeless about a poet who has gripped the attention of the people for over a millennium. Kamban can never become out of date, because he speaks to us and to the whole world with the Voice of Tomorrow.

THE AGE OF KAMBAN

THE Age of Kamban has been the subject of considerable controversy among the scholars. According to one view, which appears to be the more plausible, he lived in the 9th Century A.D., and according to the other, he lived in the 13th Century.

But there is consensus among the scholars that Kamban was a native of Thiruvazhundur in Tanjore District, and that a landlord by name Sadayappa Vallal was his great admirer and patron and that we owe not a little to this patron for having drawn the best out of Kamban.

Popular imagination has woven several legends around the name of Kamban, and these legends, which are totally valueless as historical material, indicate the attempt of the people to analyse and evaluate the genius of their greatest poet.

According to one legend, Kamban was the contemporary of Ottakootar, a minor poet in the court of a Chola King. By his

mastery of prosody and of the mechanics of versification, Ottakootar exercised a tyrannical sway over the literary men of his time; he was suffered by the King even to decapitate the poetasters of the age, who, out of ignorance, committed the slightest mistakes of grammar, syntax or prosody. But, with the advent of Kamban, whose intense poetic genius broke the accepted moulds of grammar and who invented patterns of verbal harmonics which far transcended the conventional scales of Ottakootar, the latter's influence with the King began to dwindle and Kamban became the Poet Laureate in the Court of the Chola King.

One day the King requested both the bards to prepare a poetic rendering of the epic story of Rama. Ottakootar set about the task in great earnest and started producing a laborious work of third rate verse. Kamban was in no hurry to commence the work, but spent his time in playful amusements. Some time later, the King summoned both the poets and questioned them about their progress. Kamban said that he had come up to the Sixth Canto and was working upon the bridge that Rama's monkey hordes were building between India and Lanka as a preliminary to the final battle between Rama and Ravana. Ottakootar, who was listening to this yarn, knew that Kamban had not even commenced the first Canto. So he challenged Kamban to recite one song from the scene relating to the construction of the bridge. At once, Kamban, with unlaboured spontaneity, sang the original of the following song impromptu:

Kumuda, the monkey-chief
dropped a stately hill into the rocky sea;
and the hill, with the rhythmic footwork of a dancer,

glided over the rocks and twisted and churned,
shooting forth a spray of ocean-droplets into Heaven;
and the denizens of Heaven jumped with joy,
hoping the Nectar would rise again from the sea.

குமுதம் இட்ட
குலவரை, கூத்தரின்
திமிதம் இட்டுத்
திரியத், - திரைகடல்த்
துமிதம் ஊர்புக
வானவர் துள்ளினார் -
அமுதம் இன்னும்
எழும்எனும் ஆசையால்.

Ottakootar, who was irritated by this brilliant extempore performance of Kamban, blamed him for using the word ‘thumi’ in the song. Kamban said it meant ‘droplet’. Ottakootar objected that ‘thuli’ was the proper word and not ‘thumi’, but Kamban asserted that the word had the sanction of popular usage. Ottakootar challenged Kamban to prove the usage. At once Kamban took his rival and the King into the town. The three saw a shepherd maid churning curd in front of her house and telling the children playing around her, ‘Go away, you kids, lest the curd “thumi” (droplet) should spill upon you.’ After making this statement, the churning woman vanished miraculously. Ottakootar realized that Saraswati, the Goddess of Learning herself, had come in the shape of the shepherd maid to justify the verbal inventions of Kamban.

Heart-broken, Ottakootar went home and started tearing to pieces the seven cantos of the *Ramayana*, which he had carefully and laboriously compiled with the aid of a thesaurus. By chance,

Kamban went to his rival's house at that juncture and found that only the last canto, Uttara Kanda, remained untorn. With characteristic graciousness, he grabbed his rival by the hand, prevented him from tearing the Uttara Kanda and got his permission to include it as the final Kanda in the *Ramayana* he was yet to produce.

It is desirable that we review the message of Kamban for the benefit of a society which is in danger of losing the dimension of depth. To Kamban, the question of the meaning of Life is one of infinite seriousness, and in his Epic he silences the transitory concerns of life so effectively that he enables us to listen continually to the voice of the Ultimate Concern. His intuitive and powerful presentation of Truth, Beauty and Goodness gives sustenance to the spirit of our own being, dissolves the rigidities of the Ego and induces in us a new perspective of Ananda. It is hoped that something of this Ananda may come through in the English rendering of Kamban.

BALA KANDA

The Maiden Battle of Rama

We shall make a rapid survey of the maiden battle of Rama as described by Kamban. Visvamitra, the great sage, takes young Rama and Lakshmana from the custody of King Dasaratha, much against the latter's will, to the dreary desert. Kamban brings out the dreariness of the desert after taking the three characters through the luscious greenery of the forests and the cool rivers

undulating down the hills, pausing a while on plain ground and leaping down steep rocks. The alternate pauses and leaps of the rivers remind them of the rhythmic tinkle of the dancer's anklet. Now they come upon the unfriendly desert, dried, parched and moistureless. The poet, with a chuckle up his sleeve, compares the aridity of the desert with the minds of two incompatible quantities, namely, seekers after Ultimate Reality and harlots,-with Reality-seekers, because in their ruthless search for the Ultimate they have gone beyond the warmth of passion and become detached; with the harlots, because they ply their passions for hire and thereby become devoid of the least vestige of passion. We note that the poet by his wit effects a skilful though startling linking of two contradictory elements.

It is in the setting of such a dreary desert that Visvamitra starts recounting to Rama the weird atrocities of Thadakai, the giantess.

Before Visvamitra could say that she resided in yonder mountain, came a huge black woman with crimson hair. She looked like a soot-black hill aflame with fire; the ends of her eyebrows trembled with anger. With pursed lips, she closed her cavernous mouth. She wore around her neck a string of elephants, the trunks of each animal pair remaining intertwined. She let out a roar, at which the Heavens, the outer space and the seven worlds trembled, at which thunder itself became hushed with fear.

The Poet suggests the dynamics of the giantess in the following song:

She grabbed at the passing clouds
 And, squeezing them with her hands,
 She gobbled them up;
 the huge hills she powdered
 with her kick;
 Her giant lips she bit hard
 with her giant teeth,
 each of which looked like half a moon;
 She seized her trident
 and roared,
 'You will get this in your chest.'

மேகம் அவை
 பற்று பு
 பிழிந்த னள்
 விழுங் கா,
 மாக வரை
 அற்று க
 உதைத்த னள்,
 மதித் திண்
 பாகம் எனும்
 முற்றெ யி(று)
 அதுக்கி, அயில்
 பற் றா
 ஆக மிடை
 உய்த்தெ றிவன்
 என்றெ திர்
 அழன் றாள்'.

Viswamitra thought it was time for Rama to act.

'Oh bejeweled one!' implored the Rishi, 'She has exhausted the entire gamut of conceivable evil; she has left us alive, because she thinks we are shriveled-up things unworthy of being eaten.'

This is her only restraint. Would you look upon this monster as a woman and as a delicate damsel with her plaited hair-do dangling on her back?’

The fire-like demon guessed what the Rishi was whispering to Rama and she flung at him her purple trident-fire along with the leaping fire of her whitish eyes.

None saw Rama
touching the arrow
or bending his lovely bow;
but they saw
The falling pieces of the pulverized trident,
which the monster had plucked from the very tree of
Death
and flung headlong.

மாலும் அக்கணம்
வாளியைத் தொட்டதும்,
கோல விற்கால்
குனித்ததும், கண்டிலர்:
கால னைப்பறித்(து)
அக்கடி யாள்விட்ட
சூலம் அற்றுவிழ்
துண்டங்கள் கண்டனர்.

Thereupon the woman, whose complexion was made as if out of darkness, sent with the speed of sound a rain of stones sufficient to level up the seas. With a rain of arrows the hero thwarted it. Then Rama sent out an arrow, which was as sharp and hot as an unkind word and which penetrated her chest and shot past the heart, like good counsel given by the virtuous to the wicked. The blood that swelled out of her holed heart spread

throughout the desert. It seemed as if the rose of the evening sunset had detached itself from the sky and fallen upon the earth.

In this maiden battle of Rama, the Lord of Death, who was pining to drink the blood of the Rakshasa race, smacked his lips with a foretaste of their blood.

The Story of Mahabali

After the destruction of Thadakai, Visvamitra takes his proteges across the desert to a lovely and fertile country. Rama asks him to whom the country belongs. This gives Kamban the chance to tell a dramatic short story through Visvamitra.

Once upon a time this country was ruled by a mighty king called Mahabali. By dint of his might he brought Heaven and Earth under his sway. He decided to augment his powers by performing a Yaga which even the gods could not perform. He, therefore, entrusted his kingdom to holy men and launched upon the great sacrifice. The gods, who learnt of this project, went to Lord Vishnu and requested him to frustrate the Yaga lest Mahabali should acquire much greater powers. Vishnu readily granted this prayer.

He, who had created the Cosmos, took birth as a stunted dwarf. As the far-spreading banyan tree lies hidden in a tiny seed, so did Infinity, in this pigmy shape.

The Dwarf mastered all knowledge and wisdom. Meditation illuminated his form. Wearing a sacred thread, uttering magic incantations with his tongue and holding burning embers on his

palm, the Dwarf went forth to the Court of Mahabali, who received him with honours and said that he felt blessed by his visit.

The King asked, 'What can I do for you?' 'Give me three feet of land, if you have it,' said the Dwarf. 'Granted,' declared the King, but Sukra, his preceptor and minister, obstructed the King and said, 'His appearance is deceptive, my King! Don't take him for a mere dwarf. Beware, he is the One who swallowed long ago the whole Universe and the Beyond.'

'Imagine the good I get by making a gift into the supplicating hands of the Lord himself,' declared the King, whose ideal was to give freely and ungrudgingly to those who sought his aid.

In a poem of unsurpassed intensity and felicitous form, which defies the translator's art, Kamban puts the following into Mahabali's mouth:

The Dead are not
the dead;
But
The dead are those,
Who,
Without dying,
Live,
With palms outstretched
For alms,
And who are the living,
My friend,
If not the givers,
Who, though dead,
Live for Ever?

‘மாய்ந்தவர் மாய்ந்தவர்
அல்லர்கள்: மாயா(து)
ஏந்திய கைகொடு
இரந்தவர், எந்தாய்!
வீந்தவர் என்பவர்:
வீந்தவரேனும்,
ஈந்தவர் அல்ல(து)
இருந்தவர் யாரே?’

With these words Mahabali rejected the advice of his minister and called upon the Dwarf to measure out three feet of land and take it. In the absence of Registration Offices transfer of property was made in those days by the donor pouring water on the hand of the donee.

The Infinite God stuck out his dwarfish hand on which the King poured water. The moment the water touched his hand, the Dwarf began to grow taller and taller. The watching crowd watched admiringly as the Dwarf rose to normal human height, but they became fearful as he grew and grew and touched the Heavens and grew beyond them.

The planted foot grew wider and wider
till it covered all the Earth
and made the Earth look tiny;
the raised foot
out-compassed the Heavens,
after bringing them within its sweep,
and returned,
there being no room to put it in.

நின்றகால் மண்எலாம்
 நிரப்பி, அப்புறம்
 சென்றுபா விற்றிறை
 சிறிது பார்எனா:
 ஒன்றவா எனகம்எலாம்
 ஒடுக்கி, உம்பரை
 வென்றகால், மீண்டது
 வெளிபெ றாமையால்!

Visvamisra drove home the point of the story by adding that the returning foot of the Lord came down upon Mahabali's head, wiped out his Ego, and absorbed him in its Ultimate Substance.

Kamban's aesthetic sensibility would not be gratified till the story is rounded off with a delicate *finale*. So he adds that Lord Vishnu, after absorbing Mahabali and gifting his kingdom to the Gods, went back to his abode in the Milky Way to rest Himself.

As the Blue One
 laid himself to rest
 in the Milky sea,
 Lakshmi, his consort,
 softly touched his feet;
 and the rugged feet that had
 encompassed all the worlds
 blushed and turned pink
 at her tender touch.

உரிய(து)இந் திரற்கிதென்(று)
 உலகம் ஈந்துபோய்,
 விரிதிரைப் பாற்கடல்ப்
 பள்ளி மேவினான்
 கரியவன்; உலகெலாம்
 கடந்த தாளிணை,
 திருமகள் கரந்தொடச்
 சிவந்து காட்டிற்றே!

It is by such *delicatesse* that Kamban succeeds in bringing out, with passionate intensity, the paradox of Infinite Power and Infinite Tenderness.

Rama Falls in Love

Listening to such stories, Rama and Lakshmana follow Visvamitra to Mithila, where the wedding of Rama with Sita is to take place.

In the *Ramayana* of Valmiki, the couple had not set eyes on each other before they met at the wedding. In fact, Valmiki's Sita, while recounting to Anasuya the story of her wedding, says that she was six years of age at her wedding. There was, therefore, little scope for romance at that age.

On the contrary, Kamban throws in a love-scene of extraordinary lyrical beauty, after making the couple mature enough to fall in love with each other before the wedding and even before the breaking of the bow.

Upon his description of the exalted charms of Sita, Kamban lavishes his entire aesthetics of Beauty. According to Kamban, even before the birth of Sita, the Goddess of Beauty appeared to have arrived at perfection; she had become a Being rather than a Becoming. Down the ages she had evolved by abstracting and assimilating the myriad aspects of Beauty from the myriad beauties in Creation. After assimilating the finest in Beauty, the Goddess found nothing new to absorb, and, therefore, ceased to evolve. But lo! when Sita was born, the loveliness of Beauty gained a new grace and shone with an ampler radiance than before.

As Rama went round the streets of Mithila along with Visvamitra and Lakshmana, he caught a glimpse of this beauty of Sita from her reflection in a moat beside the King's palace. As he raised his eyes from the reflection, he saw Sita herself standing at the palace balcony. The subtle psychic fusion of two beings in love is arrestingly described by Kamban:

Eye caught Eye, in pairs,
and each the other devoured;
their feelings brought to a standstill,
the Prince stood looking at the Princess
and the Princess stood looking at the Prince.

எண்அரும் நலத்தினாள்
இணையள் நின்றழி,
கண்ணொடு கண், இணை
கவ்வி ஒன்றைஒன்(று)
உண்ணவும், நிலைபெறா(து)
உணர்வு ஓய்ந்திட,-
அண்ணலும் நோக்கினான்
அவளும் நோக்கினாள்.

Visvamitra and Lakshmana, who had been lagging behind Rama, came up to him. Rama woke up from his absorption and reluctantly followed them to the palace of King Janaka. The mind and the poise and all the charms of Sita lingered around and followed the figure of Rama.

With the disappearance of Rama's figure, to which her soulful glance was riveted, Sita's mind drifts wildly and aimlessly.

The moonrise made her hotter with desire for Rama. She wilted and withered with the lotus flower spread on her bed. Cool

sandal paste smeared on her body singed her like liquid fire. Kamban, who creates all this sweet agony, projects himself into the mind of Sita and makes the empathetic interjection: ‘ Could there be a drug-cure for the malady of Love!’

Meanwhile, the trio had reached the palace of Janaka, where Rama is allotted a bedroom in the balcony. Visvamitra and Lakshmana leave Rama to himself and share a room downstairs. Rama is a stranger to the feeling of Love. As he is musing over Sita, darkness closes in, adding poignancy to his musings. His condition is aggravated by the rising moon. Is he alone? No, says Kamban. Solitude, Darkness, the Moon, his own tormenting self and his Sita keep him company. Rama laments:

The region of her waist,
 looking verily like a chariot;
 those two long spearing eyes;
 that couple of shooting breasts;
 and oh! that inward-drawing smile-
 Does that pitiless God of Killing
 need all this panoply?

வண்ண மேகலைத்
 தேர்ஒன்று, வாள்நெடும்
 கண்டி ரண்டு,
 கதிமுலை தாம்இரண்(டு),
 உள்நி வந்த
 நகையெனும் ஒன்றும்உண்(டு),-
 எண்ணில் கூற்றினுக்(கு)
 இத்தனை வேண்டாமோ?

In the company of these tormenting thoughts Rama spends most of the interminable-seeming night and then falls asleep.

Kamban, who, unlike Valmiki, depicts Rama as God, is moved by the human agony that afflicts Rama. The love-torn Rama inspires Kamban to point out to us the condescending grace of God, who, out of compassion for Man, comes down upon earth, imprisons himself in Time and Space and subjects himself to agony in order to redeem Man. The Poet sings of the waking up of Rama at dawn in words of untranslatable charm:

The sweating Sun
 riding in his chariot,
 borne on wheels of light,
 Dipped and bathed himself in the western sea,
 and rose, refreshed and cool,
 in the Eastern sky,
 And, with his tender arms of light,
 touched the feet of Rama
 and stirred him out of sleep.
 And Rama reached the shore
 of that endless agonising night-
 The Joyous One, who might have slept
 in the Sea of Infinity
 On his native couch of a thousand dazzling lights,
 chose, instead,
 to turn and writhe in pain
 on this constricting couch of Space and Time.

சொல் ஆழிப் பரவையிடை,
 வெம்மைபோய்த் தண்மைபெறத்,
 தேய்ந்(து)எழுந் த
 எல் ஆழித் தேர்இரவி
 இளங்கரத்தால் அடிவருடி
 அனந்தல்தீர்ப் ப,
 அல் ஆழிக் கரைகண்டான்;
 ஆயிரவாய் மணிவிளக்கம்
 அழலும்சேக் கைத்

தொல்ஆழித் துயிலாதே,
துயர்ஆழி இடைக்கிடந்து
துயில்வான்தா னே.

As one reads this magnificent poem in the original, one feels the rush of sound of a myriad oceans. The Poem has been suffused with such inspired music that the resulting rhythm haunts, and the haunted reader finds himself slipping out of the prison of cause and effect.

The Breaking of a Thousand Bows

Janaka, The King of Mithila, had vowed to give his daughter, Sita, in marriage only to a man who would bend and string the might bow of Siva, which was in his keeping. Many a valiant King had tried and failed to string the bow.

The sage Visvamitra introduces Rama to Janaka and tells him of his great prowess in archery and suggests that this protégé might be allowed to have a try at the bow.

Janaka looked at Rama and then at the formidable bow. He became depressed and apprehensive. He cursed himself for the rashness of his vow and was filled with concern for Sita's future.

But Visvamitra gave Rama a meaningful look.

Up rose Rama,
like a tongue of flame
leaping from a sacrificial fire
to meet the falling ghee;
'Broken is the bow,' shouted the gods in joy
and benediction was uttered by the saints.

பொழிந்தநெய் ஆகுதி
 வாய்வழி பொங்கி
 எழுந்தகொ முங்கனல்
 என்ன,எ முந்தான்;
 அழிந்தது வில்என
 விண்ணவர் ஆர்த்தார்,
 மொழிந்தனர் ஆசிகள்
 முப்பகை வென்றார்.

The Bow lay like Mount Meru
 and he lifted it with effortless ease;
 he lifted it as he would lift
 a garland of gay flowers made
 to put around Sita's neck.

ஆடக மால்வரை
 அன்னது தன்னைத்,
 தேடரு மாமணி
 சீதைஎ னும்பூந்
 தோடலர் கொம்பினைச்
 சூட்டிட நீட்டும்
 ஏடவிழ் மாலைஇ(து)
 என்னஎ டுத்தான்.

Unwinking, watched the crowd,
 they saw not
 Rama planting the Bow firm against his foot
 nor how adroitly he drew the bow;
 his taking the Bow-they saw,
 the breaking of the Bow-they heard.

தடுத்(து)இமை யாமல்
 இருந்தவர், தாளில்
 மடுத்ததும், நாண்துதி
 வைத்ததும், நோக்கார்:

கடுப்பினை யாரும்
அறிந்திலர்; - கையால்,
எடுத்தது கண்டனர்
இற்றது கேட்டார்.

Doubts Dispelled

Sita, who was in the palace, was unaware of the breaking of the bow by Rama. The figure of the unknown lad, who had smitten her with live, remained sharply engraved in her mind.

While love-lorn Sita is yearning for Rama, Neelamalai, her main-in-waiting rushes headlong into her presence, with her diamond ear-drops glittering and making rainbow patterns in the Sun, with her loosened saree and dishevelled hair 'chasing her from behind'. She is beside herself with joy and she shouts and sings and dances, without remembering even to salute Sita or passing on the good news.

Sita asks Neelamalai, 'What joy fills your heart? Tell me the news.' At once, the excited maid collects her faculties, salutes Sita and then tells her how a Prince a name Rama lifted the bow of Siva as if it were a tiny toy and broke it. She adds that he is the lotus-eyed son of Dasaratha, the King of Ayodhya, and that he has been accompanied by his brother and Rishi Visvamitra. The reference to Rama's two companions dispels Sita's doubts; she feels assured that the breaker of the bow is no other than the one who had stolen into her heart. This assurance produces a significant physical effect on Sita; that part of her body, which is girt by a golden waist-band, heaves and swells, breaking the waist-band in twain. Kamban's seismographic needle registers with quivering sensitivity every secret tremor.

Wedding Invitation

Leaving Sita in his mood of sweet expectancy, Kamban takes us to Janaka, whose joy is greater than the explosive sound that accompanied the breaking of the bow. He asks Visvamitra if the wedding might be celebrated forthwith or after the arrival of King Dasaratha. At the bidding of the Saint, Janaka sends an invitation to Dasaratha.

Towards Mithila

As Dasaratha and his people reached the outskirts of Mithila, Janaka with his retinue received them and took them into the city. Then a procession round the city was arranged for Rama, who decked himself with flowers and jewels and mounted a chariot which took him around Mithila.

The procession ends in front of the Wedding Hall in which the two sages, Vasishtha and Visvamitra are waiting. Rama enters the Hall and salutes both the Rishis by falling at their feet. He wears a garland of diamonds around his neck, which swings, as he prostrates himself, and throws off flashes of light upon his blue skin. The contrast of colours fascinates the Poet, who says Rama is like a seasonal cloud gently settling down at the feet of the Rishis—a cloud which is coruscating with lightning.

By exploiting colour words and vivid imagery and the littlest of significant details, Kamban produces, not a still photograph, not a motion picture, nor even a technicolour film, but a three-dimensional drama staged right in front of us.

The Lovers Meet

After all the guests have taken their seats, Vasishta suggests to Janaka that the bride might be fetched.

As Sita walks in softly, her jewels cast polychromatic images moving on the ground; it seems as though Mother Earth, fearing that the ruggedness of the Earth might hurt Sita's tender feet, has rolled out a carpet of multicoloured petals on the floor.

In a few bold dramatic strokes Kamban brings out the personality of the principal guests by merely stating their reactions to the appearance of Sita.

As the bride, who had the character of a sweet melody, drew nearer, all hands went up in salutation to her, except those of Rama and the Rishis. For, argues the Poet, all things that had a mind, regarded Sita as divine and what the mind thought the body promptly carried out.

Though Neelamalai's description of Rama was sufficiently reassuring, there was still some lingering doubt in Sita's mind about his identity. It would be immodest for her to stare at him. Pretending to adjust her bangles, she casts a quick furtive glance at him through the corner of her eye; she is now convinced that the Rama she sees objectively tallies in every particular with the one she has been subjectively nourishing in her heart.

During the split second that she looks at him the blue charms of Rama flow like a river into the large eyes of Sita.

At this juncture, Visvamitra announces, at the instance of Dasaratha, that the wedding would take place the very next day.

Synthesis of Bhoga and Yoga

The next morning Vasishtha is ready with all the materials needed for the wedding sacrament.

The bridegroom and the bride, both bedecked with flowers, take their seats on the bridal dais. As Rama and Sita sit, side by side, touching each other, Kamban whispers to us that they look like the grand synthesis of Bhoga and Yoga. The Poet believes that there is no inherent incompatibility between earthly joy and celestial bliss and that the two can be welded into a harmonious whole.

With the wedding Visvamitra's task is done. His exit from the epic is celebrated by Kamban in a song, which sings with orchestral fulness and exudes Visvamitra's sense of fulfilment and exaltation.

As the lordly groom
and Janaka's darling cuckoo
are dallying in the versatile fields of bliss,
Visvamitra, in the Vedic mode,
blesses them
and sets forth on his journey northward,
towards his retreat
in the dizzy heights
of Meru, the Mount of gold.

கோணா கிய
 மணவா ளனும்
 சனகன் தரு
 குயி லும்,
 நானா விதம்
 வருபோ கமே
 நுகர்கின் றஅந்
 நாள் வாய்,-
 ஆணா மறை
 நெறியூ சிகள்
 முனிகோ சிகன்
 அரு ளிப்
 போனான் வட
 திசைவாய், உயர்
 பொன்மால் வரை
 புகு வான்.

With this close-up of Visvamitra, the Poet bids farewell to one, who has brought about a union of momentous significance for the Epic.

AYODHYA KANDA

Now the curtain rises on Ayodhya Kanda, in which Rama is deprived of the crown by the machinations of Mantharai, the hunchback, and of Kaikeyi, the youngest wife of Dasaratha. By the banishment of Rama to the forest the ground is prepared for the abduction of Sita by Ravana and the final extermination of Evil and Tyranny.

Kamban begins the Ayodhya Kanda with a lovely song of invocation, which is as perfect of its kind as anything in the language.

Matter,
 which is descended from Ether,
 pervades
 the whole of the limit-disdaining
 expanse of Space;
 And God dwells in this expanse,
 infusing and transcending it,
 even as Soul and Consciousness
 infuse the Flesh, yet transcend it.
 That Godhead is no other
 than that Prince of Princes,
 that wearer of the warrior's anklets,
 who, teased and ill-treated
 by his queenly step-mother and
 a hunchbacked hag,
 abdicated the sceptre,
 crossed jungle and sea
 and saved the celestials
 from tyranny.

வான்நின்(று) இழிந்து
 வரம்பிகந் து
 மாபூ தத்தின்
 வைப்பெங் கும்
 ஊனும் உயிரும்
 உணர்வும் போல்
 உள்ளும் புறத்தும்
 உள்ளென் ப:
 கூனும் சிறிய
 கோத்தா யும்
 கொடுமை இழைப்பக்
 கோல்துறந் து,
 கானும் கடலும்
 கடந்(து)இமை யோர்
 இடுக்கண் காத்த
 கழல்வேந் தை.

The original of this poem, which has been tortured out of shape and rhythm by the sadistic mechanism of translation, would give us a measure of Kamban's capacity to fuse scientific thought with religious emotion and beatific vision.

The Cabinet Meets

After his return from Mithila, Dasaratha spends many happy days at Ayodhya. With the weddings of his able and virtuous sons, his secular life has become rich and full. One day he leaves his palace for his Council Chamber on an elephant's back, and directs his ministers to be fetched to the Council Hall. Vasishtha, his Prime Minister, arrives first. The other ministers enter the Council Chamber in the order of precedence, bow to Vasishtha first and then salute Dasaratha with folded hands. After Vasishtha and Dasaratha greet them, they take their appointed seats. Looking at them with benevolence, Dasaratha says that he wishes to emulate his spotless predecessors, who, after reaching old age, handed over the kingdom to their sons and went away to the forest in search of spiritual enlightenment.

Dasaratha requests the Council of Ministers to ponder over his proposal and offer advice.

Vasishtha, who was intently listening to the king's words, considers his proposal in the light of the wisdom and understanding behind it, of the unanimous opinion of the ministers and the interests of the citizens. Then he speaks:

It is indeed a virtuous duty.
Your utterance is worthy of your nobility.
... ..

தரும முய்இது;
தக்கதே உரைத்தனை,
தக வோய்!

Dasaratha is overjoyed that his proposal has met with Vasishta's approval.

The faces of the elder statesmen looked like outstretched letters on which approval was writ large. At Dasaratha's request Sumantra fetches Rama.

Rama bows before Vasishta and then salutes the feet of Dasaratha, who is overwhelmed by love and embraces Rama, with tears gushing from his eyes.

Dasaratha explains the tradition of his royal ancestors, who, in the evening of their lives, handed over their crowns to their sons and then set forth to save their own souls.

As the father made this request, the lotus-eyed son neither coveted the crown nor disdained it. He realized it was his duty to rule. Thinking to himself, 'whatever is commanded by the King is law unto me,' Rama accepted the royal command.

At once Dasaratha embraced Rama again and left for his palace, surrounded by his ministers.

Invitations for the coronation were sent to the sovereigns of different countries of the earth; they were sealed with gold-plated seals bearing the inscription of Garuda.

The Festive City

Rama is getting ready for the crowning ceremony. The citizens of Ayodhya beautified the beautiful city as if they would polish the Sun or dust the resplendent jewel on the broad chest of Vishnu, the Protector of the worlds.

Chariots and elephants studded the streets. As the gold-caparisoned elephants walked, they looked like the hill of the Rising Sun, walking with the glittering Sun on their foreheads.

As the City was thus scintillating with joy, Mantharai, the malignant hunchback came on the scene like the embodiment of all the evils perpetrated by Ravana. The festivities roused her envy. Her mind quivered, her anger struck roots deep into her, her heart ached, her eyes sparkled with fire, her words boiled up with rage.

This woman, who could plunge the three worlds into grief, burst into the palace of Kaikeyi, the third wife of Dasaratha and the mother of Bharatha. She pursed her lips and recalled to her mind and fixed in her memory the scene of child-Rama playfully shooting clay pellets from his bow at her hump. She could not bear to see the urchin, that had mocked at her deformity, ascending the throne. She entered the bed-chamber of Kaikeyi in a bid to persuade her to thwart the impending coronation of Rama, her step-son.

Kamban's Refinement

Kamban casts Kaikeyi, as in fact he casts every other character in the epic, in a mould radically different from that of Valmiki.

She is lovable, gracious, magnanimous and generous and is so wholesomely constituted that even sub-consciously she makes no distinction between her son, Bharatha, and her step-son, Rama. By introducing this refinement, Kamban arms Kaikeyi more strongly against the wily onslaughts of Mantharai and creates more challenging problems for himself. But, he meets the challenge convincingly by solving the problem at a deeper and subtler level of psychology. The scene in which Mantharai succeeds in poisoning the innocent and incorruptible mind of Kaikeyi, is an epic by itself and the bold dramatic treatment given by Kamban to the insidious manner in which Kaikeyi is enlisted on the side of Evil cannot be discussed within the limitations of available space. Suffice it for the present to say that, like the cunning technician that Mantharai is, she converts Kaikeyi by an argument, based not on the cupidity of the human heart, but upon its exalted nobility. She asks her, 'When the indigent and the poor, pursued by distress and poverty, go to you and beg for alms, will you, in your turn, beg of Kausalya to give you gold to help those in distress, or say "No" to those who beg for succour? If her son Rama becomes King, the whole world will become that of Kausalya, and are you going to live on gifts doled out by her?'

As wicked Mantharai uttered these words, says the Poet, the sacred heart of the noble Queen turned profane, by force of the boons obtained by the gods for the destruction of Evil. She wanted Mantharai to tell her how to secure the crown for Bharatha. The woman, whose mind was as crooked as her body, reminded her of the two boons Dasaratha had given her at the time of his conquest of Samparan, a Rakshasa, and she went on to suggest, 'With one boon you get the Kingdom for your son,

and with the other, you banish Rama to the forest for fourteen years.’ Kaikeyi proceeded to execute this plan without loss of time.

Dasaratha was shocked when Kaikeyi asked him for these boons. He entreated her not to insist upon her request to banish Rama, but Kaikeyi would not relent.

As the sorrowing Emperor rolled in the dust, the unmoved woman said, ‘I shall accept the boons if you grant them; else, Oh King! I shall kill myself.’ It was clear to Dasaratha that Kaikeyi was bent on getting what she wanted. In exasperation, he grants her the boons.

‘Fallen in this wretch,’ cried he,
‘Granted, granted is your request.
Let my son rule over the forest,
and, dying, let me rule over Heaven.
Never, never shall you and your son
swim ashore from the Sea of Infamy.’

வீய்ந்தா னேஇவ்
வெய்யவள் என்னா,
மிடல் வேந்தன்,
‘ஈந்தேன் ஈந்தேன்
இவ்வரம்; என்சேய்
வனம்ஆ ள,
மாய்ந்தேன் நான்போய்
வானுல(கு) ஆள்வென்;
வசை வெள்ளம்
நீந்தாய் நீந்தாய்
நின்மக னோடும்
நெடி(கு)’ என் றான்.

Kaikeyi Sleeps

As he said these words, a great sorrow, which was as sharp and fatal as a well-tempered and sharpened dagger, stabbed his heart and he became unconscious. As for the woman with the unmoved heart, a sense of fulfilment stole into her and she fell fast asleep. It is a subtle truth of psychology that an overwrought mind, which is suddenly released from great tension, slides quickly into a state of deep sleep. The Poet gives dramatic expression to this truth by sending Kaikeyi into the peace of slumber after sending Dasaratha into an agonized stupor.

Nature Protests

Though Kaikeyi finds repose in sleep, all Nature, according to Kamban, rebels against her great act of treachery.

The Night breaks into Dawn. The cool Night-Maid, says the Poet, hurried away as if ashamed to show her face before men and as if abashed at the conduct of the woman, who since her wedding day had acted as the soul of Dasaratha, but who, when her lord was struck with sorrow, showed him no pity whatever.

With day-break the stars disappear into the sky. The star-studded firmament looked like a far-spreading canopy hung with lustrous pearly hangings, which bathed the entire Earth with their white radiance. Now that the Coronation of Rama (whose crimson eye looked like a laughing lotus) has been put off, where is the need for the canopy? As the stars hide themselves in the sky, it looks as though the canopy is being hurriedly dismantled before Rama would wear the coronation armband around his arm.

The Sun rises. The hostile darkness that was like dense overhanging smoke was put to flight. The life of Dasaratha (the descendant of the Sun) was wearing out like the fading lamps in the palace. As if infuriated by the sinful wickedness of treacherous Kaikeyi, the blazing Sun rose above the Eastern hill, reddening with anger.

The Coronation Crowd

The people of Ayodhya, who know nothing of the bed-chamber scene, were ecstatically looking forward to the coronation of Rama. Each enjoyed the prospect of the coronation according to his or her temperament and maturity. Women, mature in age, regarded Rama's elevation with the mother-heart of Kausalya. The saints looked upon the event with the detached enlightenment of Vasishtha. The younger women resembled Sita in their attunement to the joyous occasion. Sita in her joy looked like Lakshmi herself. The older men, who had become other-worldly, resembled Dasaratha in their serenity.

Princes and Kings from all over the globe flooded Ayodhya to witness the coronation of the spouse of Sita.

Fresh-Blown Lotus

As the coronation crowds were surging in the streets of Ayodhya, Vasishtha, who was busying himself inside the palace with the performance of sacred rites, asked Sumantra to bring the King forthwith. Sumantra went to Dasaratha's mansion and failing to find him there, went to the palace of Kaikeyi. He was

commanded by Kaikeyi to bring Rama to her. Rama appeared before Kaikeyi and prostrated himself at her feet. Kaikeyi told him: ‘The King has ordered that your brother Bharatha shall rule his Kingdom and you shall go out into the jungle, live with matted locks in the company of saints, perform penance, bathe in the holy rivers and return in fourteen years.’

Rama rejoiced at this heartless command. The Poet says that Rama’s face, which, before hearing the command, resembled the lotus in freshness and charm, outshone the fresh-blown lotus after hearing the command. Rama said:

Were it not the King’s Command but yours,
would I disobey it?
This very moment I take leave of you
and set out for the forest.

‘மன்னவன் பணியன்றா கில்
உம்பணி மறுப்பனோ: என்

... ..
இன்னினி யேயான்கா னம்
ஏகின்றேன், விடையும்கொண் டேன்.’

Rama knew that his father was in the inner Chamber, but he did not go in to take leave of him. He offered his salutation in the direction of his father, and after prostrating at the feet of Kaikeyi again, he left for the palace of his mother, Kausalya. *En passant* we may note that in Valmiki’s *Ramayana*, Rama, before leaving for the forest, seeks an interview with Dasaratha, who calls Rama in and tells him, ‘I have been defrauded by Kaikeyi to grant those boons. You must, therefore, ignore my Command and become King of Ayodhya.’ This advice provokes Valmiki’s Rama

to preach a homily to Dasaratha and to dissuade him from breaking his pledged word. Kamban cuts out this awkward farewell scene for sound artistic reasons. Firstly, the pathos of separation would be more dramatic and intense if Rama went into the wilderness without taking leave of his grief-stricken father. Secondly, Dasaratha's love for Rama and love for Truth are in such lofty conflict that the tonality of either would be impaired by over-stringing the other.

Virtue's Sobs

With none to fan him with *samarai* fans,
 with none to hold aloft the white umbrella of royalty
 over his head,
 with heartless Destiny going in front of him
 and Virtue going behind him
 with sobs and sighs,
 the solitary figure of Rama came
 into the presence of the woman,
 whose mother-heart was throbbing with expectant joy,
 and yearning to see Rama, blue-mountain-like,
 come with a dazzling crown upon his head.

குழைக்கின்ற கவரியின் றிக்,
 கொற்றவெண் குடையுமின் றி,
 இழைக்கின்ற விதிமுன்செல் லத்,
 தருமம்பின் இரங்கிஏங் க,
 மழைக் குன்றம் அனையான்மெள லி
 கவித்தனன் வரும்என்(று), என்று
 தழைக்கின்ற வுள்ளத்(து)அன் னாள்
 முன்,ஒரு தமிழன்சென் றான்.

As Rama gently broke the news of his banishment, Kausalya broke down.

Rama takes his sorrowing mother in his arms and tries to console her. She says, 'By all means let Bharatha rule the world. He is rich with the perfection of Virtue and is better than you, even. But, I will, by cringing before the ill-advised King and appealing to him, protect you from banishment.' With these words, she rushes towards Kaikeyi's palace, where she finds the King lying unconscious on the floor.

Meanwhile, Sage Vasishtha conveys the dreadful news to the waiting crowd of citizens. In their delirious frenzy, the people attribute the vilest of motives to Dasaratha and declare that his desire to retire after crowning Rama is only a ruse.

They proclaim:

'We will cluster around Rama
and following him,
we will dwell in the serpent-infested Jungle—
and the Jungle shall in a brief while
turn into the City Beautiful.'

... ..
முற்றுடைய கோவைப்
பிரியாது மொய்த்தீண்டி
உற்றுஉறையும்; யாரும்
உறையவே, சில்நாளில்
புற்றுஉடைய கா(டு)எல்லாம்
நாடாகிப் போம்' என்பார்.

As the citizens were bemoaning their fate, Lakshmana raged with anger upon learning that his pretty-eyed step-mother had charmed Dasaratha into banishing Rama and securing the Crown for her own son.

‘Here stand I’, he roared,
‘to exterminate the folk
who call for battle
and to rid the Earth of their burden;
to pile their carcasses,
one upon the other,
till the heap reaches the roof of the sky;
to set the crown upon the head
of the only King I recognize,
Come who may
to cross my wishes.’

‘புவிப்பா வை
பரங்கெடப் போர்உவந்
தோரையெல் லாம்
அவிப்பா னும்
அவித்(து)அவர் ஆக்கையை
அண்டம்முற் றக்
குவிப்பா னும்
எனக்(கு)ஒரு கோவினைக்
கொற்றமெள லி
கவிப்பா னும்நின்-
றேன்,இது காக்குநர்
காமின்!’என் றான்.

Rama came to Lakshmana sprinkling a cool spray of mellowed words. He came, says the Poet, like a blue-black cloud to drench an inextinguishable fire.

After quelling Lakshmana's rage, Rama prepares to go to the forest.

Weeping Voices

The poignancy of the scene invaded the homes of Ayodhya. Stunned housewives ceased to perform their domestic chores.

The kitchens lost their smoke;
the terraces lost
the incense of burning sandalwood;
cupfuls of milk the parrots lost;
the cradles lost
the rocking hands of women,
the babies squealing.

அட்டிலும் இழந்தன
புகை; அகில்புகை
நெட்டிலும் இழந்தன
நிறைந்த பால், கிளி
வட்டிலும் இழந்தன;
மகளிர் கை, மணித்
தொட்டிலும் இழந்தன
மகவும் சோரவே.

This is great drama, literature that makes the kitchen and the terrace, the milk-cup and the cradle, walk and talk.

Ayodhya's streets would be usually filled with song and merriment. But, now?

The sound of *mridangam*
ceased;
the stringed lutes were hushed;

stilled was the noise of the festive crowds;
with nothing but weeping voices
the regal streets were filled.

முழு(வு)எழும் ஒலியில,
முறையின் யாழ்நரம்(பு)
எழஎழும் ஒலியில,
இமைப்பில் கண்ணினார்
விழு(வு)எழும் ஒலியில,
வேறும் ஒன்றில,
அழுஎழும் ஒலியல(து)
அரச வீதியே.

Rama went to the palace of Sita, followed by hordes of grief-stricken citizens. He tried to dissuade her from following him to the forest by telling her that she could not stand the forest heat. Sita retorted:

Can the huge forest burn hotter
than your parting?

...ஈண்டுநின்
பிரிவி னும்சுடு
மோ,பெருங் கா(டு)?'என்றாள்.

As Rama stood lost in thought, Sita went into the inner chamber, audaciously put on a saree made of the bark of trees, came out and stood beside Rama, firmly clasping his long arm.

In the *Ramayana* of Valmiki, Sita does not wear the hermit's weeds voluntarily but is forced by Kaikeyi to wear them. The coarseness of the garment shocks Sita, who trembles at the sight of it 'like a deer trembling at the sight of a net cast to catch it'. Vasishtha and Dasaratha curse Kaikeyi for her hard-hearted gift,

but Kaikeyi turns a deaf ear to their curses. Kamban, on the contrary, makes Sita wear the coarse garment voluntarily and cheerfully and thereby lends dramatic finality to her resolve to follow Rama into exile.

Departure for the Woods

It was sunset when Rama started for the jungle along with Sita and Lakshmana. Sumantra drove them for twenty miles in a chariot to a fragrant grove, where Rama alighted for the night. As he was conversing with the Rishis in that grove, a dense circle of citizens, ten miles in diameter, converged on the grove and covered its outside as if with a blanket. They settled themselves down on the river-beds, on sand slopes, on green grass, on every available patch of land.

As the crowd started sleeping, Rama wished to go further into the forest without their knowledge and before doing so, he asked Sumantra to go back to Ayodhya and convey his salutations to his 'three mothers' and to wipe out the sorrow of Prince Bharatha by remaining constantly by his side. This amazing compassion of Rama for Bharatha moves the Poet to exclaim:

So said the One,
who, hiding from the Scriptures,
took to dwelling in the woods.

...என்றான்:
மறைகளை மறைந்துபோய்
வனத்துள் வைகுவான்.

The idea of Kamban is that mere theological learning is a hindrance to the discovery of Reality. Such learning merely thickens the ego of Man and puts Reality at a greater distance from him. The more we burrow into the scriptures, the more perplexed we become about the nature of Reality. God, therefore, decided, for the benefit of Man, to quit the Scriptures and to give more convincing proof of Himself by going into the woods. And how does going into the woods demonstrate to Man the reality of God?

In the artificial City, the handiwork of Man is more in evidence than that of God. Man becomes drunk with his egotistic powers as he sees in the city the glory of his achievements. But, when Man leaves the City and goes out into the forests and mountains and sees stately trees with myriad-tinted leaves or wild cascades flowing down the hills, he feels humbled, forgets the achievements of his own ego and is overpowered by the unseen Presence of God. As a visit to the wilderness turns the mind of Man from his own Ego to God, Kamban justly says that God hides himself from the Scriptures and chooses to dwell in the woods.

This profound sentiment crosses the mind of the Poet as Rama, the incarnate God has discarded the City of Ayodhya and is about to go deeper into the forest. The request made by Rama to Sumantra to stand by Bharatha and console him is so refreshingly free from the pettiness and envy we associate with human nature that Kamban makes this memorable exclamation so that the reader may notice this existential proof of the divinity

of Rama-'So said the One, who hiding from the Scriptures, took to dwelling in the woods.' The whole sublimity of the passage derives from the weight of passionate insight thrown into it. This is not cleverness or artifice, but genius.

The Mynah and the Parrot

Now, Sumantra turns to Sita, who is looking forward to a joyous future in the forest. She tells Sumantra, 'Convey my regards first to the King and my mothers-in-law. Then tell my loving sisters carefully to nurse my golden *Mynah* and parrot.' Sumantra is moved by this child-like request of the simple, unsophisticated Sita, who has known no sorrow and who has not the slightest notion of the rigours and perils of forest life. As he thinks of her pathetic innocence, Sumantra breaks into tears. Sita wonders if she has given offence to Sumantra. She muses, 'I merely said the birds must be looked after. Why should he weep?' Unable to divine the reason for his tears, she starts weeping, too.

With a heavy heart, Sumantra takes leave of Rama and drives back all alone to Ayodhya.

The Godly Moon

Leaving the sleeping legion of Citizens, Rama takes this opportunity of going further into the jungle. It is pitch dark now, and who escorts Rama into the dark? The Poet says:

The Chastity of Sita,
the manliness of his own Virtue
and his younger brother and the bow—
these were the protective armoury
that escorted this Earth-descended Grace,
as he launched out into the darkness of the Night.

தையல்தன் கற்பும்,தன்
தகவும், தம்பியும்,
செய்யகை வில்லுமே
சேமமாகக் கொண்டு,
மையறு கருணையாய்
வையம் வந்துள
ஐயனும் போயினான்
அல்லின் நாப்பணை.

As the three groped forward, the darkness seemed to have an obstructive solidity about it; it seemed to collude with the Rakshasas, the friends of Evil, and out of friendship for them, to obstruct the march of the trio. It is by such whispered intimations that Kamban suggests the impending confrontation between Good and Evil.

Driving
the ink-drenched darkness out,
came the Godly Moon,
as if the Sky, lighting a lantern,
had lifted it up with its hands.

... ..
மைவிளக் கியதேஅன் ன
வயங்கு)இருள் தூரக்க,வா னம்
கைவிளக்(கு) எடுத்த(து)என் ன,
வந்தது கடவுள்திங் கள்.

In some subtle way the Poet involves the reader in this pilgrimage through the darkness and in the ensuing Crusade against Evil. Kamban expresses our sense of sudden relief and gratitude by calling the timely Moon 'Godly'. In the whole epic we get a continual consciousness of eternal law and order and good.

As the Moon breaks through the night, the Poet gives a verbal silhouette of the three figures moving in the moonlight. Rama moves like a black-washed hill. Lakshmana is like a hill having the same contours but plated with gold. The play of moonlight on the ground is so soft that the Moon would appear to have spread out filaments of whitest cotton in order that the tender feet of Sita might tread the forest unhurt. Leaving the three in these gay idyllic surroundings, Kamban takes us along with Sumantra to the poignant scenes in Ayodhya.

Well of Tears

As Sumantra returned to Ayodhya, Dasaratha asked him, 'Is the Prince far or near?' 'Into the remote jungle of rising bamboos, the Prince is gone' said Sumantra. The moment Dasaratha heard the words, 'the Prince is gone', gone was the soul of Dasaratha. The tragedy of Dasaratha stirs Kamban to his depths and what a well of tears has he dug out of it!

The sight of the bereaved wives holding fast to the body of Dasaratha leads the Poet into a mood of profound reflection upon the glory that was Dasaratha. At the cost of his life he had kept his pledged word and, by dying for an ideal, he had achieved the

life eternal. The body-boat, in which Dasaratha sailed, had ferried him safely across the ocean of earthly life to the shore of Bliss; it had steered clear of the sharks of delusion and returned safe after landing its passenger in Eternity, thereby proving the seaworthiness. As the wives held fast to the dead body, it seemed they had boarded this trustworthy vessel in the confidence it would take them, too, to the same destination.

The Excursion

Blissfully unaware of the tragic events in Ayodhya, Sita and Rama walk through the forest with great gaiety. In a holiday mood, they enjoy the Carnival of Nature. The spirit of tender and charming irresponsibility, which marks their picknicking excursion, is brought out by Kamban in a series of poems of exalting loveliness and charm; Rama strolled along with Sita, like a lovely cloud strolling with a flash of lightning. As they reached the northern bank of the Ganges and were conversing delightfully in the company of Saints, Guha, the hunter-chief, came to pay his respects to Rama. He was the Lord of a thousand boats, armed with a deadly bow. His shoulders were carved in stone, and his thighs, cut in ebony. He was tall, of such height as could plumb the Gangetic depth. A piece of red skin flowed down from his waist and a shiny belt of tiger's tail fastened tight the hide around his loins. He wore a necklace of beads, strung as if with a row of teeth; he wore an anklet, strung as if with pebbles; he had a tuft, strung as if with sheaves of darkness; lion-like, he had bushy eyelashes, strung as if with paddy grains. Buckled to his belt was a blood-stained dagger. He had the awe-inspiring look of a venomous cobra, but he lisped his words like a babbler and his

waist was strong as Indra's diamond lance. 'Unversed in Falsehood's ways', 'pure of heart' and 'more loving than a mother'. Guha placed before Rama his tribute of fish and honey.

Kamban's Rama and sages were vegetarians, unlike Valmiki's, and regarded vegetarianism both as a virtue and as a hall-mark of culture. The hunter-chief's request to eat fish shocked the assembled saints and sounded offensive. Rama smilingly told them that the gift brought by Guha was 'bathed in love', and thereby it had become consecrated and must be deemed to have been eaten with sweet relish. Guha asked Rama why he had left Ayodhya, and Lakshmana unfolded to him the woeful tale, which drew tears from Guha's eyes. Rama is moved by the intense devotion of Guha and adopts him as his brother. He tells him:

Hitherto we were brothers four,
and from now on, we are brothers five.
Is there any limit to brotherhood?
Love increases the number.

...
முன்புளெம் ஒருநால் வேம்;
முடிவுள(து) எனஉண் டோ?-
அன்புள இனிநாம் ஓர்
ஐவர்கள் உளரா னேம்'

It is a happy sentiment of the Poet that brotherhood is founded not in birth but in love, and with expanding love, the bounds of brotherhood expand, there being no limit to either.

After taking leave of Guha, the three reached the Chitrakuta hills in the morning. The whole day they spent under the shade of trees on the river bank. It is evening now.

Catharsis of Love

As the three remain meditating near a mountain pond, darkness falls, and Lakshmana takes Rama and Sita to a hermitage he has improvised for them on the slope of the hill. He has built it with his own princely hands. He uprooted bamboos from the hill side, cut them into pieces of equal length, planted them in a row, put up a roof-frame over them and fastened it to the planted posts. He thatched the roof with closely-knit teak leaves and overlaid it with flowering reeds. He built a wall around and plastered the wall with mud and treated the surface with water. Appurtenant to this hut, he built a private chamber for Sita with the same materials and decorated its walls with red loam and studded it with glittering stones picked up from the jungle stream.

As he surveyed the hut lovingly put up by Lakshmana, Rama rejoiced. He is stirred by the love showered on him by Sita and Lakshmana, and thinks that such spontaneous gifts of love come only to those who have lost all.

‘The queenly feet of Janaka’s daughter
have trodden the Jungle path;
the peerless hands of my younger brother
have built this hermitage;
what on earth one could not have
once one has deprived oneself of all!’
Rama then turns to Lakshmana and asks:
‘When did you learn, my brother,
to do this wise?’

சந்தம்
தான தன்ன
தன்ன தன்ன

மேவு கானம்
மிதிலையர் கோன்மகள்
பூவின் மெல்லிய
பாதமும் போந்தன;
தாவில் எம்பிகை
சாலை சமைத்தன;
யாவை யாதும்
இலார்க்கியை யாதவே!

and as he said so, dewy tears misted his lotus eyes. Rama thinks that his reputation for the vindication of Virtue is undeserved, as it is based, not upon his own sacrifice, but upon that of Lakshmana. Leaving us in this state of catharsis, Kamban takes us to Bharatha, who is Kekaya on a visit to his maternal grandfather, the King of Kekaya.

Tyrant Woe

Kaikeyi, who slept in peace after getting the two boons from the King, woke up and hurriedly sent messengers to Kekaya to fetch Bharatha. Bharatha, on receipt of the message, rushed back to Ayodhya, without knowing that Rama had been banished and Dasaratha was dead.

He found the City desolate. Foreboding evil, Bharatha dashed into the palace to see the King, but the King was not to be seen anywhere. He went to Kaikeyi and asked her where the King was. She embraced him and said, 'Grieve you not, Your father is gone to Heaven.' The callousness of her reply intrigued Bharatha, and the news of Dasaratha's death made him breathless, and unconscious. Recovering consciousness a little later, he broke into a loud lamentation. Then his thoughts naturally turned to Rama

for consolation. He said: 'It is Rama of boundless virtue, who is my father, mother, brother and lord. Unless I prostrate myself at his sacred feet, my mind will not be rid of this tyrant woe.' Bharatha's reverence for Rama angered Kaikeyi, who, in a thundering voice, said:

'Companioned by those two—
wife and brother—
he is now a forest-dweller.'

...
'தெவ்வடு சிலையினாய்!
தேவி தம்பியென்று)
இவ்விரு வோரொடும்
கானத் தான்' என்றாள்.

The casual manner in which she uttered these words provoked Bharatha to ask, 'What more plots are there to uncover? And what more griefs to inflict on my ear?' 'Why did the King die? and why did Rama go to the forest?' Kaikeyi replied with verve, 'With one boon I caused Rama to be banished and with the other, I procured the Realm for you. Unable to bear it all, the King gave up the ghost.'

Before hearing these words, Bharatha's folded hands remained upstretched over his head in salutation, but on hearing these words,

his folded hands
came down to stop his ears;
his eyebrows jumped up and down
and danced a fierce dance;

gleams of fire mingled with his breath,
and ran in and out;
blood flushed his eye and flowed forth.

சூடின மலர்க்கரம்,
சொல்லின் முன்,செவி
கூடின, புருவங்கள்
குதித்துக் கூத்துநின்(று)
ஆடின, உயிர்பினோ(டு)
அழல்க்கொ முந்துகள்
ஓடின, உமிழ்ந்தன
உதிரம் கண்களே.

In this stanza, Kamban dramatizes the very physiological symptoms of indignation. The anatomy of anger is seldom more vivaciously described. Annexing Rama's crown out of cupidity would be an unholy act of sacrilege in the eyes of Bharatha, but the omission to kill wicked Kaikeyi on the spot appears to him equally unholy. However, he restrains himself from tearing her mouth lest he should incur Rama's wrath by doing so.

In his despair, Bharatha thinks that all values have collapsed in this sordid scheming world. But, later, recollecting in tranquility the sacrifice of Rama and Dasaratha, his confidence in Virtue is restored. He exclaims:

If here is a King who would lay down his life
to keep his pledged word,
if here is a hero, to return from the exile
thrust upon him by a heartless word;
and if here is a Bharatha to rule the Kingdom
that has come his way,
the blame lies with the stars, not with Virtue,
which shines undimmed.

'மாளவும் உள்ளொரு
 மன்னன்; வன்சொலால்
 மீளவும் உள்ளொரு
 வீரன்;-மேய்பார்
 ஆளவும் உள்ளொரு
 பரதன் ஆம்எனில்,
 கோள்அல(து) அறநெறி
 குறையுண் டாகுமோ?'

Bharatha's conviction that the whole of life is sustained by the higher laws of virtue is expressed by Kamban in words of singular force and grandeur. The Poet's mastery over the choice of words and sonorities is uplifting and his marvellous blending of sound and sense makes him the most untranslatable of Tamil Poets. The lofty disdain with which Bharatha refers in this song to his own self in the third person gives his holy name the contextual meaning of sinner. Kamban contrives such dramatic situations and puts such eloquence into his living characters that he is able to sustain in the reader a feeling of passionate intimacy with things that count.

Bharatha refuses to remain by the side of Kaikeyi because he says she is a sinner with a mind filled with unspeakable cruelty. He goes to Kausalya and tells her that the solar dynasty has become tainted by 'a slander called Bharatha', because on account of him, sinful Kaikeyi had caused Rama to be expelled. Hearing these words of lofty sorrow, Kausalya feels an instantaneous sense of identity with Bharatha. Weeping, she gathers up and embraces Bharatha, as if the one who had given up the crown and gone to the jungle, has come back and stood right in front of her. Vasishtha comes to Bharatha at this juncture and tells him, 'A Realm without a strong King is like a Day without the dazzling Sun,

and a planetless Night without the lucid Moon. Your father is dead and your brother has renounced the crown which has descended upon you by virtue of your mother's request. Take over, my son, the Government of this domain.' As he heard these words, Bharatha shuddered in fear. With glowing indignation, he asked if it was proper for men of Virtue to give such advice.

He adds that Rama must be brought back and crowned in accordance with law and immemorial custom. 'If you utter any word more', he said, 'I will kill myself.' Vasishtha and other, who heard these words, were struck with Bharatha's sublime sense of justice and eagerness to right the wrong done to Rama. Bharatha called Satrugna, his younger brother, and asked him to proclaim by tom-tom to the people that he was resolved to give them back their lawful Sovereign. The dead City revived on hearing this proclamation. It is the diagnosis of Kamban that sorrow is the result of the deprivation of love and can be cured by an adequate supply of love. The Poet says:

Bharatha went, followed by chariots, cavalcades of horses and elephants, *on foot*, unlike Valmiki's Bharatha, who mounted a chariot and rode fast in his eagerness to meet Rama and bring him back.

As Bharatha, with his Army reached the Ganges, Guha, who was on the opposite side, jumped to the conclusion that the Army was directed against Rama.

Kamban's Guha is the very personification of unconditioned love and devotion. He recalls to our mind the unspoilt awareness and the uninhibited reactions of a child. His loyalty to Rama constrains him to act excitedly and unrestrainedly.

A sword buckled to his belt,
 biting his lips, his eyes afire,
 uttering words that cut and pierced,
 beating his war-drum, sounding his bugle,
 stood he,
 with his shoulders swelling to rush,
 like close kinsmen, to his support.

கட்டிய சரிகையன்,
 கடித்த வாயினன்,
 வெட்டிய மொழியினன்,
 விழிக்கும் தீயினன்,
 கொட்டிய துடியினன்,
 குறிக்கும் கொம்பினன்,
 கிட்டிய தமாள்ளனக்
 கிளர்ந்த தோளினான்.

Guha gather his warriors around him and tells them:

This deep, long-waved river-
 Dare they cross it and survive?
 Are we archers that would flee
 at the sight of these huge elephant hordes!
 Did not Rama call me 'friend',
 and is that not a word among words?

சந்தம்
 தானன தன்னன
 தன்னன தன்னன
 தன்ன தன்

'ஆழநெடு நுந்திரை
 ஆறுக டந்(து)இவர்
 போவா ரோ!
 வேழநெடு நும்படை
 கண்டுவி லங்கிடும்
 வில்லா னோ!
 தோழமை என்றவர்
 சொல்லிய சொல்லுரு
 சொல்அன் றோ?
 ஏழமை வேடன்
 இறந்திலன் என்றெனை
 ஏசா ரோ?'

The ungraciousness of Bharatha distress Guha most. In his martial speech to his warriors, he says:

'To my Lord, who gave them kingdom,
 They wouldn't give the jungle that we rule!'

'நாடுகொடுத்தான்
 நாயக னுக்கிவர்,
 நாம்ஆ னும்
 காடுகொடுக்கிலர்
 ஆகிளடுத்தது
 காணீ ரோ!

As Guha stands on the southern bank of the Ganges, Minister Sumantra approaches Bharatha on the northern bank and gives him a description of Guha and his devotion to Rama. At once, Bharatha, in his eagerness to meet Guha, hastens to the water's edge, taking Satrugna with him. The hunter-chief now has a close view of Bharatha.

Dressed in jungle weeds, his body stained with dust,
 his face bereft of laughter, like a pale, beamless Moon,
 his grief so mellow as to melt the rockiest of rocks-
 Such was the sorrow-stricken figure that Guha saw
 and seeing it, Guha stood dazed, choked and sobbing,
 the bow in his hand slithering down to the ground.

வற்கலையின் உடையானை,
 மாசடைந்த மெய்யானை,
 நற்கலையில் மதியென்ன
 நகைஇழந்த முகத்தானை,
 கல்க்கனியக் கனிகின்ற
 துயரானைக் கண்ணுற்றான்;
 விலக்கையினின்(று) இடைவீழ
 விம்முற்று நின்(று)ஒழிந்தான்.

Recovering from the shock, Guha realizes that Bharatha's
 intention is far from war-like. He bursts out at once:

This trusty Prince does look like my lord
 and the one who stands beside him
 does look like my lord's brother.
 He is in hermit's attire, his grief is without end,
 he salutes in the direction of Rama.
 Can any one born brother to my lord
 be guilty ever of misdemeanour?

'நம்பியும்என் நாயகனை
 ஒக்கின்றான்; அயல்நின்றான்
 தம்பியையும் ஒக்கின்றான்;
 தவவேடம் தலைநின்றான்;
 துன்பம்ஒரு முடிவில்லை;
 திசைநோக்கித் தொழுகின்றான்,-
 எம்பெருமான் பின்பிறந்தார்
 இழைப்பரோ பிழைப்பு!' என்றான்.

Guha rows in a lonely boat to the opposite bank and salutes Bharatha, who prostrates at Guha's feet and tells him he has come to right the wrong committed by Dasaratha and to take back Rama and crown him. As he hears these words, Guha clasps tight the feet of Bharatha and says:

'Oh, celebrated one!
your nobility is such indeed
that, in the eyes of those who ponder,
a thousand Ramas cannot equal you.'

... ..
புகழினோய்! தன்மைகண் டால்,-
ஆயிரம் இராமர்நின் கேள்
ஆவரோ, தெரியின் அம் மா?'

Bharatha tells Guha, 'Pray tell me where out elder brother rested.' Guha takes him to the hermitage, where on a slab of stone overspread with grass, Rama had taken bed. Bharatha falls down at once shivering to the ground and is lost in grief. Then Bharatha asks, 'If this is where the great one slept, where did he spend his time—the one who has boundless love for him and who followed close upon his heels?' Guha replies:

As the lovely dark Prince and she
slept here together,
Lakshmana kept vigil, bow in hand,
heaving long, hot sighs,
his eyes pouring tears;
Unwinking, he kept vigil
till Night's limit-line came into view.

'அல்லையாண் டமைந்தமே னி
 அழகனும் அவனும்துஞ் ச,
 வில்லைஊன் றியகையோ டும்
 வெய்துயிர்ப் போடும்வீ ரன்,-
 கல்லையாண்(டு) உயர்ந்ததோ ளாய்!
 கண்கள்நீர் சொரியக்,கங் குல்
 எல்லைகாண் பளவும்நின் றான்,
 இமைப்பிலன் நயனம்'என் றான்.

Guha's report is as touching as the Gentleman's report to Kent of Cordelia's reactions to Lear's sufferings.

At Bharatha's request, Guha caused the sixty thousand troops of Bharatha and the grief-stricken people of Ayodhya to be ferried across the Ganges. Then Bharatha boarded a boat along with his brother and the three Queens and Minister Sumantra. Guha rowed this boat, 'which crawled on those lovely swimming feet called the oars.'

Introducing the Queens

As they pass over the river, Guha points to Queen Kausalya and asks Bharatha who she is. Bharatha replies: 'She is the noble one who gave birth to him who had given birth to all the worlds; she is the one, who, because I was born, renounced all the wealth of royalty.' Guha fell at Kausalya's feet and sobbed, whereupon the Queen asked who he was. In reply Bharatha told her that he was Guha, the sweetest friend of Rama and the elder brother of Lakshmana, Satrugna and himself. As Guha wept, the eyes of Bharatha and Satrugna became wet with tears. Kausalya comforted them all in a song, which breathes the very spirit of serene benediction. As we read the song in the original, the air

becomes vibrant with a thousand angelic wings, which waft a balmy breeze over the bruised heart of Man. The original song is given below in Roman script:

Naiv̄ir aīr, maintīr!
inittuyarāḷ; natirantw
kāṭunōk ki
Meiv̄i peyarntatuvum
nalamāyitrām antre
vilangal tintol
Kaiv̄irak kaliranaya
kalai ivan tannotum
Kalantu nīvir
aiv̄irum oruv̄irāi
ahaltattai nedungālam
alittir endrāl.

Kamban's variety of musical accomplishments is prodigious. In fact, he works in larger musical units than any English poet. In this stanza, which consists of four lines, each line comprises 19 or 20 syllables. To be able to control so many syllables and words at once is a sure sign of exceptional mastery, and to be able to arrange them in such a musical order as to set them to a key appropriate to the relevant emotion is the most conclusive evidence of his supremacy in poetry.

Beethoven said once that Goethe was in D-major. Likewise, everything and everybody seem to present themselves to Kamban in a certain key and Kamban communicates them in a key most appropriate to each by resorting to musical phrases and rhythmical devices which produce the intended impression on a sensitive and penetrating reader. None of this word-magic of

Kamban or the regality of his tone can come through in a translation, but lest the narrative should be interrupted, the following version of Kausalya's utterance is given.

'Grieve you not, my sons, grieve no more,
it is as well that the warriors of Truth
renounced the Realm and came to the wilderness;
Befriend this mighty warrior,
who stands like a heroic elephant
with a trunk strong as the hills;
and befriending him,
may the Five of you, becoming one,
govern this Earth
for many and many a year.'

'நைவீர் அ லீர்மைந்தீர்!
இனித் துயரால்; நா(டு)இறந்து
காடு நோக் கி
மெய்வீரர் பெயர்ந்ததுவும்
நலமாயிற் றாம் அன்றே,
விலங்கல்த்திண் தோள்க்
கைவீரக் களி(று) அனைய
காளைஇவன் தன்னோடும்
கலந்து, நீ விர்
ஐவீரும் ஒருவீராய்,
அகலிடத்தை நெடுங்காலம்
அளித்திர்'என் றாள்.

In the mellowness of her grief, Kausalya's mother-heart embraces the lowly hunter as one of her own blue-blooded sons. There is in this song a certain epic nobility of thought, which lifts the reader above human pettiness.

Pointing to Sumitra, who looked like Virtue herself, Guha asked, 'Pray, tell me who's this lady brimming over with love.' And Bharatha replied, 'She is the Junior Queen of the one, who died in order that unfaltering Truth might live. She is the great one, who begot that inseparable brother and showed that adorable Rama had a brother, too.'

After this introduction, Kamban feels embarrassed that Guha's attention might fall on Kaikeyi. As that distinguished aesthete T.K. Chidambaranatha Mudaliar observes, this feeling of embarrassment is brought out with superb poignancy in the next stanza.

Her spouse gone to the cremation ground,
her son gone down the sea of grief,
Rama—that ocean of Grace—
gone to the merciless jungle,
the woman, who gauged
with the wanton cruelty of her mind,
all the worlds, which, of yore,
Mystic Vishnu had gauged with his height—
pointing to this woman.
Guha said, 'Pray, tell me who she is.'

சடுமயா னத்திடை, தன்
துணைஏகத், தோன்றல்துயர்க்
கடலின்ஏ கக்,
சடுமையார் கானகத்துக்
கருணைஆர் கலிஏகக்;-
கழல்க்கால்மா யன்

நெடுமையால் அன்றளந்த
 உலகெல்லாம், தன்மனத்தே
 நினைந்துசெய் யும்
 கொடுமையால் அளந்தானை,
 'யார்இவர்கள்(று) உரை'என்னக்,
 குரிசில்கூ றும்.

Now, Kamban makes Bharatha give vent to all the pent-up fury of his mind. He replies:

She is the Author of all evil,
 the foster-mother of Revenge,
 she is the one
 who has ground me down mercilessly
 despite my lying in her accursed womb so long,
 she is the one, the only one,
 who has a beaming grief-free face
 in a world where all bodies seem all dead.
 Guess you not who she is?
 The one who stands this wise
 is the one who has generated me.

'படர்எலாம் படைத்தானைப்,
 பழிவளர்க்கும் செவிலியைத்,தன்
 பாழ்த்தபா விக்
 குடரிலே நெடுங்காலம்
 கிடந்தேற்கும் உயிர்ப்பாரம்
 குறைந்துதே ய,-
 உடரெலாம் உயிரிலா
 எனத்தோன்றும் உலகத்தே
 ஒருத்திஅன் றே
 இடரிலா முகத்தானை
 அறிந்திலையேல், இந்நின்றாள்
 என்னைஎன் றாள்.'

These were bitter words, which created an awkward situation for the entire Assembly. The Poet makes haste to relieve them and the reader from this predicament by bringing down the curtain on the boat scene. He hurriedly changes gear from a long ponderous metre to a short snappy one.

Even this pitiless woman
 Guha regarded as his mother,
 and with his holy hands he saluted her.
 The boat, like a wingless swan,
 swiftly reached ashore.

சந்தம்

தான தன்னன
 தன்னன தன்னன

என்னக் கேட்(டு)அவ்
 இரக்கமி லானையும்,
 தன்நலக் கையின்
 வணங்கினன் தாய்என;-
 அன்னப் பேடை
 சிறையில தாய்க்கரை
 துன்னிற்(று) என்னவும்
 வந்தது தோணியே.

Rare dramatic skill has been employed by the Poet in retrieving a situation, which in lesser hands, might well have degenerated into bathos. The similarity between a boat with in-drawn oars and a wingless swan is so startling that the attention of the reader is diverted from a distressing predicament to the comeliness of an apt simile and to the happy need for disembarkation.

Heaven on Earth

After dismounting from the boat, Bharatha and his people trudge along on foot to the hermitage of Sage Bharadwaja, who receives them with open arms and blesses them and entertains them to a feast. Out of the richness of his tapas, the Sage sends out a thought, whereupon Heaven comes floating downward and settles itself softly upon the Earth.

Leaving Bharatha and his retinue in this enchanted Heaven-on-Earth, the Poet takes us to the Chitrakuta hills, where Rama, Sita and Lakshmana are holidaying. One day as Lakshmana was sitting in the courtyard of his cottage, he saw something moving hazily in the dim distance. Closeby stood a cliff, which looked like a tapering tongue of flame shot out by the Earth. Climbing up the cliff and standing on its summit, Lakshmana looked northward and saw a sea of arches and bows. There was little doubt that it was Bharatha's army on the march. Rash, devoted and easily excitable like Guha, Lakshmana misjudged Bharatha's motive and lost no time in taking hurried steps to resist the enemy. Down to the ground he jumped and stamping the rocks with his feet, he raised a cloud of rock-dust. Rushing to Rama, he roared, 'Unrespecting Bharatha is coming down upon you with Ayodhya's extensive hordes.' Donning his coat-of-arms and locking it tight, he lifted his bow and touching Rama's feet reverentially, he said he would presently rout Bharatha's army. In his mind's eye, Lakshmana sees an Armageddon, the bloody scenes of which he describes with picturesque and war-like relish.

‘And you will see rivers of blood
flowing and gurgitating into all the seas,
wiping out all Evil,
upturning and rolling those Island-elephants,
sweeping down chariots.’

‘படர்ளலாம் அழிபடப்,-
பரும யானையின்
திடர்ளலாம் உருட்டின,
தேரும் ஈர்த்தன,
குடர்ளலாம் திரைத்தன,
குருதி ஆறுகள்,
கடர்ளலாம் மடுப்பன
பலவும் காண்டியால்!’

Kamban, who knows how to turn the smallest details to dramatic account, would not let this blood-river go to waste. He makes Lakshmana say:

‘And you will see, too
red demons, slit-eyed dwarfs,
and headless trunks
swimming in the surging blood-tide
and dancing gaily, like the celestials,
and shouting,
“The Kingdom has become yours!” ‘

‘நிவந்தவான் குருதியின்
நீத்தம் நீந்தி,மெய்
சிவந்தசா தகரொடு
சிறுகண் கூளியும்
கவந்தமும், உலகம்நின்
கைய(து) ஆய(து)!என்ற(று)
உவந்தன குளிப்பன
காண்டி, உம்பர்போல்.’

‘By command of the King, Bharatha rules the world, and by my command’, says Lakshmana, ‘he will start reigning in Hell.’

Rama is distressed to hear these terrible threats. He says:

‘Scriptures, no matter how numerous,
can only *talk* about virtue.
But, Bharatha *acts* virtue.
What he does is Virtue
What he does not, is not.
You have thought not of this,
because of your love for me.

‘எனைத்துள மறைஅவை
இயம்பல்பு பாலன:
பனைத்திரள் கரக்கரிப்
பரதன் செய்கையே
அனைத்திறம்: அல்லன
அல்ல; அன்னது
நினைத்திலை, என்வயின்
ஏய நெஞ்சினால்.’

Think you ill
of that God of lofty Righteousness,
that Axle of Perfection?
He’s come, my boy,
to pay his respects to me,
and this you will discover presently.’

‘சேண்உயர் தருமத்தின்
தேவைச், செம்மையின்
ஆணியை, அன்னது
நினைக்க லாகுமோ?
பூணியல் மொய்ப்பினாய்!
போந்த(து) ஈண்(டு)எனைக்

காணிய, நீஇது
பின்னும் காண்டியால்.’

As Rama spoke thus, Bharatha took Satrugna and rushed towards Rama in his eagerness to have a close look at him. His hands uplifted in reverent salutation, his body sagging, his eyes dissolving in tears, Bharatha came like a painting done to declare, ‘This is the portrait of Agony!’

Rama gazed at Bharatha from top to toe and turning to Lakshmana said,

‘Look! my bow-twanging brother,
look with both your eyes,
at the “War-thirsty” Bharatha,
leading the “martial” battalions!’

... ..
‘ ஆர்ப்பறு வரிசிலை
இளைய ஐய!நீ,
தேர்ப்பெரும் தானையால்
பரதன் சீறிய
போர்ப்பெரும் கோலத்தைப்
பொருந்த நோக்(கு)’எனா.

Lakshmana stood startled, his abusive words were stilled, his tears dropped to the ground along with his fury and his bow, Bharatha’s figure is thin and worn-out with grief. Rushing towards Rama, he complains,

‘You have thought not of virtue,
you have thrown compassion overboard;
you have abdicated the law.’

‘அறந்தனை நினைந்தலை
 அருளை நீத்தனை,
 துறந்தனை முறைமையை!’
 என்னும் சொல்லினான்.

Then, he falls at Rama’s feet as if he has seen, face to face, his dead father come back to life. With his tears Rama drenches the matted locks of Bharatha, and lifting him tenderly, presses him close to his bosom. This spectacle moves Kamban to exclaim:

Thus did love-based Virtue
 embrace
 the Repertory of all that is just.

நியாயம்அத் தனைக்கும்ஓர்
 நிலையம் ஆம்அதை,
 தயாமுதல் அறம்அது
 தழுவிற்று) என்னவே.

Then Rama asks him, ‘How fares the might King?’, and Bharatha replies, ‘Sire, he is no more. Separation from you is he disease that killed him. The boon obtained by black Kaikeyi, my begetter, is the Yama that choked up his life.’ Hearing these words, Rama’s eyes whirled and so did his mind, both revolving like a whirligig. Down he sank to the ground—the one that was greater than the greatest.’

Sage Vasishtha comforts him by saying, ‘Death, too, like birth is a function of Nature. Forget you this truth—you that have mastered all the extant scriptures?’ Deriving comfort from his words, Rama goes into a jungle stream nearby, has a bath and performs oblations with water thrice.

Limitations of space prevent the writer from reproducing the moving scenes that follow. Bharatha requests Rama to take over the scepter. Rama tells him that he will carry out his father's command by living in the jungle for fourteen years and that, meanwhile, Bharatha shall rule the Kingdom at his command.

Bharatha's Crown

As Bharatha mused over the fourteen long years that lay ahead, grief gripped him again, and his mind turned towards the feet of God, which symbolize Divine Grace, the Grace that moves the whole Universe and all events within it. 'Pray', he said, 'Give me the blessed sandals which could bless Bharatha with the bliss of the Here and the Hereafter. The one with the weeping eyes placed the footwear on his head with ritualistic devotion, thinking to himself, 'This is my Crown'. He prostrated himself at Rama's feet and left, his frame dazzling with the dust on which Rama's feet had trodden.

With the departure of the visitors, the curtain is rung down on Ayodhya Kanda and rises upon Aranya Kanda, the book of Forests.

ARANYA KANDA

The Redeeming Feet

The three leave the Chitrakuta hill and go to the forest called Dandakaranya, where they encounter a monstrous giant called Virada, who threatens to swallow the two Princes. Rama kicks

the giant and at the touch of his feet, the giant recovers his former form and recounts how he Indra had punished him for his lust by cursing him to become a demon and recover his old form at the touch of Rama's feet. Recalling this curse and his redemption from it, Virada sings some beautiful hymns in praise of Rama's grace.

If these are Thy feet,
which the scriptures expound
and which spread throughout the Universe,
how vast and lovely must be Thy total form!

வேதங்கள் அறைகின்ற,
உலகெங்கும் விரிந்தன,உன்
பாதங்கள் இவைஎன்னில்,-
படிவங்கள் எப்படியோ!

God resides not only in inanimate Nature but also in the life and consciousness of all animate beings. But it is a mystery that these beings know Him not. The law of reciprocity does not seem to govern the relationship between the Maker and the made!

There is no calf which knows not her mother,
and the mother-cow knows her calf as well;
Oh! Lord, thou art the Mother of the Universe
and thou knowest thy children, every one of them,
but, alas! how comes it about
thy children know thee not!
What magic Ignorance blinds their eyes?
Tell me, Thou that canst come without coming.

தாய்தன்னை அறியாத
கன்றில்லை; தன்கன்றை
ஆயும் அறியும்;
உலகின்தாய் ஆகி,ஐய!

நீயறிதி எப்பொருளும்;
அவையுன்னை நிலையறியா;
மாயைஇ(து) என்கொலோ?
வாராதே வரவல்லாய்!

God, who lives in the hearts of all, the ignorant and the wise, is perceived only when divine wisdom dawns upon the ignorant. It cannot therefore be said that He comes in only at the moment of perception. He is already in the heart even before He is perceived. It is this truth that the Poet presents in a profoundly paradoxical form by making Virada say, 'Thou, who canst come without coming.' Objective presence of God, according to the Poet, preceded the subjective perception thereof.

After the departure of Virada, the trio move towards the hermitage of Sage Sarapangar. At the threshold of the Ashram, Rama sees the insignia of Indra, the King of the Celestials, and goes into the Ashram to see if Indra is inside. In the Ramayana of Valmiki, as soon as Indra sights Rama, he hurriedly leaves the Ashram without meeting Rama lest the meeting should delay the fulfilment of Rama's mission on Earth. But, Kamban makes Indra meet Rama in order that he might express his gratitude to the Lord for having condescended, at the instance of the Celestials, to take birth as Man for the purpose of destroying the forces of Evil. The meeting thus contrived gives the Poet an opportunity to explain earthly events against a cosmic background and thereby widen the earth-bound perspective of Man.

Indra sings the praise of Rama:

'Thou art the Light
that penetrates and soaks everything

and yet remains unsoaked.
 Harassed by the enemy
 we sought refuge at Thy feet
 and implored Thee;
 and in fulfilment of the boon Thou gavest
 Thou hast arrived, Oh, Lord!
 Imagine Thy two lotus feet
 now planted on the Earth!

தோய்ந்தும் பொருள் அனைத்தும்
 தோயாது நின்ற
 கூடரே! தொடக்கறுத்தோர்
 சுற்றமே! பற்றி
 நீந்த அரிய
 நெடுங்கருணைக்(கு) எல்லாம்
 நிலையமே! வேதம்
 நெறிமுறையின் நேடி
 ஆய்ந்த உணர்வின்
 உணர்வே! பகையால்
 அலைப்புண்(டு) அடியேம்
 அடிபோற்ற அந்நாள்
 ஈந்த வரம்உதவ
 எய்தினையே எந்தாய்!
 இருநிலத்த வோ?நின்
 இணையடித்தா மரைதாம்.

Bearing the Cross

Indra is moved by God's compassion for his devotees, by His renouncing his multi-dimensional world, and his choosing to bind Himself in Time and Space, and subjecting Himself to the indignity of human weal and human woe—just for the redemption of Man.

He continues his hallelujah:
 There is none
 who is out of touch with Thy God-stuff,
 and none,
 who is fully in touch with it;
 It is neither Light nor Darkness
 neither Above nor Below,
 It is not without ageing,
 nor does it age;
 It has neither beginning, middle nor end
 neither Afore nor After:
 Lord! if such be the condition of Thy Being,
 who could blame Thee,
 if Thou wouldst refuse to redeem us
 by coming upon the Earth,
 bearing the burden of a bow
 and treading the ground
 with Thy crimson feet
 reddening with pain?
 Oh! the One that sleeps
 in the black sea of Infinity,
 What recompense dost Thou get
 for redeeming us from sorrow?

மேவா தவர்தில்லை,
 மேவினரும் இல்லை,
 வெளியோ டிருள்இல்லை,
 மேல்கீழும் இல்லை,
 மூவாமை இல்லை,
 மூத்தமையும் இல்லை,
 முதல்இடையோ டுறில்லை,
 முன்னொடுபின் இல்லை;
 தேவா!இங்(கு) இவ்வோநீ
 சென்றநிலை என்றால்,-
 சிலையேந்தி வந்தெம்மைச்
 சேவடிகள் நோவக்

காவா தொழியில்ப்
பழிபெரிதோ? அன்றேல்க்
கருங்கடலில்க் கண்வளர்வாய்!
கைம்மாறும் உண்டோ?

Measuring Infinity

In the intensity of his devotion, Indra fabricates a fantastically huge cup of imagination in order to measure Infinity, but he realises that the cup is infinitely inadequate for the purpose. He says:

Let Brahma, the Creator of the worlds,
mould out of the stuff of all the planets an immense cup
of measurement,
and standing agile,
let him measure Thee for aeons and aeons;
Thy immeasurable grace would still remain
undiminished and unmeasured,
With the Earth as the bowl,
the Ocean as the Curd
and Mount Meru as the Churner,
Thou hast churned the Ocean
with Thy lotus hands aching
and given us immortalizing nectar.
How, then, can the Rakshasas help
becoming Thy slaves!

நாழி நவைதீர்
உலகெலாம் ஆக,
நளினத்து நீ தந்த
நான்முகனார் தாமே
ஊழி பலபலவும்
நின்றளந்தால் ஒன்றும்

உலவாப் பெருங்குணத்(து)
 உத்தமனே! மேல்நாள்
 தாழி தரையாகத்
 தண்தயிர்நீ ராகத்
 தடவரையே மத்தாகத்
 தாமரைக்கை நோவ
 ஆழி கடைந்தமுதம்
 எங்களுக்கே ஈந்தாய்:
 அவுணர்கள்தாம் நின் அடிமை
 ஆகாமை உண்டோ?

Rama, Lakshmana and Sita now leave for the mountain resort of Agasthya, which is criss-crossed with cascades of water 'sweeter far than freshly-extracted honey'.

Yogic Elephant

Saint Agasthya's erudition was as profound as it was encyclopaedic. He was an authority not only on Art, Poetry and Spiritual Culture but also on Science, Weaponry, Dam-building, Irrigation and other branches of secular knowledge. People from distant lands used to come to the Podikai hills in Tirunelveli District to study at the University of Agasthya. He was a powerhouse of enlightenment and culture. As he heard that Rama was in the vicinity of his hermitage, he rushed towards him to welcome him, unlike Valmiki's Agasthya, who asks a messenger to bring Rama into his presence.

The tradition in the Tamil country is that Agasthya published in the Tamil language several works summing up all available human knowledge, though these books were subsequently lost while a good part of southern Tamil Nadu was submerged in the

sea. Kamban, therefore, describes Agasthya as the One who, like Vishnu, scaled the heights of the Universe, with the long rod of Tamil.

In the next song, Kamban refers to a legend of symbolic significance. Long, long ago, there was a race of Asuras, who gathered all the spiritual and ethical treasures of the world and sank along with them into the depths of the Ocean. Thereupon, the celestials went to Agasthya and appealed to him to retrieve the sunken treasures. Agasthya responded to this appeal; he took the waters of the Ocean in the palm of his hand and drank them dry; then at the request of the gods, he ejected the Ocean waters from his stomach through his mouth, and made the hidden treasures available to mankind again.

Rasikamani T.K. Chidambaranatha Mudaliar interprets this legend in the light of what Mirandola did five centuries ago. Greek Art and Literature were so subtle and intricate that the Italians, who were out of touch with Greek tradition, grievously misinterpreted them. A horde of Italian Grammarians and Commentators, who had no aesthetic sensibility, allowed their barren intellect to play upon the exquisite works of Greek Art, and blacked-out all that was fine and graceful in Greek Culture. In effect, these misinterpreters had become a race of anti-artistic Asuras, who, by their lack of perception, set at nought the brilliant achievements of the Greek mind. In this period of darkness Mirandola was born. He made a profound study of Greek Art, showed up the falsity of the Italian Grammarians and Commentators, and brought to light the inner soul of Greek Culture. Frequently, we come across such phenomena in the history of culture, a period of great artistic and spiritual activity

being overwhelmed and succeeded by a dark period of misinterpretation. T.K. Chidambaranatha Mudaliar thinks with reason that Agasthya must have extricated Art and Wisdom from the grip of the barbarians and that the legend relating to his drinking up the ocean and then spewing it out at the behest of the celestials must be a symbolic reference to the service of rectification and re-interpretation rendered by Agasthya.

In the next song, Kamban refers again in symbolic language, to the spiritual feats of Agasthya. Men, eager to seek the Unitive Way, approached Agasthya and asked, 'Which is the painless path leading to God?' Instead of giving a verbal reply, Agasthya gave a convincing demonstration.

Upon the Magic Hill,
 which scraped the skies and had around it
 a swinging garland of creeping clouds,
 Agasthya planted his feet and ascended;
 at once, the hill sank lower and lower
 till it reached the neither-world,
 and he stood triumphant on top of it,
 like a Yogic elephant.

யோகம் உறு
 போர் உயிர்கள்
 தாம் உலைவு
 றா மல்
 ஏகம் நெறி
 யாதென,-
 மிதித்த டியின்
 ஏறி,
 மேக நெடு
 மாலை தவழ்
 விந்தை எனும்
 விண் தோய்

நாக மது
நாகம் உற
நாகம் என
நின் றான்.

This demonstration must have brought home to the interrogator of Agasthya the way to solve the central problem in spiritual evolution. The one obstacle that stands between Man and God is the human Ego, which has been referred to by Kamban as the huge, sky-scraping Magic Hill. But, this hill, though illusory, is nevertheless an almost insurmountable projection of the human mind and is overspread with the clouds of unknowing like lust, anger and delusion. The moment a man puts his foot firmly upon it and submerges it, he realizes God. This is a mystical process, which, unlike the process of Hatha Yoga, involves no bodily pain and is commended by Agasthya as the 'painless path' towards God.

One other Agasthya legend is narrated by Kamban and it is presumably based on some geological upheaval that affected South India. The wedding of Lord Siva and Parvati was scheduled to take place in the Himalayas. The whole of mankind rushed there to witness the wedding, with the result that the Himalayas, unable to bear the unprecedented burden, started sinking. At once, Lord Siva sent for the diminutive Agasthya and requested him to hurry to the South. Agasthya obliged by shifting to the Podhigai Hills as a counter-weight, whereupon the sinking Himalayas came up and the equilibrium was restored. What is weighed in this legendary balance is, not masses, but values, and Agasthya's value as a cultural force is audaciously equated with that of Siva and the rest of mankind.

It is this saint of prodigious learning and spirituality that hurries forth reverently to receive Rama, who has stepped into the premises of his Ashram. As Agasthya rushes out, he thinks that Rama's arrival marks the culmination and fruition of all the tapas he has performed. He is thrilled he is going to have a vision of God in the shape of Rama and he proclaims ecstatically:

'Let Brahma put the four vociferous Vedas
and the allied scriptures
on the huge grinding-stone of Wisdom
and let him grind them hard
for days and days on end;
Yet he cannot grasp Reality.
But that Unknown Quantity is come here bodily
to hold converse with me,
face to face!'

இரைத்த மறை
நாலி னொ(டு)
இயைந்த பிற
யா வும்,-
நிரைத்த நெடு
ஞான நிமிர்
கல்லின் நெடு
நாள் இட்(டு)
அரைத்தும், அய
னாலும் அறி
யாத பொருள்,
நேர் நின்(று)
உரைக்கு தவு
மால்ள னும்
உணர்ச்சி யின்
உவப் பான்.

Kamban celebrates the meeting of the two in a magnificent song:

The towering figure that came
bowed at the feet
of the figure that stood still;
Clasping him with love
and with joyous tears gushing out of his eyes,
the saint uttered warm words of welcome—
the saint, who had achieved immortality
by singing poems
in the ever-living Tamil of the South.

நின்ற வனை
வந்த நெடி-
யோன்அ டிப
ணிந் தான்;
அன்ற வனை
அன்பொ டுத-
ழீஇ,அ முத
கண் ணால்
'நன்று வர(வு)'
என்று, பல
நல்உ ரைப-
காந் தான்,-
என்றும் உள
தென்த மிழ்
இயம்பி இசை
கொண் டான்.

Rama's arrival was celebrated by the sages in Agasthya's hermitage. A feast was held in Rama's honour and after the feast, Agasthya spoke, requesting Rama to sojourn in his hermitage. Rama pledged himself to wipe out the forces of Evil and sought Agasthya's permission to go beyond the hermitage and stay at a

strategic spot where he could meet the Rakshasas half-way and confront them. Agasthya approved of this plan and gave Rama the bow and quiver of Siva, which had been in his worshipful custody for a long number of years. He gifted to him also the mighty shaft with which Siva had destroyed the three aerial cities. After making these gifts, Agasthya suggested that Rama might take up his abode in Panchavati, where the Godavari takes its rise. Kamban's Agasthya gives a vivid description of the scenic magnificence in which Panchavati is set.

Up-rising trees, and above them,
 Up-rising bamboos, and above them,
 Up-rising mountain peaks;
 Cool groves out-bulging at the flanks,
 with flower-clusters swinging
 and chumming together;
 a soft stream crawling by,
 with sleepy wavelets rippling—
 In this sacred setting, my son,
 nestles Panchavati.

‘ஓங்கு மரன்
 ஓங்கி, கழை
 ஓங்கி, மலை
 ஓங் கிப்,
 பூங்கு லை
 குலாவு குளிர்
 சோலை புடை
 விம் மித்,
 தூங்கு திரை
 ஆறு தவழ்
 தூய தொரு
 கு ழல்,-

பாங்கர் உள
தால்உ றையுள்
பஞ்ச வடி,
மஞ் ச!

With this description, the saint bids farewell to the trio, who, after receiving the sage's blessings, go northward to Panchavati.

Miles and miles they walked,
crossing
lovely streams—some lying, some standing up—
and mountains—some marching past in a row
and others sitting around jostlingly—
till at last they descried the King of Eagles.

சந்தம்
தானன தானன
தான தன்னன

நடந்தனர் காவதம்
பலவும்; நல்நதி
கிடந்தன நின்றன,
கிரிகள் கேண்மையின்
தொடர்ந்தன துவன்றின,
சூழல் யாவையும்
கடந்தனர், -கண்டனர்
கழுகின் வேந்தையே.

Mother Bird

Out of the mountain range juts out a black hill and out of the black hill juts out a promontory, on which Jatayu, the King of Eagles, is perched. Austere Valmiki sets Jatayu on the branch of a banyan tree and furnishes no description of the bird except

that it is huge and powerful. But Kamban lavishes his great descriptive power and vividness of portraiture upon the bird, which in the course of the new few scenes is going to lay down its very life in the defence of Sita. Well-versed in the pure arts, posed and anchored in learning, truthful and spotless, incisive in intellect, he look far, far ahead, like a seasoned statesman, through his tiny, little eyes. In Valmiki's Ramayana, Jatayu introduces himself to Rama and Lakshmana as a great friend of their father, but fails to enquire after Dasaratha. On the other hand, Kamban by making Jatayu enquire about the health of Dasaratha, creates an occasion for celebrating in a most moving elegy the inspiring friendship between the bird and the man. The result is Jatayu is brought nearer to the reader by imagination and dramatic sympathy and the reader's feeling is effectively enlisted.

Jatayu guided the three to Panchavati under the sheltering shade of his huge, widespread wings and after pointing out to them the spot prescribed by Agasthya, went on a reconnoitering flight. Keeping his thoughts centred on his golden-breasted daughter-in-law and his two sons, Jatayu started patrolling the vicinity. Kamban, who has the incomparable ability to get out of the human shell, now looks at the three from inside the tender heart and through the anxious eyes of the bird and says:

Jatayu watched the three
as the mother-bird would watch
her fledglings inside the nest.

வார்ப்பொற் கொங்கை
மருகியை, மக்களை,
... ..

... சேக்கையில்
பார்ப்பைப் பார்க்கும்
பறவையில்ப் பார்க்கின்றான்.

It is through this ability that Kamban succeeds in endowing this imaginary and legendary character with life, passion and vigour, and in bridging the gulf between Man and Bird.

Surpanaka's Bizarre Love

As Rama and Sita spend their days joyously in these romantic surroundings, an interloper crosses their lives and forces the pace of events. A giantess by name Surpanaka, the younger sister of Ravana, reigns supreme over the huge forest near Panchavati. Savage scheming Destiny brought her where Rama lived. Rama was born to liquidate the Rakshasa race and Surpanaka was born, according to the Poet, to give support to Rama in the fulfilment of this mission. The meeting of the two is consequently of the most momentous meaning in the epic. As Surpanaka sets eyes upon Rama, she feels that his is a charm she has never seen before. She falls deliriously in love with him. She wonders why such a handsome figure, who ought to give himself up to the pursuits of pleasure, should languish and wilt away in the performance of austerities. She asks herself:

What meditation has Meditation performed
to tempt him into meditation!

... ..
தவன்செய்த் தவன்செய்த
தவன்என்!' என்கின்றாள்

Valmiki's Surpanaka, who is red-haired, big-bellied and repulsively ugly, fails, in the head of passion, to change her form before going into Rama's presence. But, Kamban's Surpanaka is crafty enough to use her admitted powers of magic and assume the seductive figure of a lovely damsel before appearing in front of him. She uttered an abracadabra and at once, she got a face and body that out-lusted the Moon. In a song, which has a lilting rhythm and swing, Kamban ushers Surpanaka, draped in a glistening and trailing saree, into the presence of Rama. She comes softly, gliding like a peacock, with seductive movements of the appropriate limbs. Her golden complexion resembles the velvety and tender shoots put forth by the ever-obliging tree of Heaven—Kalpaka. Her crimson lips appear to drip with aphrodisiac honey. Behind the lips is a string of lustrous pearls. She endows herself with the coy eyes of the gazelle. It is a pity that nothing of the seductiveness of the original can be decanted into the translation. The ethereal agility of the ballerina has been cunningly recaptured in the *materia poetica* of Kamban; and the beauty, which is made visible in this song, becomes audible in the next. The tinkling of Surpanaka's anklets, the chiming of the little bells strung on to her waistlet, the clinking of her necklace and the buzzing of the golden bees hovering over the flowers in her tresses—all these competing sounds proclaim, 'Here comes a maid!'

Though Kamban can sing about love with great intensity and truth, he portrays in several songs the bizarre love of Surpanaka with a keen sense of humour. Jilted by Rama, she scoops out frozen snow with which she plasters her shooting breasts but it melts like butter thrown on scorching rock. Ultimately, her violent flirtatiousness was punished by Lakshmana cutting off her nose,

ear and 'rebellious' nipples. She wailed 'like the big drum, which, by order of the God of Death, proclaimed the extinction of the Rakshasa race.'

Surpanaka belonged to the Imperial family of Ravana. She had behind her the majesty and panoply of the Rakshasa Empire. She was used to tormenting others, but not to be tormented. That a mere man should have humiliated her provoked her sovereign shame. The offender remained not only unpunished but was also gloating over his crime, while the sister of His Imperial Majesty was rolling in the dust. Kara and Dhooshana, the Rakshasas guarding the forest by command of Ravana, learn of this indignity and give battle of Rama, but are destroyed by him.

The City of Lanka

After their destruction, Surpanaka left for the City of Lanka. It is at this juncture that Kamban introduces Ravana to us in all his pomp and glory. He is portrayed, not as a super-Rakshasa symbolizing the powers of unrelieved Evil; but as a noble, courageous, spiritually great and benevolent and highly cultured person, the only foible vitiating his personality and bringing about his downfall being his misdirected and blinding lust. In his Court, mighty Kings move around him in concentric circles with their folded hands stretched over their heads, knowing not which way and when he would cast his glance at them. Tumburu, Heaven's Minstrel, celebrates in sweet music the valour of his shoulders; Narada caresses the ear with music, which pours out of the strings of his Veena, without swerving from the purity and loftiness of the ancient classical tradition. All this music stops as Surpanaka

bursts into the Court of Ravana with the speed and fury of a hurricane that would churn up the oceans. Ravana is appalled by the indignity and mutilation inflicted upon his royal sister and he asks her in a stentorian voice, 'Whose act is this?' Surpanaka, who was deeply in love with the culprits, replies, 'They are humans, who, whipping out their swords, mutilated me. But, they resemble the God of Love. And can there be two Cupids co-existing in the self-same world?' These words of adoration were suspiciously free from any bitterness for the mutilators and must have intrigued Ravana. But, Surpanaka side-tracked his suspicion by giving him an enchanting description of Sita. Her design was to exploit Ravana's notorious lust and induce him to annex Sita and leave herself free to monopolize Rama and Lakshmana. The voluptuous description given by Surpanaka of Sita's charms set Ravana's heart ablaze. In the delirium of love, Ravana kept awake the whole night, planning to get at Sita. He sent for his uncle, Mareecha, and forced him, much against his will, to wreak vengeance upon Rama by separating him from Sita, and thereby help him to kidnap her. Mareecha assumed the shape of a golden deer, whose golden rays lighted up Heaven and Earth, and approached Panchavati. As he came near Panchavati, Sita was coming out of the hermitage.

Her fragile waist twisting,
 she moved round with a delicate tread,
 plucking flowers
 with her hands,
 which were verily like unplucked flowers.

பொய்யாம் என
 ஒதுபு றஞ்சொலி
 னால்,

நையா இடை
 நோவந டந்தன
 ளால்,
 வைதே கிதன்
 வாள்வளை மென்கைள
 னும்
 கொய்யா மல -
 ரால்மலர் கொய்துறு
 வாள்.

The original of this song shows how Kamban sinks his soul in the gracious movement of Sita and makes living gossamer poetry out of it. In this scene, Sita cajoles Rama into capturing the deer with his own hands instead of allowing Lakshmana to catch it. There is something seductive and peculiarly feminine about the sound-patterns of the songs in which this scene abounds, the vowels caressingly outsinging the consonants. As Rama went after the deer, it pricked up its ears, and pressing its four limbs against its chest, galloped high; it galloped faster than wind and mind as if imparting speed to speed. It climbed up the hill, leapt into a bunch of clouds and whenever Rama paused, tired, it would come within reach of his hand, and feigning to stand still, would go far, far away. Its tantalizing movement resembled that of flower-bedecked harlots, who project goldward their fluctuating affections. As the reader is absorbed in the physical movements of the deer, Kamban transports him, by means of an apt but shocking simile, to a different place of reality and makes him see the mental movements of the sad 'gay' girls who ply for hire. With an arrow, shaped like a long leaf, Rama shot the deer. The deer assumed the voice of Rama, yelled for help and fell down dead. Now, Rama realized that the deer was part of a deeper plot, of which Lakshmana had forewarned him.

The Abduction

Sita was beguiled by the false voice of distress into thinking that Rama was in peril. She admonished the unwilling Lakshmana and forced him to rush to Rama's rescue. In the absence of Rama and Lakshmana, Ravana came in the form of an old and infirm Sanyasi and lifting Sita along with the piece of ground on which she stood, put her on his chariot and shot up into the sky. The lamentation of Sita caught the ear of Jatayu. A ferocious duel ensued between the bird and the Rakshasa, in the course of which Ravana cut off with his sword both the wings of Jatayu, and Jatayu fell down unconscious. Ravana carried Sita swiftly to Lanka and fearing to touch her holy body, kept her in detention, surrounded by black giantesses in a lovely park called Asoka Vana. Says the Poet:

Sitting amidst a cluster of black giantesses,
Sita shone,
like a coruscating arc of lightning
that tears asunder a dense cluster of rain-clouds.

விரிமழைக் குலங்கிழித்(து)
ஒளிரும் மின்னனக்
கருநிறத்(து) அரக்கியர்
குழுவிற கண்டனன்,-

Meanwhile, Rama, whose mind was filled with forebodings, rushed back to the hermitage and was shocked at the disappearance of Sita. He was 'like the soul, which having parted from its body, comes back in search of its cage and finds it missing.' He stood helpless, bearing the burden of a mighty bow and a sea of arrows! Lakshmana pointed out to him the track of

a chariot and both tottered along the track in distress. At some distance, Rama saw a gruesome sight and rushed forward to find Jatayu lying unconscious in a pool of blood. Torrential tears shot forth from Rama's eyes as he fell on the sacred body of Jatayu and fainted. Lakshmana took in the palms of his hands the 'cloud-kissed' waters of a nearby cascade and sprayed the same on Rama's face. Rama recovered consciousness and started lamenting over the fate of Jatayu. Consciousness stirred slightly in the mind of the King of Birds and opening his eyes, Jatayu rejoiced that he had wiped out the stigma attaching to him and felt as if 'he had regained his two severed wings and the seven worlds'. With the beak that broke to pieces the Crown of Ravana, Jatayu tenderly kissed Rama and Lakshmana again and again.

Jatayu was hesitant to describe to Rama the manner in which Ravana had carried away Sita. Hesitating a good deal and plucking up courage, he referred to the abduction scene in an oblique manner, by saying that Rama should extirpate the vicious weeds called Rakshasas. As he stammered out these words, Rama was able to guess that some giant must have abducted Sita and out the wings of Jatayu, when he went to her rescue. Rama flew into a rage and said he would wipe out all the worlds along with the Celestials who had been idly looking on. Jatayu, who was baffled by the delirious condition of Rama's mind, proceeded to perform a major operation to cure him of his uncontrollable rage. He knew that stinging words would bruise Rama's heart but he could not help using those words, because those words alone could have the desired result. He blamed Rama for having brought disgrace to the family by leaving poor Sita behind and running after a deer with glittering horns. 'The blame is yours.'

he declared, 'Not that of the world.' These hot words touched Rama to the quick and brought down the pitch of his rage. Rama said, 'Sire, Please tell me in what direction the giant went.' By the time these words were uttered, the Eagle King became giddy and speechless and collapsed and dies.

Though Valmiki's Jatayu discloses to Rama the name of Sita's abductor as Ravana, Kamban introduces an element of dramatic suspense by making Jatayu breathe his last before disclosing the abductor's identity. Further, at the sight of Jatayu lying in a pool of blood, Valmiki's Rama suspects that the cannibalistic eagle must have killed Sita and devoured her and, therefore, attempts to shoot him with an arrow. At that juncture, Valmiki's Jatayu appeals to Rama not to kill him and then narrates to him how he had been maimed by Ravana while he went to Sita's rescue. On the other hand, Kamban's Rama has nothing but the highest adoration for Jatayu, whom he regards as the alter ego of his own father, and the beauty of the intensely tender relationship between the two is not marred by the slightest suspicion of the kind Valmiki's Rama entertained. By his intensely dramatic and human treatment, Kamban has made out of Jatayu an unforgettable character.

KISHKINDA KANDA

After performing the funeral of Jatayu, who had filled the void created by the death of Dasaratha, Rama and Lakshmana went far and wide in search of Sita. Ultimately, they came to the mountainous region of Kishkinda, where Hanuman received the two with great cordiality. He was enchanted by their grace and

he thought they ought to be visitors from Heaven. He was so transformed by them that his doors of perception were cleansed and all the things of the Earth appeared to have taken on a new meaning and loveliness. At the touch of their feet, the fire-spitting pebbles softened and seemed to have turned into wine-filled flowers. In whichever direction they went, all things—grasses and trees—bent low as if bowing in reverence for them. Hanuman exclaimed, ‘Are these the Gods of Virtue!’

Rama found from the few words uttered by Hanuman that he was a highly refined personality, in whom there was a combination of rare qualities—power, fullness of mind, learning, steadfastness and native intelligence. In fact, Kamban describes Hanuman as having come into the world ‘to relieve Virtue of its loneliness.’ Rama told Lakshmana, ‘Perfection, which cannot be captured either by Poetry with its net of words or by Unitive Wisdom with its net of mysticism, has assumed the shape of this monkey and come down upon the Earth.’

Hanuman went to his master, Sugriva, the King of monkeys and told him about the noble ancestry of Rama, his supreme sense of sacrifice and his present predicament. Sugriva was moved by what Hanuman told him and longed to meet Rama at once. Both went down a zig-zag mountain path and as they turned a bend, they saw Rama sitting at a distance. Sugriva stood transfixed as he saw the figure of Rama. After casting a long lingering look at Rama, he said, ‘The Lord of all the Celestials has come in the guise of Man, and by becoming Man, has established the victory of the human species over the gods.’

Rama received Sugriva as his friend and ally. When he learnt that Vali, the elder brother of Sugriva, had annexed the latter's wife and was persecuting him, Rama readily gave the assurance that he would destroy Vali.

The Single Combat

A single combat ensued and the brothers fought ferociously. Ultimately, Sugriva received a knock-out blow from Vali and fell down, exhausted. Just at that juncture, an arrow came from behind the nearby bush and pierced the chest of Vali. Blood welled forth from his chest and gushed down like a cascade with a gurgling sound. This sight moved Sugriva and he fell down unconscious, shedding copious tears of love. Due to profuse bleeding and shock, Vali also fell down. Excruciating pain made him explode with anger. He plucked the mighty arrow from his chest and saying, 'I will break it in twain', he stood up. Then his eyes were startled to see the inscription of a name on the arrow. It was the sacred name of Rama, 'the primordial mantric word' that can redeem the three worlds, the unique incantation that can bring on Heavenly bliss, the Elixir that cures now and here the accumulated *karma* of ages'.

Vali's Impeachment of Rama

Rama came from behind the bush and saw the pathetic spectacle of Vali lying wounded and bleeding, and his younger brother, unable to bear this fight, falling down unconscious. Vali, who was a great devotee and hero, saw the lovely figure of Rama.

He was more concerned with Rama straying from Virtue than with his own mortal wound. Addressing Rama, he said, 'You are the son of the pure one, who laid down his life for the sake of Truth and you are the brother of noble Bharatha. Your life has been an illustration of mother-love and mercy. If one guards others from evil but does evil oneself, does evil cease to be evil?' Vali's indictment gathered momentum and he gathered into one voice all the varieties of sarcasm and cynicism that Rama's unchivalrous act appeared to deserve, and he gave them added force by clarity, logic and wit. He asked, 'Has the Code of Manu prescribed that when a Rakshasa indulges in abduction of your wife, an unconnected Monkey-King shall be killed? If you should cover yourself with infamy, whoever is fit to wear the mantle of Fame?' With further loss of blood, Vali threw restraint to the winds and started declaiming violently: 'You became bewildered perhaps after parting with Sita of ambrosial sweetness. What a senseless act have you done!' Referring to Rama's royal clan, which claimed descent from the Sun, Vali said, 'Perhaps because the Moon crawling across the sky, bears a dark, blemishing stain, you have put upon the pedigree of the Sun a corresponding stain which will endure for ever! Oh, gallant Hero, you have destroyed, not Vali, but the fence that surrounds kingly duty and keeps guard over it.' The climax of Vali's wrath is reached in the following song:

Was the art of archery invented
that you might send your arrow, not face to face,
but from a place of hiding
against the chest of an unarmed person!
Fie upon your wife, who has been annexed by another!
Fie upon your blooming how, which stands sullied by
your act.

‘தாரம் மற்றொரு -
வன்கொளத், தன்கையின்
பார வெஞ்சிலை
தானும் பழுதுற,
நேரின் அன்றிம -
றைந்துநி ராயுதன்
மார்பின் எய்யவோ
வில்த்தொழில் வந்ததே!’

Realization of Divinity

There is reason to suppose that a songs succeeding this song have been interpolated in the *Kamba Ramayana* by fanatical devotees for the purpose of defending Rama against the formidable charges leveled by Vali. These songs of apologia, which do not bear the authentic ring of Kamban, attribute to Rama defensive arguments which are insipid and unconvincing. The late Rasikamani T.K. Chidambaranatha Mudaliar, who had an unerring instinct for poetry, and whose inspired exposition of Kamban has profoundly influenced the writer of this monograph, rightly rejected these songs as spurious and put forward the hypothesis that Kamban’s Rama must have made an unqualified admission of his guilt and courageously apologized to Vali for having mortally wounded him from behind the bush. Rama’s courage to own up his mistake convinced Vali of the divinity of Rama, and Rama rose high in Vali’s estimation on this account. Vali realized that he had misunderstood Sugriva and harassed him. He asked Sugriva to realize the divinity of Rama and have him as his guide. He also appealed to Rama to give asylum to Sugriva.

At this stage, Angada, the son of Vali, came running down the slope of the hill with tears in his eyes and fell, lamenting,

upon his dying father. The Poet says he fell like a lightning falling from the Heavens, upon Vali, who lay like the Moon upon the Earth.

Vali was touched by the profound agony of his son and he asked him to give up his childhood's sobs and learn that the peerless Substance of Ultimate Reality had, with its feet treading on the Earth, with its hands bearing a bow, assumed a form perceptible to the senses. He added, 'Rama is the Elixir, my son, which will cure us of the disease of birth. He considers the maturity of souls and confers grace upon them, each according to his deserts. You will flourish by keeping his holy feet on your head.' Then he turned to Rama and said, 'Angada is like the fire that will burn out the Rakshasa cotton. I entrust him to your protection.' At once, Angada fell at the feet of Rama, and Rama stretched out his golden sword to Angada and said, 'Bear this'. The moment he said this, Vali renounced his earthly life and 'assumed the life of the world beyond'.

The bereaved Tara became inconsolable. Kamban uses words of austere intensity to bring out her great grief. In her lamentation, Tara resorts to a piece of devastating logic to shatter the delusion that she and Vali had been dwelling in the hearts of each other.

Oh! Lord of battle-happy shoulders!
Were I a dweller of your heart,
the arrow that pierced it
ought to have sucked my life, too!
and were you a dweller of my heart,
you ought to be alive!
Neither has lived truly in the heart of the other.

‘செருவார் தோள! நின்
 சிந்தை யேன்ள னின்,
 மருவா வெஞ்ச ரம்
 எனையும் வவ்வு மால்!
 ஒருவேன் உள்உ ளை
 ஆகின் உய்தி யால்!-
 இருவேம் உள்ளி ரு
 வேம்பி ருந்தி லேம்.’

SUNDARA KANDA

The Canto of Beauty

Kamban begins the Canto of Beauty (Sundara Kanda) with a search for Sita. Monkey couriers have been dispatched in all directions. Hanuman crossed the seas and reached Lanka in the evening. The City presents a beautiful spectacle and Hanuman marvels at the loveliness of the buildings in the City.

Are they built out of sunlight,
 invalid with flashes of lightning!
 or made out of molten gold
 studded with pearls and gems!
 Hard to know what stuff they are made on!
 Oh! those towers pierce the giant clouds
 and keep knocking against the Moon!

சந்தம்

தானன்ன தன்ன னன
 தன்னனன தன் ன

பொன்கொண்(டு)அ மைத்த, மணி-
 யைக்கொடு பொதிந் த,

மின்கொண்(டு)இ னழைத்த, வெயி-
லைக்கொடுசு மைத் த,
என்கொண்(டு)இ யற்றிய
எனத்தெரிகி லா த
வன்கொண்டல் விட்டு, மதி
முட்டுவன மா டம்.

The Lamp of Chastity

Hanuman went round from palace to palace in search of Sita, peering through the carved windows and doors, but she was nowhere to be seen. Disappointed, he came out of the City to Asoka Vana, climbed up a tree there was a clearing, where Sita was sitting, revolving a variety of sad thoughts in her mind. Anything utterly black like a dark cloud or the black paint on the eyes of girls upset her mind, as it reminded her of Rama. Expecting Rama, she surveyed all the quarters of the globe, rotating her eyes hopefully. Hope would give place to despair as she wondered if Rama knew that Ravana had abducted her. She would recall to mind the magnificent qualities of Rama and the several experiences she had shared with him in common. To the poor hunter, who plied boats across the waters of the Ganges, he had said, 'My brother is your brother; comrade am I to you; this lady is your sister-in-law.' Recalling this redemptive friendship, Sita would writhe in grief.

It was while Sita was in this mood of nostalgic melancholy that Hanuman caught sight of her.

As Hanuman sees Sita in a state of profound sadness, he is astonished at her state of unshakable chastity, modesty and noble

lineage. Rama's eyes had only enjoyed the charms of Sita while she was in joy. But now sad Sita, in her intense penance to keep her chastity inviolate, is a thousand times more charming. Hanuman muses, 'It is a pity it has not been given to Rama's eyes to see this noble spectacle.'

At this moment, Ravana comes into the presence of Sita, and Hanuman's mind swings to and fro in excited anguish.

Ravana stands humbly, cringingly, but at a respectable distance from Sita. Hanuman realizes that Ravana is afraid of approaching to close to the fire.

Ravana has an iron will and a steadfast mind, but in the presence of Sita, his sterner qualities give way. He tells Sita:

The citizenry of the three worlds
offers obeisance to me,
and I offer myself to you
as your slave.
Be gracious and accept me.

'தேவர் தேவியர்
சேவடி கைதொழும்
தாவில மூவுல
கின்தனி நாயகம்
மேவு கின்றது
நுன்கண், விலக்கினை;-
யாவர் ஏழையர்
நின்னின் இலங்கிழாய்.'

As soon as she hears these words, blood gushes out of Sita's eyes, and without looking at Ravana, she utters words which are charged with indignation:

If Mount Meru has to be pierced through,
if the sky has to be split up and crossed,
if the twice-seven worlds have to be destroyed,
the arrow of my lord can do it.

‘மேருவை உருவல்வேண் டில்,
விண்பிளந்(து) ஏகல்வேண் டில்,
ஈரெழு புவனம்யா வும்
முற்றுவித்(து) இடுதல்வேண் டில்,
ஆரியன் பகழிவல் ல(து)-
அறிந்திருந்(து) அறிவிலா தாய்!
சீரிய அல்லசொல் லித்
தலைபத்தும் சிந்துவா யோ?’

Learned Fool,
will you shed your ten heads
by uttering improper words?
your ten heads and multitudinous shoulders
offer a fascinating target
for my expert archer to scatter his arrows about
and gaily play upon.

‘பத்துள தலையும்தோ ளும்
பலபல பகழிதூ வி,
வித்தக வில்லினாற் குத்
திருவிளை யாடற்கேற் ற
சித்திர இலக்கமா கும்;
அல்லது, -செருவில்ஏற் கும்
சத்தியை போலும்!வீ ரார்க்(கு)
அடாதன செய்யத்தக் கோய்!’

All the boons and the long life
you have procured by your tapas etcetera
may save you from Yama, the lord of Death,
but not from my hero's shaft.

'தோற்றனை பறவைக்(கு)அன் று;
 துள்ளுநீர் செள்ளம்சென் னி
 ஏற்றவன் வாளால்வென் றாய்,
 அன்றெனின் இறத்திகண் டாய்,
 நோற்றநோன் புடையவாழ் நாள்
 வரம்அவை நுனித்தஎல் லாம்
 கூற்றினுக் கன்றே,வீ ரன்
 சரத்திற்கும் குறித்ததுண் டோ!'

As Ravana heard these words, 'the force of his wrath transcended even the force of Cupid'. In a mad fury, he left Asoka Vana for his palace. Hanuman was witnessing this thrilling scene from the topmost branch of a tree and rejoiced that the lamp of Chastity was burning undimmed.

It was midnight now and Hanuman thought this was the proper time to meet Sita. As he climbed down from the tree, he found a number of giantesses sitting in a ring around Sita. They were so vigilant and watchful that they would alert the Goddess of Vigilance herself if she were to take a nap. Hanuman used his magic powers and cast a spell over them, and all of them went into a deep slumber. Seeing the unsleeping ones sleeping, Sita found herself utterly lonely, and fear and grief gripped her. The doubt assailed her if ever Rama would discover her and rescue her. Had he perhaps decided to discard her? Ultimately she resolved that to die was her duty. In this mood she entered a bower closed in with the thick foliage of Madavi creepers. At this moment, Hanuman, who guessed what she was about, rushed towards her and announced to her that he was the messenger of Rama. He convinced the incredulous Sita of his credentials by narrating to her certain incidents known only to Sita and Rama.

After narrating these incidents, which must have given Sita comforting evidence of Rama's tenderness for her, Hanuman handed over to Sita the signet-ring on which Rama's name was inscribed and said, 'Rama asked me to carry this safely and hand it over to you.'

At the sight of the ring, Sita grows ecstatic. Smelling it, she presses it close to her breasts; 'Good One,' said Sita to Hanuman, 'You have given me life. If I have a mind of spotless purity, you will live for Eternity, with all the vigour of today; surviving the disintegration of the fourteen worlds, and reckoning each epoch as a day, you will live for ever.' Sita wondered how with his small body Hanuman crossed the sea. In answer to her question, Hanuman assumed his enormous form (*Visva Rupa*). In a split second, he grew taller and taller, his shoulders spreading upwards, till he reached the roof of the sky, and crouched his figure, lest, growing taller, he should knock against the ceiling. This amazing demonstration dispelled Sita's doubts and gave her a sense of security. At Sita's command, Hanuman resumed his original size. Then, Sita complimented Hanuman by saying, 'Isn't it a slur on your gallantry that hostile Lanka was not situate far beyond the seven seas in order that you may prove your mettle?' A charming dialogue follows, in which Kamban delineates the alternation of emotions which assail Sita's mind. Ultimately, she says to Hanuman, 'Tell my lord that I will wait for a month, and if he fails to rescue me within that time, tell him to perform my funeral rites with his sacred hands on the banks of the Ganges.' 'Remind him, too.' she added, 'Remind him, too, of his wedding-vow "I shall not in this birth touch another woman even with my mind".' After giving a reply, which moves and reassures Sita, Hanuman

takes leave of her. At this juncture, Sita hands over her Choodamani (head ornament) to Hanuman to be safely delivered to Rama. Receiving her blessings, Hanuman leaves Asoka Vana, sets fire to Lanka, crosses the sea and returns to Rama.

Hanuman's Return

The Poet shifts the footlights now to Rama. Having sent a battalion of monkeys in search of Sita, Sugriva remains by the side of Rama, comforting him. As he is expressing his dismal doubts, a light flashes in the southern horizon. 'As if the Sun was rising in the South, Hanuman made his appearance.' On arrival, he saluted not the feet of Rama; with his head facing towards Sita, he prostrated on the ground and started eulogizing her. 'Seen have I,' he declared, 'with mine own eyes, the ornament of Chastity in the sea-washed Island of Lanka. Lord of the Universe, dispel your doubts and your grief.' Rama is emotionally elevated by the magnificent description given by Hanuman of Sita's purity. Nothing more remains for him except to liberate Sita.

YUDDHA KANDA

The Canto of Battle

The Canto of Battle (Yuddha Kanda) now begins, with a scene in Lanka. After Lanka was set ablaze by Hanuman and burnt down, Ravana ordered it to be rebuilt. Lord Brahma, the Creator, prepared the architect's blue-print and in accordance with it, Maya, Heaven's mason rebuilt the City without any loss of

time. Ravana, who felt humiliated by the destruction of the City by a monkey, went round and found that the rebuilt City was lovelier than the one that was burnt; he got over his anger and rejoiced. He convened his War Council in the newly built Durbar Hall.

The War Council

An awesome silence descended upon the Assembly as Ravana spoke from the throne about the destruction of his imperial prestige as a result of a monkey's antics. Commander after Commander stood up and advised Ravana to permit him to wage war against the enemy and exterminate him. At this stage, Kumbakarna, the younger brother of Ravana, stood up and said he had put himself morally in the wrong by kidnapping Sita. Unlike Valmiki's Kumbakarna, who tells Ravana he would make a widow of Sita and make it easy for her to marry him, Kamban's Kumbakarna has a keen perception of right and wrong, though out of fraternal affection he is prepared to lay down his life for the sake of the erring Ravana.

Vibhishana, the youngest brother of Ravana, was on the opposite extreme of the spectrum. Not only was he the most enlightened among the three brothers but also was he an uncompromising champion of Virtue. He was so constituted that he would renounce ties of race, family and ego, in his eagerness to uphold Virtue. He stood up and delivered some home-truths to Ravana. 'The City and your glory were burnt down by the Chastity of Sita, the mother of the worlds. Don't you fancy it was a monkey which did the burning,' he said. He advised Ravana

to restore Sita to her lord. His speech infuriated Ravana, who laughed uproariously. In a speech of ringing eloquence, he poured scorn on Vibhishana, but Vibhishana, who was rooted in Truth, proceeded to quote the precedent of the mighty Hiranya, who was destroyed by Rama, in his previous incarnation as Narasimha. Ravana, who heard the impassioned speech of Vibhishana, jumped to the conclusion that he was in league with Rama and banished him from Lanka on pain of losing his life if he lingered there any longer. Sad Vibhishana left Lanka, after telling Ravana, 'Brother, I have given you advice which is good for your soul, but you heed me not; forgive me my fault.'

The Surrender of Vibhishana

Followed by four good-souled giants, Vibhishana crossed the sea and came to the place where Rama's monkey army was encamped. Some of the monkeys thought that a giant spy had come into their midst. Rama took counsel with his friends. Everyone except Vibhishana opposed the proposal of accepting Vibhishana, the renegade. Hanuman commended Vibhishana's sense of justice, unbounded compassion and spiritual virtues. Turning to Sugriva and the other doubting warriors, Rama said, 'Marvellous is the utterance of Hanuman and the clarity and choice of his words! No matter if we win or lose, live or die, we should receive and accept the one who seeks refuge in us. The day I reject the one who seeks asylum from danger is the day of my death, and the day I die as a result of foul play by the refugee is the day from which I will live for ever.' Kamban takes this opportunity of expounding through Rama the gracious doctrine of surrender, according to which, God, in his infinite compassion,

wipes out the sins of those who surrender to him without reservation, and absorbs them into his own stuff of Ananda.

At Rama's command, Sugriva goes out to receive Vibhishana. The pure hearts of the two mingle together at first sight and as white Sugriva embraces dark Vibhishana, the Poet says with characteristic audacity and inventiveness that it looks like the simultaneous embrace of Day and Night.

In an attitude of extreme devotion, he approaches Rama and as he sets eyes on Rama, he is bewitched by his loveliness. Vibhishana had been meditating upon Virtue as an abstract principle. Now, as he sees Rama, he feels that Virtue is something concrete. He asks in amazement, 'Is Virtue dark in complexion?' Rama reacts, without inhibition, to the boundless devotion of Vibhishana and accepts him as his brother. 'With Guha we became brothers five', he says, 'later, with Sugriva we became six and with you, my loving friend, we have become seven. By giving me the precious forest, glorious Dasaratha, your father, has become replete with sons!' The Monkey Army rejoices at this adoption.

Nala, the engineer, is commissioned to build a bridge across the ocean to Lanka. By the command of Sugriva the monkey-warriors go in all directions and bring hillocks, boulders and pebbles from tens of miles away.

The bridge connecting Bharat with Lanka is now complete and Rama crosses the bridge along with his army and reaches Lanka. Rama sends Angada to deliver an ultimatum to Ravana, but he returns and reports to Rama, 'He will not remove from

his mind his desire for Sita, unless his crowned head is cut asunder and removed from his body.’

The War Begins

The inevitable War begins. The Rakshasa battalions pour into the battle-field. So also the monkey battalions. As they prepare to accost each other, Ravana makes his appearance at the Front. Ravana’s chariot is surrounded by huge giants armed with glittering weapons and shouting full-throated war-cries.

Rama rejoices that Ravana has personally come to the Front and given him a chance to accost him. His shoulders, which had become lean with pining for Sita, now swell with joy.

The fighting begins. Ravana fights, standing on his chariot, but Rama fights standing on the shoulders of Hanuman. Ravana’s arrows are pulverized by those of Rama. Unable to face the ferocious shafts of Rama, the Rakshasa Army runs helter-skelter in all directions, leaving the lonely Ravana on his chariot. Rama sends some heavy sword-like arrows which pierce the joints of Ravana’s chariot and break the chariot to pieces. Standing on the naked ground, Ravana continues to fight valiantly. One arrow breaks his bow and another shatters his sword. The third lifts a diadem off Ravana’s head and flings it scornfully away. This was the most humiliating moment in Ravana’s life. He stands humbled, with eyes downcast, with his toes scratching the ground, with his empty hands drooping spiritlessly like a tired banyan tree with its supporting roots sloping impotently to the ground.

Rama would not take advantage of Ravana's predicament. Moved by pity, he generously spares the life of Ravana and asks him to come back for battle the next day. Ravana retreats to Lanka, and stretching himself on a bed, ponders over his plight. He cares not that his enemies would laugh him to scorn, but he wilts in shame at the thought that the red-lipped Sita would laugh at his defeat.

Then Ravana sends for Kumbakarna and tells him of his defeat and desires him to go to the battle-field and liquidate the enemy. Kumbakarna goes on to suggest that Ravana should give up Sita and surrender himself to Rama. This infuriates Ravana, who rises in fury and orders his chariot corps to be brought so that he may himself go to the Front the fight the enemy to the bitter end. Seeing this, Kumbakarna takes up his huge trident in his right hand and says, 'One word more and I am done. Destiny takes me by the scruff of the neck and pushes me forward. I will die, and if I die, my liege, do return Sita to Rama. It will be as good as victory.' His leave-taking is full of pathos. 'My King,' he says, 'forgive me all my sins. It is not given to me to see your face again. Farewell!'

The Conflict of Loyalties

Kamban, who has the incomparable knack of telling a story, takes us to Rama's war-camp and enables us to see the debut of Vibhishana, through the eyes of Rama. As Kumbakarna's chariot enters the battle-field, Rama tell Vibhishana, 'His figure is even more handsome than that of your eldest brother. Who may he be?' Rama ungrudgingly admires the personality of his opponent.

He adds: 'Many a day will pass before the eye could, in one continual glance, survey him from one shoulder to another. And the body in between! Is it a mountain that possesses feet! He seems not a person itching for battle. Who is he?' Vibhishana tells Rama of the great qualities of Kumbakarna, of how he had admonished Ravana for his abduction of Sita. He tells him also of his great affection both for Ravana and Vibhishana. Rama, who is pleased to hear this report, asks Vibhishana to go to Kumbakarna and persuade him to come over to Rama's camp. Accordingly Vibhishana goes to Kumbakarna and salutes him. Kumbakarna embraces him and tells Vibhishana: I rejoiced that by joining sides with Rama, you are the one brother that will survive this holocaust. Tell me why you have shattered my hope and come back to this camp like a muddle-headed one. By your great penance, you have secured a sense of justice, a knowledge of the posture of Virtue and a deathless life. Yet, are you unable, oh, Noble one, to free yourself from the baseness of our Rakshasa race?' Kumbakarna utters these words under a misapprehension that Vibhishana has forsaken Rama and come back to Ravana's camp. He adds, 'The Lord of all stands there, with his war-ready bow; all the others stand behind him: Death and Destiny stand there bent upon killing us; why did you renounce Rama and come back to those who stand already vanquished?' Vibhishana replies, 'The Lord of the Vedas himself has out of live sent me to you with a request. Brother, you never compromise with Virtue, and so, you must come along with me and join Rama.' Uttering these words, Vibhishana falls at the feet of Kumbakarna and entreats him to cross over. Kumbakarna knows that, unlike Vibhishana, he has been living in a plane of lower values and it would be cowardly and untrue to his own being to abandon Ravana and

suddenly seek to fight for higher ideals. At the same time, Kumbakarna is able to perceive Vibhishana's lofty idealism and the sincerity of his purpose. He, therefore, thinks it will be in accord with his genius to fight against Ravana for the vindication of Virtue.

As Kumbakarna thinks of Ravana's great qualities, he goes into rhapsodies about them. Recalling these qualities, Kumbakarna movingly says:

'He is a hero without equal, without a foe,
His lofty shoulders have lifted up the huge Mount of
Siva.
Is it proper that with those shoulders,
tied by vanquished Yama's lasso,
he should enter the land of Death,
all alone and unescorted?'

'இணையின்றி உயர்ந்தவீ ரன்
ஏதிலார் யாரும்இல் லான்,
பிணைஒன்று கண்ணாள்பங் கன்
பெருங்கிரி நெரியப்பேர்த் த
பணைஒன்று திரள்தோள்,கா ல
பாசத்தால் பிணிப்பக்கூ சித்
துணையின்றிச் சேறல்நன் றோ
தோற்றுள கூற்றின்கு ழல்.'

Kumbakarna is torn by a conflict of loyalties. He shifts his attention now to the welfare of Vibhishana, whom he loves as deeply as he loves Ravana. He tells him: 'Pause not here for a moment. Go back and seek Rama's friendship. Whatever must happen will happen at the time appointed for the happening. That which is doomed to destruction will, despite careful and

close husbandry, be nevertheless destroyed. Who is there more clear-headed and perceptive than yourself? Go back without regrets. Pity us not, immortal Vibhishana.’ Saying this, he takes him in his arms again and clasps him to his bosom; he stands and stands, and sighs and sighs, and fixing his full gaze upon him for long, he adds, ‘With today snaps our fraternal tie.’ Listening to these words, Vibhishana falls at the feet of Kumbakarna, his spirit shrinking with his body. Convinced that further debate is fruitless, he rises and leaves, the arms of the Rakshasa warriors around him going up in salutation to him. It may be noted in passing that in the Ramayana of Valmiki there is no encounter at all between these two brothers, the encounter stemming purely from a mixture of Kamban’s intellectual daring and dramatic inventiveness.

Vibhishana reached Rama’s camp and narrated to him all that had passed between Kumbakarna and himself. Rama resigned himself to the inevitable and permitted Lakshmana to give battle to Kumbakarna.

The Testament of Kumbakarna

Thousands gathered to witness the duel between the two illustrious warriors. Kumbakarna had no ideal to fight for; his duty was to do and die. But Lakshmana was animated by a high purpose and he was therefore in high martial spirits. After a preliminary passage at arms, which is full of wit, sarcasm and repartee, a ferocious and long-drawn-out battle was waged, each outwitting the other and both becoming fatigued. Ultimately, Rama intervened, routed Kumbakarna’s army and riddled

Kumbakarna with his arrows. A blood stream, vermillion in colour, gushed across the battle-field, washing down the chariot corps, the elephant corps, the cavalry and the infantry of Kumbakarna. Charming Rama, with his lovely shoulders and bow, appears now before Kumbakarna, who lies maimed and mutilated. Addressing Rama, Kumbakarna makes his touching request in the interests of Vibhishana: 'My younger brother is grounded in the pervasive substance of Justice, which sprouts out of the Eternal Law. He knows not the lowly ways of caste and race. Oh! God that has come in the garb of a King! he has sought refuge in you and I beseech you to grant him asylum.' 'That merciless Ravana will give no quarter to Vibhishana, though he be his brother. He will kill him at first sight. Pray, grant me this boon, my lord, that he may throughout the battle be under the protecting wings of yourself or your brother or Hanuman.' With this request, which Rama grants, dies Kumbakarna, the immortal creation of Kamban, who is marked by a high-souled heroism, an exquisite perception of justice and a tenderness of heart, very much unlike the grotesque Kumbakarna created by Valmiki. To Vibhishana we give our admiration, to Kumbakarna our tears.

Ravana's Grief

New of Kumbakarna's death plunges Ravana in grief. Irate Adikaya, Ravana's son by Danyamalai, goes to the front to avenge the death of Kumbakarna. A huge army follows him. In an encounter with Lakshmana, Adikaya loses his head and dies.

Message of this ignominious defeat is carried by couriers to Ravana. The death of Adikaya raises in Ravana's mind intensely contradictory emotions:

Sobs raise his head,
 shame tilts its down,
 pity for the dead rouses his valour,
 surging rage and grief afflict the mind of Ravana,
 who stands, with tears gushing from his eyes,
 like the ocean, with its waves supporting one another,
 advancing farther and farther towards the shore
 then retreating farther and farther inwards.

ஏங்கிய விம்மல்,மா னம்;-
 இரங்கிய இரக்கம்வீ ரம்;-
 ஓங்கிய வெகுளி, துன் பம்;-
 என்றிவை ஒன்றிற்கொன் று
 தாங்கிய தரங்கமா கக்
 கரையினைத் தள்ளித்தள் ளி
 வாங்கிய கடல்போல்நின் றான்,
 அருவிநீர் வழங்கும்கண் ணான்.

He thinks of lifting up the Earth;
 He thinks of pulling down the Heavens;
 He thinks of giving a simultaneous kick
 to the multitude of living things;
 He thinks of splitting in twain
 all that bears the name of woman.

மண்ணினை எடுக்கஎண் னும்;
 வானினை இடிக்கஎண் னும்;
 எண்ணில உயிர்கள்எல் லாம்
 ஒருகணத்(து) எற்றஎண் னும்
 பெண்ணெனும் பெயரஎல் லாம்
 பிளப்பென்என்(று) எண்ணும்; எண்ணிப்
 புண்ணிடை எரிபுக்கென் ன
 மானத்தாற் புழுங்கிநை யும்.

Superior Grief

Every one around Ravana is struck with awe by his frenzy. Kamban, with his unflinching sense of drama and his supreme knowledge of psychology, introduces bereaved Danyamalai into the scene at this juncture. She is one of the wives of Ravana and the mother of Adikaya, who has been killed in battle. Her intense grief over the death of her son puts the raging but guilty Ravana on the defence. Queen Danyamalai is a high-born lady, reared in the imperialist tradition. Even Ravana deferentially looks up to her. She comes beating her breasts violently with her hands.

She drops himself at the feet of Ravana and cries:

Pay heed can you to what you hearken?
Hearken will you to what I utter?
Show me, will you show me
my darling child,
who was the very iris of my eye.

‘மாட்டாயோ இக்காலம்
வல்லோர் வலிதீர்க்க,
மீட்டாயோ வீரம்,
மெலிந்தாயோ தோளாற்றல்,
கேட்டாய் உணர்ந்திலையோ,
என்னுரையும் கேளாயோ,-
காட்டாயோ என்னுடைய
கண்மணியைக் காட்டாயோ!’

All the vociferous fury of Ravana becomes stilled and muted in the presence of Danyamalai’s superior grief. Danyamalai impeaches Ravana for the madness of his lust for Sita and warns him, ‘Not a few are the evils that will come on Sita’s account!’

As she is wailing in this manner, Urvashi and Menaka, the celestial dancing maids in attendance on Ravana, take Danyamalai in their arms and carry her inside the palace.

Ravana next sends Indrajit, his most valiant son to the front. He resorted to a mysterious weapon called Brahmastra, a missile, which could discharge poison gas on the enemy and then return to the owner. He sent this missile at midnight while Rama, Lakshmana and their Army were fast asleep. The poison gas made them all unconscious and they were lying like dead. Indrajit went back exultantly to his palace and slept away.

On the advice of Jambavan, Hanuman sped to the Sanjeevi Hill, uprooted it and brought it. Inhaling the smell of the herbs on the hill, Rama, Lakshmana and the Army recovered consciousness. As Rama emerged out of his stupor, he saw the anxious face of Vibhishana and questioned him. Vibhishana explained how with the efforts of Hanuman, Rama, Lakshmana and the Army had been bought back to consciousness. At once, Rama gratefully embraced Hanuman.

Virtue Triumphs

The next day, Indrajit learnt that his subterfuge had failed. Egged on by Ravana, he fought a savage battle, in which Lakshmana severed his head with a crescent-shaped arrow. News of his death profoundly upset Ravana.

Ravana feels that Sita is at the bottom of all this catastrophe and in a fit of anger, he decides to kill Sita and runs towards Asoka Vana. Mahodara obstructs him, and tells him that if he kills Sita,

he will incur everlasting infamy. He appeals to his innate love of chivalry and fame, and turns him away from his mad venture.

The delirium of Ravana's grief is now transformed into the delirium of war. In his encounter with Rama, he fights with prodigious heroism, but Rama's arrow severs his neck and lands his head on the ground. The valour and virtue of Rama triumph. Captive Sita is rescued. Vibhishana performs the funeral obsequies of the dead Rakshasas.

The victorious warriors set out towards Ayodhya along with Vibhishana, Sugriva and Hanuman.

Single Speech Satrugna

Meanwhile, Bharatha, who has been ruling the kingdom as Regent for fourteen anxious years, is daily looking southward for the arrival of Rama. Today the fourteenth year comes to a close. Bharatha climbs up a tower and looks southward, but sees no sign of Rama's arrival. Disappointed, he decides to fulfil his vow by leaping into the fire and perishing. At his command, his men make a big fire. He sends for the citizens and the sages, and tells them resolutely that he will not live a moment beyond the appointed time. Their attempts to dissuade him prove futile. At this juncture, Satrugna, the younger brother of Bharatha, arrives on the scene. Bharatha tells him, 'Today is the appointed day and Rama has failed to return. Before immolating myself, I make a request of you. You must rule this kingdom till Rama arrives and then hand it over to him.'

Satrugna is struck with self-disdain as he listens to these poignant words. He is a silent character who does not speak except once in the whole of Kamba Ramayana, and when he speaks, as he does now, Kamban puts into his utterance all the rhythmic sweetness at his command. A translation of the intellectual content of his utterance, but not its rhythm, may be given in the following words:

A brother is he, who went escorting the one,
who, deserting the Earth-maid, went to rule over the
jungle;

He is a brother, too, who stands resolved to give up his
dear life
because those who went have not returned in time.
Standing apart, like an unconcerned spectator,
am I to unblushingly rule over this Kingdom!
Sweet, indeed, is this blooming sovereignty!

‘கானாள நிலமகளைக்
கைவிட்டுப் போனவனைக்
காத்துப்பின் பு
போனானும் ஒருதம்பி,
போனவர்கள் வரும்அவதி
போயிற்றென் னா
ஆனாத உயிர்விடஎன்றூ)
அமைவானும் ஒருதம்பி;-
அயலேநா ணா(து)
யானாம்பிவ் அரசாள்வென்!
என்னேஇவ் அரசாட்சி!
இனிதேஅம் மா!

The rhythmic pattern of the original of this poem is so contrived that the stress of every rhyme and alliteration falls just where the emotional stress falls. If we draw two graphs, one plotting the emotional intensities of Satrugna's speech, and another, the verbal, there would be such a perfect synchronisation between the two, trough for trough and crest for crest, that the original song in Tamil is rightly regarded as a marvel of poetic achievement.

The Coronation

The citizens of Ayodhya stand baffled by the pathetic predicament of Satrugna and the resolute unvacillating determination of Bharatha. Just at this moment, Hanuman comes rushing to the scene, shouting, 'Rama is come!' With his hands he reduces the big fire to ashes and claps his hands and dances with joy. The good news of Rama's arrival throws Bharatha into ecstasy. He acts like one mad. He salutes all those around him, he salutes his servant-maids, he salutes his own self. His joy so intoxicates him that the Poet makes the reflection:

This thing called Love
is, verily
a distillate of wine!

ஏதும்ஒன்(று) அறிகிலான்
இருக்கும் நிற்குமால்!
காதல்என் றீதுமோர்
கள்ளின் தோற்றிற்றே!

In a short while, Rama, Lakshmana and Sita arrive along with Vibhishana, Sugriva and the monkey Army. The whole of

Ayodhya is plunged in joy. To the accompaniment of instrumental music, the Coronation of Rama takes place.

CONCLUSION

Hardly any justice could be done in this tiny monograph to the Epic of Kamban, which consists of over then thousand songs. Throughout the Epic, he speaks with the assurance and self-surrender of one, who has discovered the controlling center of life. Take, for instance, the Hiranya Vadai Padalam, in which he creates an intensely original dramatic situation. In this scene, Brahma, the creative aspect of God, confronts Vishnu, the Ultimate Reality, and conducts a cosmic dialogue with Him. At the invocation of Prahlada (the son of Hiranya), God breaks asunder the shell of the Macrocosm and after shattering the roof of the Cosmos, descends to the Earth in human form with a lion's head before the unbelieving Hiranya, and red in tooth and claw, destroys him. As Narasimha (Man-Lion) is roaring in infinite fury, Kamban, with his sense of exquisite artistry and humour, introduces Brahma into the scene in an attempt to appease the Lion of Heaven. In accents of great devotion, not unmixed with loving irony, Brahma exclaims:

By precipitating Thyself in this form,
Oh! Lord of Lords,
Thou hast proved
that Thou must have created Thyself!
But, by indulging in this act of self-creation,
My Lord,
Hast Thou not encroached upon my jurisdiction
and set at nought Thy purpose in creating me
for creating the multitudinous forms!

'தன்னைப் படைத்ததுவும்
 தானே எனும்தன்மை
 பின்னைப் படைத்ததுவே
 காட்டும்: பெரும்பெரும!
 உன்னைப் படைத்தாய்நீ
 என்றால்,-உயிர்ப்படைப்பான்
 என்னைப் படைத்தாய் நீ
 என்னும்அது எற்றாமோ?'

There is more devotion than logic in the mock complaint of Brahma that the Sovereign, who has power to delegate his jurisdiction, has no power to trench upon it. But there is truth in the following charge that Brahma levels against his Principal:

The myriad stars and planets
 linger in Thy Primordial Substance
 like the unlingering bubbles in the Arctic seas;
 Thou art the myriad forms,
 but, alas! by assuming this singular form,
 Hast Thou not needlessly imposed
 a narrowing constraint
 upon Thy Infinite plurality!

'பல்ஆ யிரகோடி
 அண்டம்,-பனிக்கடலுள்
 நில்லாத மொக்குள்ளனத்
 தோன்றுமால் நின்உழையே:
 எல்லா உருவமுமாய்
 நின்றாய்க்கு,-இவ்வுருவம்
 வல்லே படைத்தால்,-
 வரம்புண்மை ஆகாதோ.'

After demonstrating the incongruity between the infinity of God and the unflattering finitude of his manifestation, Brahma brings out the paradox between God's immanence and God's transcendence in the following words:

I have no existence outside Thee;
without Thy Grace, I can create neither life nor matter;
I can exist neither before nor after;
I am like a goldsmith
born inside Thy golden substance,
shaping that substance
with Thy grace.

‘நின்னுளே என்னை
நிருமித்தாய், நீயல்லா(து)
என்னுளே எப்பொருளை
யாவரையே யானீன்றேன்
பின்னிலேன் முன்னிலேன்
எந்தை பெருமானே,-
பொன்னுளே தோன்றியதோர்
பொற்கொல்லன் போல்கின்றேன்.’

Thus does Kamban argue metaphysics with his Maker in a series of poems, which, in the amplitude and boldness of their vision, in the sweep of their reverential humour and pathos, and in the overwhelming splendour of their poetry and dramatic power can equal the best in the literatures of the world. The implications of Advaitic thought bewilder the intellect of those, who live in this world of relativity, but the poetic instinct of Kamban, while dramatizing and concretizing this bewilderment, accepts and uses this very bewilderment as convincing proof of the truth of Advaita.

The success achieved by Kamban is due not so much to what he says as to how he says it. Each word of his is a focus of persuasive energy, in which his living faith is transformed into the vibrations of the human voice. And those, who wish to expose themselves to these vibrations, must listen to the songs of Kamban in the original and not to the feeble and uncreative vibrations of the translator.

To Kamban, life is not a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, but signifying nothing. To him, life is full of significance, order and dignity. The source of Kamban's art is a boundless sympathy for all things, animate and inanimate. He has a vision of life as but a passing through necessary stage in a cosmic journey and he interprets the events of earthly life as effects of causes originating before birth and as having effects on the life beyond the grave. He, therefore, delves deeper, deeper into life; he digs deeper and deeper into the Eternity of the past and the Eternity of the future in the consciousness that Man is but part of an ageless continuum. This enables him to gaze fixedly at the phantasmagoria of life, to bring the different segments of life into harmony and to interpret the whole in the light of a profound optimism and insight. This vision gives Kamban a certitude and we can say of Kamban, what Emerson said of Plato, that from the Sun-like centrality of his vision, he had a faith without a cloud.

This does not mean that Kamban is a heavy-footed metaphysical poet or a propagandistic hawker of religious wares. His roots are in the real world of character and situation and his epic takes in its stride the facts of life and Nature. Describing

the aridity of a parched desert, he can, with his tongue in his cheek, compare it with the dispassion that characterizes alike the common prostitute and the saint aspiring for Jivan Mukti. Describing the building of a bridge across the ocean, he can mention with loving and cinematographic details the feats of a monkey carrying three hillocks all at once—one rolling under its heels, another borne in its upstretched arms and a third, firmly held in its looped-up tail. He can narrate, with a gift of immediacy, and a sense of personal involvement, a hundred battles, each conceived and executed on a different pattern from the rest, and all packed with thrill, suspense and intense tempo. As a connoisseur of the human heart, he can reveal the most secret springs of human action. He can neutralize the stiffness of the Epic with the suppleness of Drama and suffuse both with the glow of his lyrical intensities.

Whatever he does, he manages to sustain in the reader a feeling of passionate intimacy with things that count. He drives the reader to dip himself again and again in the cleansing waters of his *Ramayana* and to emerge with a warmer idealism, with a sense of keener sensitivity to what is beautiful, good or true, with a greater courage to put the ultimate questions and an easier confidence to tackle them.

And all this he achieves through his supreme gift of poetry. Kamba's rhythm has an unrivalled fullness, variety and sufficiency. He manipulates his vowel and consonantal sounds with such dexterity and magic that they bring out the astral form of any mood or emotion. And his rhythmic inventions have the effect of hushing the chattering mind of the reader and keeping it

receptive to the message of the Poet, undistracted by the pressures of the private will. All this manipulation bears the imprimatur of unlaboured spontaneity and does not betray the pre-verbal agony of poetic creation. While describing some deep inexorable purpose behind the Cosmos or while conveying some glimpse of the inner chambers of existence, his rhythm effectively prolongs the moment of contemplation. Such indeed is the *attar* of Kamban's poetry that by common consent of the Tamils, Kamban has been rightly acclaimed as Kavi Chakravarti or the Emperor of Poetry.

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TIRUMOOLAR AND THE EIGHTEEN SIDDHAS

Tirumoolar is the greatest mystic and Seer Tamil Nadu has ever produced. The eighteen Siddhas of Tamil Nadu acknowledge him as their supreme preceptor and as the progenitor of the esoteric school of the Tamils.

According to legend, Tirumoolar lived in 6000 B.C. However, modern scholars think that he must have lived between the 3rd Century A.D. and the 5th Century A.D. Sundaramoorthi Nayanar, who is one of the four great Saints of Saivism and who lived in the 6th to 7th Century A.D. has, in his Tiruthonda Thogai, referred to Tirumoolar and sung as follows:

I am the slave of the slaves
of
My lord, Tirumoolar.

This reference shows that Tirumoolar must have lived long enough before Sundaramoorthy Nayanar to have become deified by that great saint as “My Lord”.

The Central message of Tirumoolar is, ‘Love is God’. In his Tirumanthiram, he sings:-

Senseless are they who say,
“Love and Siva are two”,
They know not
It is Love that becomes Siva;
The moment they know
That Love becomes Siva
That moment they'll remain
Rooted in Siva-as-Love.

Tirumoolar's life is a living illustration of his message. According to him, he was one of the four, who were initiated by Lord Siva himself, whom he refers to often as Nandi. He was an inhabitant of Mount Kailas in the Himalayas. One day he flew southward from the Himalayas to see saint Agasthiar, who had his Ashram in the Pothigai Hills, now in Tirunelveli District. On the way, he alighted at Tiruvavaduthurai (now in Thanjavur District) and after worship at the temple, proceeded to the Cauvery river nearby. On the bank of the Cauvery, he saw a herd of cows lamenting loudly and shedding copious tears. Moved by this sight, he looked around, and found that Moolan, the shepherd, who had brought the flock to the river side, was lying dead. Flocking around the dead body, the cows were weeping. The Saint, who had a strong sense of contemporary tragedy, rushed to relieve the cows of their sorrow; he put his physical

body aside and with his astral body, entered the corpse of the shepherd, Moolan and stood up to the great rejoicing of the cows, and herded them back to the village of Sathanur, where Moolan had been living. The wife of the shepherd, Moolan came and took him by the hand; but Moolan, the Saint, resisted her and went into a Matam close by and entered into Samadhi. The wife's appeal to the villagers for restitution of her husband proved ineffective. Waking up from his trance, the body, and found to his surprise that it had been cremated by the local people. Realising that this deprivation of his original body was part of Divine grace, the Saint dwelling in the Shepherd's body, went to the Tiruvavaduthurai Temple and sitting under a tree, which is west of the temple and is still worshipped in memory of the Saint, went into a trance again. Legend has it that once a year he would wake up from the Samadhi, sing one song in Tamil and go into Samadhi again and would wake up a year later. For three thousand years, he remained in meditation under this tree and sang 3,000 songs, one every year, the collection of which is called "Tirumanthiram" (The Holy incantation). After completing the Tirumanthiram, Tirumoolar was satisfied that the mission of his life was over, and shedding the borrowed body, he disappeared into the mental world, where it is believed, he still lives in his mental body directing the evolution of mankind. As the Saint sang the songs, while in the body of the shepherd Moolan, he came to be known as Tirumoolan or Tirumoolar (The Holy Moolar).

Tirumanthiram is an encyclopaedia of authentic spiritual experience at almost all levels, that is to say, from idolatry to a

disembodied absorption in the Ultimate Void. Tirumoolar is about the only Indian mystic who has cared not only to record his experiences but also to evolve and communicate an elaborate technique by following which other aspirants may reach the goal he had set for himself. It is true that the secrets discovered by Tirumoolar have been set down in highly symbolic language. The writer of this article once thought that the key to his symbolism has been irretrievably lost. But subsequent contact with living mystics has convinced him that the key is in safe and exclusive keeping. If there is good reason to keep the atom bomb out of the reach of the rabble, there is much greater reason to deny to it the fruits of supra-material research.

Even the intellectual is not qualified to obtain initiation into the secrets, unless he realises that the intellect is after all one of the most inadequate instruments given to man. It is in the awareness of human ignorance that Tirumoolar sees the beginnings of spiritual wisdom. Accordingly, in his preface to Thirumanthiram, he sings with characteristic humour:

Whoever knows
 the glories of my Lord!
And who,
 the vastness of Infinity!
Yet
 Of my ignorance of that nameless Light
I shall sing
 Three Thousand songs.

Einstein, that great Scientist, standing on the brink of the known and peeping into the Unknown, exclaims:- “How

terrifying is my ignorance!” Consciousness of ignorance, however, holds no terrors for Tirumoolar; in fact he exults and revels in it as the liberator from the Ego.

But even the man who has become aware of his ignorance is trammled by the Ego. Tirumoolar would, therefore, urge him to go beyond knowledge and ignorance into Pure consciousness. The wisdom acquired through such unfettered consciousness can alone be regarded as having ultimate validity.

Says Tirumoolar:- If you go beyond knowledge and ignorance into pure consciousness, ignorance of knowledge would be bliss, indeed:

How then are we to have access to the region of Pure Consciousness, where there is awareness but no thought? The exact mechanism by which the different states of consciousness can be reached has been suggested by Tirumoolar in several places in his great work ‘Tirumanthiram’:

The mind is located by Tirumoolar in a specific physical center in the human body. This is very much like the gear box of an automobile. The mind can be said to be in the first gear when we are awake, in the second gear, when we dream, and in the third gear, when we are in deep dreamless slumber. In other words, there are three physical states in the body corresponding to the three mental conditions, viz., waking, dreaming and sleeping. When a waking man falls asleep, a corresponding involuntary change takes place in his physical condition. Likewise, when he drifts into the dreaming condition, an automatic physical

change occurs. In their great spiritual laboratories, our sages made this most momentous discovery and put it to immediate use. By physically manipulating the center, in which the mind resides and by changing its gear, they found they could enter into any of these three mental conditions voluntarily and at will, retaining at same time their awareness. They could, for instance, get into the deep slumber condition remaining aware or “awake”. The Ego, which is like a prism distorting and refracting Reality, is itself asleep in slumber, and the Gnani, who can go into a slumber without losing awareness, is in a position to have a glimpse of Reality undistracted by the frolics of the Ego. Beyond slumber is the fourth condition of Turiya where the Ego dies completely and the soul stands face to face with the Lord ready to melt in his embrace.

It is when the mystic finds himself in this condition of the utmost absorption that he is able to pierce the multifaceted crust of Reality and perceive the Primordial and undifferentiated stuff of Being. Tirumoolar clarifies this truth with his famous analogy of a wooden toy elephant. He sings:-

The child played ecstatic with his elephant proud,
He cared not it was made of wood;
Unplayful man behind but a lump of wood,
He missed, alas! the elephant's form;
Even so, the Elements hide the Real from our sight,
But the Mystic's eye pierces thro' the Elements
and gets at — God.

The fifth condition is Turyadhita, in which the merger of the Atma and Paramatma takes place.

Tirumoolar had a strong sense of his mission and he says that the main purpose of his birth was to put across divine truth in the Tamil language. In one stanza, he proclaims:

The Lord has created me,
And created me well,
In order that
I may create Him in Tamil
And create Him well.

and in another place, he says:

Let the whole of mankind derive from me
The spiritual ecstasy, which I have derived.

In a stanza of exquisite beauty and authenticity he describes his experience in Samadhi, in the following words:

The bounds of my Ego dissolved
And thereafter,
I could not conceive of anything which had bounds!
After I had become He, whom could I meditate
upon!

In another place Tirumoolar says that in this condition of trance, he started performing Archana (worship) to himself.

Tirumanthiram consists of 3000 songs, divided into 9 tantirams or divisions. The strategy adopted by Tirumoolar in the introductory chapters is to impress upon the reader, the pathetic mortality of Man, the evanescence of human youth and the transience of material wealth. This he does in words of incredible power and extraordinary vividness. In the whole range of Tamil

Literature, there is nothing to equal in power or, vividness Tirumoolar's portrayal of the fleeting nature of man's life. For instance, here is a cameo in which he paints the human predicament:-

She had cooked for him,
 he eats to his heart's content,
He copulates with her
 and then, he says
"There's pain in my chest"
He lays himself down to rest
 And lo! and behold! he's dead & gone.

After bringing home to the reader the temporal nature of human life, he calls upon him to contemplate the eternal verities of life. In unequivocal language he asserts:

Self-knowledge alone is knowledge,
 Knowledge of anything other than self
Is
 Knowledge diabolical.

He, therefore, advises us to put ourselves under the microscope and study ourselves. He says:

Pierce your mind with your own mind
 as penetratingly as possible;
If you sleep night and day thus wise with grace,
 even the stone will break,
And become limitless Space.

Though he expounds the doctrine of Saiva Siddhanta that 'Pathi' (God), 'Pasu' (Soul), 'Pasam' (Material attachment) are

uncreated and uncreatable and eternally existent, there are places in Tirumanthiram, in which, while describing spiritual union with God, Tirumoolar seems to speak in Advaitic terms. For instance, he says in one song:

There are not two things
Called Siva and Jiva,
Jiva knows not Siva,
After Jiva comes to know Siva,
Jiva becomes Siva.

At another place he says:-

Like the fragrance,
Inseparable from the flower,
Siva's fragrance inheres in the Jiva;
Siva leaps forth and embraces
Those, who become still like a painting and understand
through silent awareness.

Though Tirumoolar adores God as Lord Siva, he is catholic enough to proclaim that all religious reach the same goal and that wrangling over the merits of the several approaches to God is foolish and futile. In fact, he would say:

My God laughs at those
Who say, "This way is better" or "That" and
give a double name
to man's approach to God
It matters not which way you approach Him.
Those approaching Him with devotion
Will reach His habitation in a trice.

In one of his stanzas, he points the finger of scorn at champions of denominational religions and condemns them in the following words:

They attain not the Egoless experience,
as a pre-condition to which,
the inner-light should dawn upon their interior;
They think not of inevitable death
Nor do they yearn for freedom from birth;
They waste their time
Ceaselessly wranglingly about the rituals
of, denominational religions
And alas! they are doomed for ever.

Tirumoolar thinks that the assist way of approaching God is in and through the human body, in which God dwells. He says:

After wandering over the land, far and wide,
I discovered our Lord
In the land of this body!

According to Tirumoolar, there is a secret trap door in the body, by entering which one could contact divinity. It is by that trap door, according to Tirumoolar, the soul comes into the body at birth and it is through that trap door again that the soul goes out of the body at death. This Tirumoolar calls the magic way, a way, which, people, subject to the cycle of births and deaths, will not discover. This is a way which only the Guru can show. Once the Guru initiates you in the Unitive way, what happens? Tirumoolar answers:

If you gain control over that horse
 which can fly speedier than bird,
You need not consume intoxicants,
 for there will be auto-generation of ecstasy,
It will make you walk
 With spring-like steps
and cure you of all your sloth,
 We utter this truth
to those alone,
 Who have the awareness to grasp it.

Tirumoolar has great contempt for the externals of Religion. On the contrary, he lays great emphasis on the inwardness of Religion. According to him, God hides himself in a place where man is least likely to search for him and that place is the mind of man! With characteristic humour, he says:

Lest the wicked folk should discover him,
 He hides himself in their minds!

According to him, an external pilgrimage from Kasi to Kanyakumari would not wipe off the sins of the people. What one should undertake is the internal pilgrimage. He says:-

Several are the Theerthas
Found inside the mind;
The unenlightened would not
dip themselves in the Holy waters of the mind
And wipe off their sins;
But, instead, those wicked men
roam wildly over hills and dales - fruitlessly.

Tirumoolar says that if we discover the trap door in the human body, Death can be overcome and future births prevented. And where is this magic trap door? The following Tirumanthiram answers this question:

It is the way, through which, at birth, the soul
comes into the body,
Through the same way does the soul get out
of the body at death
It is this magic way, which, people subject to the
cycle of births and deaths.
Will never discover,
It is the way which the Guru alone can open—
the way following which one can merge with God.

Speaking of the Sahasrara, which is the culmination point of all Yogic practices, Tirumoolar sings a highly symbolic song in the following words:-

On top of that high mount,
Where an etheric cascade crawls,
There's a precious pond,
Which has no river to feed it,
but it yet filled with astral waters;
There grows a creeper there
Springing otherwise than from the mire,
and on that creeper,
a lovely Lotus is in bloom;
No flower will Siva wear
Except that Lotus which is in bloom.

Tirumoolar is probably the first Indian Saint who reconciled the Yogic approach with the Tantric approach. Yoga is Ego-

oriented. But Tantra is non-Ego-oriented. Yoga says 'No' to many dominating impulses of life. But Tantra accepts the totality of life, evil as well as good. Even sex it accepts and it does not want the practitioner to eschew sex. On the contrary, Tantra encourages indulgence in sex for the very purpose of transcending sex. Apart from expounding Ashtanga Yoga, Kesari Yoga, Chandra Yoga, Mantra Yoga and other yogas, Tirumoolar deals with Parianga Yoga, which literally means the Yoga of the Cot. This is the Yoga which exploits sex for the purpose of transcending sex. The other Yogas, by lying down several commandments, create inhibitions in the human mind. In Parianga Yoga, the practitioner is invited to make an uninhibited response to the demands of the body, in order that ultimately those demands may be sublimated into spiritual joy. One important song in Parianga Yoga runs, when translated, as follows:

Lest the silver should melt
And flow into the gold,
The cunning gold-smith
Closed the passage with coal.

These lines indicate the mechanism of sublimation which shall not be explained except by the Guru to his chosen disciple. Suffice it to say that by this tantra, which is of momentous significance to human evolution, it is possible to arrest the downward pull of the sexual impulses, direct the same in the opposite direction and convert sex energy into the light of Gnana. Tirumoolar says he would recognize as a spiritual master anyone who has learnt to prevent ejaculation of the vital substance despite

coitus of two hour duration. The device described by Tirumoolar is clearly tantric in character. In a famous song, he says:-

Fools are they, who say,
“Control the senses five”,
Even among the Immortals-
there’s none who can do so,
Lest, by controlling the senses,
I should become inanimate,
I have acquired the Wisdom, which enables me
Not to control the senses.

Tirumoolar’s attitude in this respect is refreshingly unorthodox. The senses are but the servants of the mind and have no volition of their own. He, therefore, declares that it is dangerous to impose any restraint upon the senses. That will be tackling the mind from the wrong end. Every such restraint is bound to create an inhibition in the mind and thereby further complicate the Subconscious. He suggests that the mind (conscious and sub-conscious) should be treated in such a way that an effective disjunction between the mind and the senses is brought about. When one has acquired mastery of the mind, not by subduing it, but by going round it, he gains freedom from the senses by transcending them without controlling them.

It is said that while Saint Francis of Assisi was on his death bed, he realized the spiritual utility of the human body and expressed his thanks to the body for having enabled him to realise God. Tirumoolar makes a similar statement:-

Once I thought the body was something
vulgar and mean,
But now I know that inside the body and only
through it
Can I get at Reality.

It is his view that the dignity of the body is almost as great as that of the spirit. To him the human body is not execrable delusion, but a divine gift to be treasured. In fact he calls every human being a walking temple of God and adds that any offering made to this temple is more readily accepted by God than the offerings made in the stone temples of God. In one song he says that the mental body (which is even bigger than the physical body of man) is the big temple of God, that the physical body is the shrine within the big temple, that the mouth is the gate-way to the sanctum sanctorum, that the Jivan is the Sivalingam and the five wicked-seeming senses are the eternal foot-lights that light up the glory of the Lord.

One must make spiritual hay, while the bodily sun shines; for, the moment the body is lost, experience comes to an end, and consequently, the opportunity of emancipation comes to an end too. That is why Tirumoolar exclaims:-

By developing my body,
I developed my spirit, too.

To Tirumoolar bodily health is only a means to a spiritual end and not an end in itself.

By opening certain secret centers of the body, he is able to witness the joyous dance of Lord Nataraja and to sing:-

He dances with Kali
and then, on the Golden Mount,
He dances with the ghosts
and then, on the Earth
He dances in the Elements of
Water, Fire, Wind and Ether
And dance does he in the limitless expanse
of consciousness!

Tirumoolar describes his bodily reactions to the dance of Siva in thrilling terms:-

Even as the sight of tamarind
makes your tongue water,
the sight of the charming dance of Nataraja
makes your eyes water,
your heart melt,
and joyous ambrosia ooze out of your
Inner Light.

Tirumoolar says that by the grace of God he acquired the eightfold Siddhi (Ashtamasiddhis) and that he disseminated knowledge of the same by going in the eight directions. There are as many as 30 stanzas in Tirumanthiram in which detailed instructions are given as to how one could obtain the faculty of getting out of one's body and entering the body of another (Parakayapravesam) Tirumoolar lays down certain tests by which the sex of a child can be determined even at the moment of conception. He also prescribes the date and time of sexual

congress; according to him, it must take place during the time commencing 6 days after the menstrual period ending 6 days before the succeeding period. According to him, coitus in the former part of the night would involve wastage of semen whereas if it takes place in the latter part of the night, there will be conservation of energy and that, too, for those who have learnt to mediate on the light in the crest of the head during coitus.

On the whole, Tirumanthiram gives solutions to problems which have great contemporary relevance. It makes an audacious attempt to integrate the Here with the Hereafter. The emphasis is throughout laid on the quintessence of life and spiritually as contrasted with the superficial and side-tracking externals of denominational religions. Evidently, at the time of Tirumoolar, men of religion had missed the wood for the trees, and fire sacrifices and rituals galore were the order of the day. Tirumoolar protests against this kind of extravaganza in words of lofty disdain and wants men to turn the searchlight inwards. His poetry, which is direct and simple and sometimes rugged, has an explosive power and a finality of tone. These qualities are results of his personal experiences.

But some of his songs are so cunningly constructed as to have different layers of meaning for persons having different levels of spiritual attainment. A song which would convey one meaning to a person in a lower stage of evolution would convey another meaning to him after he has evolved to a higher stage of evolution. Tirumoolar is undoubtedly the most versatile spiritual genius produced by Tamil Nadu and the greatest Master of Tapas — a

title which, according to Tirumoolar, Lord Siva himself conferred upon him. Says he:-

I invoked Siva
Calling Him the Lord of Lords;
Forthwith he appeared before me,
Calling me, "Oh, Lord of Tapas!"
(*Tapas: Meditation*).

In fact, the Tamil school of Siddhas acknowledges Tirumoolar as the father of the school. Thayumanavar, one of our greatest saints and Siddhas, in his songs calls Tirumoolar the Chakravarti (Emperor) among Tapasvins (Meditators) and prays reverently for his grace. The Siddha school is marked by special characteristics; in the first place, it denounces the caste system and preaches equality of all men; in the second place, it discourages idol-worship, and condemns ritualism; in the third place it lays stress on meditation upon the in-dwelling God and as a means to self-realization, it advocates different kinds of Yoga including Kundalini Yoga and Gnana Yoga and resort to tantric practices and complete reliance on the Guru. Though most of them use the word 'Siva' to denote God, their religion is universal and undenominational. Gunankudi Masthan, a Tamil Muslim is reckoned as a Siddha and his teachings are hardly distinguishable from those of the Siddhas except for the fact he occasionally uses Muslim jargon in the place of Saivite jargon.

Sivavakkir, who lived probably between the 6th Century A.D. and the 8th Century A.D. condemns idol-worship in the following terms:-

You plant a stone,
throw a few flowers over it,
go round it,
and mutter some mantras
When the Lord is inside you,
Can the planted stone speak?
Can the pot
taste the food it has cooked?
Or the ladle?

Some of the most moving spiritual hymns are to be found in the work of Pattinathar, who is a Siddha belonging to the 10th Century. He describes the Human body “as the blacksmiths’ bellows which fan the fire of anger”, as the case of the bird called the Five-fold senses”, as “the hollow in the tree out of which sorrow rises unendingly”, as “the rotating top, whipped up by the string of desire”, as “the fan that rotates with the aid of money-power” and as the “boat, laden with the cargo of sin, launched upon the sea of births, blown by the whirl wind of lust and running aground into the shore of evil” and so on.

Bhadragiriar, the disciple of Pattinathar was also a noted Siddha. His impatient cry is:-

When will you burn the Sastras,
falsify the Four Vedas
and get rid of Sorrow
by discovering the controlling center of Life?

Of the later Siddhars, who lived between the 11th century and the 19th century, mention may be made of Pambatti Siddhar, Ahappey Siddhar, Kudhambai Siddhar, Kaduveli Siddhar and Azhuhini Siddhar. One of them sings:-

To those who are in the state of heightened awareness
and are brimming over with joy,
even Gnana is superfluous.

The latest, certainly not the last of the Siddhas was Ramalinga Swamigal, who lived in the 19th Century. He has decanted his mystical experience in mellifluous poetry. He also sings:-

I renounced the wranglings
Of caste and religion
At once,
I saw the Gracious Light of God
I renounced Falsehood
and marched ahead
and the Lord revealed Himself unto me.

Thus we find that the golden thread of a universal Religion runs through the works of the Siddhas from Tirumoolar to Ramalingar and binds them into a distinctive and unique mystic Fraternity.

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SAINT ARUNAGIRI NATHAR, THE MYSTIC

The following is a paper read by Doctor Justice Maharajan at an All India Seminar held at Srinagar Kashmir on 25th and 26th October 1979 under the Joint auspices of Sheik Abdulla, Trustees of the Nooruddin Sixth Centenary Celebration Committee and the Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi. The Seminar was held to celebrate the sixth centenary of a great Muslim mystic by name Nooruddin Nund Rishi of Kashmir and was attended by Poets and writers from Orissa, Bengal, U.P., Punjab, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Kashmir and presided over by Prof. Uma Shankar Joshi, President of the Sahitya Akademi. The songs of Arunagiri were read out in Tamil by the author of this paper to the audience and explained with English translation thereof. The Arabic scholar, who heard the songs, exclaimed: "We have been transported by Arunagiri's songs to a new world altogether".

St. Arunagiri Nathar, the 6th centenary of whose birth we celebrated some years back, was one of our most colourful and romantic mystics. He was bred and born at Tiruvannamalai in South India. Prabuda Deva Raya, the Vijayanagar King, who died in 1447 A.D., was a contemporary of Arunagiri and has received mention in one of his hymns.

The Saint's favourite deity was Lord Muruga, the Lord of the Hills and hilly country, the Lord who rides on the blue peacock of Eternity, with his six symbolic faces and twelve symbolic shoulders. Upon the loveliness and grace of Lord Muruga, Arunagiri has lavished his powers of poetic articulation.

Under the heading 'Tirupugazh' (Praise to the Lord) he has sung as many as 16,000 hymns. These hymns show his effortless mastery over a bewildering variety of metres, beats and rhythms. His word-magic lies not only in the choice of words but also in the distinction, the surprise, the audacity of their use. His songs appear to partake of the vivacious music emanating from a percussion instrument, like, say, the mridangam or the tabla, and display all intricate permutations and combinations of laya. He performs his verbal miracles, standing on the borderland between Poetry and Music-where Poetry, unable to communicate his moods, throws up its arms in despair, and Music confidently takes over the appointed function. Here is a random example of his song quality:

கட்டுண்ட சொல்லியர் மெல்லியர்
காமக் கலவிக் கள்ளை
மொண்டுண்டயர்கினும் வேல்மற
வேன் முதுகளித் திரள்
டுண்டுண் டுடுடு டுடு
டுடுடு டுண்டு டுண்டு
டிண்டிண் டெனக் கொட்டியாட வெஞ்
சூர் கொன்ற ராவுத்தனே.

No music concert in Tamil Nadu is regarded as complete without the singing of atleast one piece from Tirupugazh.

Here is a piece:-

சீர்சிறக்குமேனி பசேல் பசேல் என
நூபுரத்தினோசை கலீர் கலீர் என
சேரவிச்ச தாள்கள் செவேல் செவேல் என -வருமானார்

And there is hardly any Tamilian who cannot hum some stanzas from the Tirupugazh. Such has been the gripping quality and popular appeal of these devotional songs during the past six centuries.

Arunagiri's main obsession was with sex. Evidently the earlier part of his life was spent in the company of public women. The sad, gay girls, who plied for hire, relieved Arunagiri of all his wealth and treacherously threw him away like a sucked orange. Despite his disenchantment with those women, Arunagiri clung to them, sinning, repenting and sinning again.

Consequently, his earlier outpourings were marked by a deep inner conflict, coloured by a profound spiritual melancholy and a conviction of sin, by a self-loathing and a self-despair. As a rule, the first half of each of his Tirupugazh hymns would be devoted to a graphic, rather a pornographic description of his physical encounters with harlots and the second half would contain a passionate and moving appeal to Lord Muruga to save him from his sexual excesses. Nevertheless, one suspects that while he was sincerely eager to get over his infirmity, he was secretly relishing what he wished to avoid. This suspicion gathers strength from the gusto and voluptuousness with which he describes his sexual orgies in these hymns.

But the marvel of it all is that his later writings unmistakably show that as a result of a direct divine intervention he became spiritually and physically transformed. By some inexplicable spiritual chemistry, copper became gold and the sinner became a Saint. The man, who had been groaning under the weight of bodily sin, and crying to an unresponding God for help, overcame his sin, soared upon the wings of faith, stood upon the Mount of the Spirit, feeling the Eternal round about him and crying out, “My Lord, My God, Thou hast saved me, Thou hast, by touching my head with Thy gracious feet, erased from my skull the handwriting and signature of Destiny”.

What is the exact cause that brought about this reformation? Was it gradual or abrupt? These are questions, which at this distance of time it is difficult to answer. Perhaps he learnt the Shakta tantra of remaining in sex and yet sublimating its energy into Gnana, or perhaps, he received some shock treatment which effected an alchemy. Man’s extremity, it is said, is God’s opportunity and when the opportunity came, Arunagiri was enabled to overcome his sovereign excitement. A complete break with the past was established, and Arunagiri passed from the storm centres of his senses into the smooth waters of inner unity and peace. It was a clear case of the deep calling unto the deep; the deep within his soul had been opened up as a result of his mighty struggle with the flesh and the deep within him was answered by the deep without. There came about an instantaneous process of unification and illumination. He died to an unreal life and was born into the real life. By experiencing this rebirth, he became a Dwijaha, indeed-a twice-born. In this state of ecstasy Saint Arunagiri gratefully sings:

You initiated me
by subtle suggestion, my lord,
into the unitive way,
whereupon
all at once
I lost my sense of Ego,
I lost my attachments to this world,
I lost not only all my knowledge but also all my
ignorance,
The chains of my desire broke to pieces,
And I entered the Realm of wordless silence.

The resulting state of Abhaya or Nirbhaya he celebrates in a famous song:

As the tiny anklets of my lord tinkled,
the Asuras trembled,
the four quarters of the Globe were deafened,
the eight Cardinal hills and the golden Meru tumbled
down
And the fear of the Devas was put to instant flight.

Reformation came to Arunagiri in such a flood that his values underwent a radical change. After a foretaste of this Ananda, he says, "I find honey tastes bitter and sugarcane, sour". He warns:

Your body's shadow avails not to shelter you from the
Sun,
Likewise,
Your pomp and your wealth avail not to shelter you
from the throes of
Death.

After his conversion he defies Death. To him, who has become illimitable and who has transcended the body, Death

becomes a laughable impossibility. His individuality seems to dissolve and fade away into boundless being. In a state of transcendental wonder, he exclaims:

A strange something
which moves not to or fro,
which is neither Night nor Day,
without interior or Exterior,
without speech, without form, without end,
Such a something accosts me
and invades me again and again;
It absorbs me;
it enralls me;
Oh! Lord!
Unspeakable is this ecstasy.

There is intrinsic evidence in his songs to show that Arunagiri was a practitioner of Yoga. His achievements as Yogi are celebrated by an Arunagiri legend. One day the King asked the Saint to fetch the Parijatha flower from the celestial world. Arunagiri left his body near the temple gopuram at Tiruvannamalai, entered the body of a dead parrot, by a process of Parakaya Pravesa, and winged his way to the celestial region. Unaware of his transmigration, Arunagiri's rivals told the King that unable to execute the royal commission, Arunagiri had committed suicide and his dead body was lying near the holy temple. On the orders of the King, the body of Arunagiri was expeditiously cremated. A few days later, the parrot came flying to the King's Court carrying in its beak a basket of Parijatha flowers. The King and his advisers realized their folly and prostrated at the feet of the Parrot-Saint and begged for forgiveness. The parrot readily forgave the wrongdoers, and perched on the mountain trees of

Tiruvannamalai, thrilled the people with the torrential music of his songs, which have since been collected under the heading, “Kandar Anubhuthi” (“The Experience of God”).

These songs have an ethereal and yet, noetic, quality. They show that the mystical state is not a state of illusion but a state of authentic knowledge. They are states of insight into depths of Reality unplumbed by the logical intellect. They are illuminations which carry with them an imperious sense of authority for all time. Arunagiri, with his exalted sensibility, and gift of poesy, records one of his visions in words, the music of which is difficult to capture in a translation.

Here is an inadequate, unmusical translation:

My mind was stilled,
All action died away,
And out of the lotus of my Buddhi,
shot out a jet of Ananda,
which swelled into an all-enveloping tide,
flowed over the banks of the Cosmos
and widened out into a shoreless Infinity;
And there I saw
My sweet, ambrosial Lord
With a dazzling array of six faces
and shoulders, ten plus two.

The original of this song reads:

பத்தித் திருமுகங்களாறுடன்
பன்னிரு தோள்களுமாய்த்
தித்தித்திருக்கும் அமுது கண்டேன்
செயல் மாண்டொடுங்க

புத்திக் கமலத் துருகிப் பெருகி
புவனமெற்றித்
தத்திக் கரைபுரளும்
பரமானந்த சாகரத்தே

These are words, which are living witnesses to the vision, which Arunagiri had about six centuries ago. To this sinner turned Saint let us pay our obeisance.

* * *

T.K.C. THE MAN OF LETTERS

*By "Incognito" (Justice S. Maharajan)
(Free India, March 21, 1948)*

Notwithstanding his numerous critics T.K.C has become a power to be reckoned within the field of contemporary Art and Literature in Tamilnad. His crusading spirit and uncompromising views on poetry and art have won for him the place of the most applauded and the most vilified man of letters today. His forth right speeches and writings have caused the literary doves to flatter and have restored to us the sense of poetic values. But, in this cleansing process, he has left behind, sand-storms of controversy, which, in their fury and extent, have few parallels in the history of other literatures.

By far the greater part of his most original work consists in the re-discovery of the importance of rhythm in poetry. He has an ear which is exceptionally sensitive to the harmonics of words and he has an instinct which is unerring in its perception of the

beautiful and the rhythmic. At a time when demoniacal dithyramb and soul-less quibbling and pedantry were masquerading as poetry, he boldly proclaimed with the spirit and in the accents of a missionary, that rhythmic form and emotion were the two elements which distinguish the true from the false in poetry. When the grammarians and the mechanics of versification were engaged in measuring, with a foot-rule and a sliding scale, the line length and the stanzaic structure, he called upon them to renounce the methods of vivisection and to learn to apply the stethoscope to the stanza and dance with its pulsating harmony.

Eulogising his powers of interpretation, V.V.Srinivasa Iyyangar said: "T.K.C has communicated the incommunicable". I disagree, for he has done much more than that; he has enabled his audiences not merely to understand the heart-throbs of the poet but also to participate in the creatorial functions of the artist himself. To him poetry is no mere translation of, or abstraction from life; it is life itself. It is an art of which we ourselves are the stuff. As he expounds poetry, the audience and the exponent begin to feel themselves in and through the poet who is expressing and manifesting the latent impulse of our own being. "If a sparrow come before my window", said Keats, "I take part in its existence and pick about the gravel". That reflects the kind of imaginative sympathy that an artist and an art-critic are obliged to possess, and that, T.K.C. possesses in an abundant measure.

He has always emphasized that the music of poetry is more important than its meaning, and that Form is more important in art than mere substance. Applying this test, he has assigned

poetic status to nursery rhymes and fold-songs to the chagrin of pedants and pandits. Not that he has scant respect for substance. It is his belief that, in Art, Form is part of the intrinsic grandeur of matter. To him dry intellectual gymnastics have no creative value, and conversely, all creative activity, including even scientific invention, is the result of ecstasy and joy. There is something akin to the devotion of a lover or a mystic in an Einstein peeping into the Fourth Dimension or Raman observing the play of the spectrum upon the structure of crystals without the basic joy of approach, pursuit of truth will become a wearisome night-mare. This thesis of T.K.C has been assailed by no less a rationalist than Rajaji himself. But the latest pronouncement of Raman and Einstien themselves would point to the conclusion that, in the ultimate analysis, faith rather than reason is the guide of the seeker after Truth, no less in Science than in Art.

From the same standpoint, he has attacked modern education as anti-artistic and soul-destroying. It is one of his main passions in life to bring about a drastic and medical revision of our system of education from the foundation to the flag-pole. The cramming of young vigorous minds with scrap-iron facts, divorced from the therapeutic influence of life and art, is to him a tragedy too deep for tears. It is a tribute to the courage of his conviction that his grandson, who is now 15 years old, has never peeped into a school room in his life, nor has he ever met a pedagogue except as a friend and outside the school at that.

His devotion to art has given him not only courage but also fortitude.

A fortnight after he lost his only son (who showed unmistakable evidence of rare gifts and who died in the prime of youth), T.K.C. was seen in the Gokhale Hall expounding with great pathos and impersonal poignancy, the grief of Ravana over the death of Indrajit by some subtle process of vicarious suffering through literature, T.K.C. has learnt to stand out against the tragedies and disasters of life.

His intuitive perception led him to discover many things of beauty which, but for him, would have been completely lost upon the Tamil-Public. He discovered and proclaimed the genius of Balasaraswati, that exquisite dancer, who was later on hailed by Uday Shankar as the cultural Ambassador of the south. It was he, who turned the full glare of publicity upon the tender and gentle poetry of Desika Vinayakam Pillai, who had remained hidden under a bushel. Again, it was he who resurrected the matchless poetry of "Muththollayiram" which ought to rank among the finest achievements of the human spirit and which, alas, had been hitherto neglected by the Pandit world owing to a lamentable lack of the poetic sense. The sculptural treasures of our land as exemplified by the pillars in the temples of Krishnapuram and Tenkasi were revealed by him to an astounded public. These disclosures of T.K.C. have gone a long way to open the artistic vision of the Tamils and to reassure them of the Titanic achievements of their race.

As a speaker, T.K.C. is not eligible for admission into the company of orators. Confessedly, he is not a speaker of the respectable variety. He cannot, for instance, remain "in the sonorous state of signifying nothing". He cannot affect a single

studied pose. He simply lets himself go with a naturalness which, in some quarters, has been regarded as unorthodox, and he talks in the common speech of Tinnevely with a simplicity and a wealth of racy idiom that the meanest intelligence could follow with joy and without effort. With cinematographic detail and artistic skill, he works out the background of a song, and with a refreshing lack of self-consciousness, he works himself and his audience into a crescendo of feeling before setting the chosen poem to tune. He is never tired of declaring that Tamil poetry is intended to be sung and not to be read or recited, and he makes good his declaration by creatively rendering poetry in tune. It is as you listen to his workshop of the poet himself and respond, in an incredible measure, to the inner characteristics of a work of poetry, catch its real purpose and touch the creative joy of the artist. As a writer, he is not half as effective as a speaker. Till five years ago he had no faith in writing. The cold print is a moribund mody inadequate to bring out in full the colour, warmth and light of his unique personality. The credit of drawing him out in print certainly belongs to "Kalki", and his contributions to that journal will preserve for posterity, if only in a relatively feeble form, the art-experiences of this remarkable man.

In his interpretation of religion, he has broken new ground. By rationalizing religion he has rendered it presentable and by stressing the aesthetic elements of religion, he has made it acceptable to the modern mind. Very often he hovers over that borderland between higher Physics and Philosophy, where Science, after coming to the brink of the Unknown, throws up its arms in despair and confesses its impotence to proceed further and where religion steps in with confidence and faith and takes

Man by the hand towards the Bliss that its beyond. T.K.C. rightly recognizes that Art and Religion must walk hand in hand if the one is to be rescued from sensuous debasement and the other from uncomprehending superstition.

In his private life T.K.C. is a thorough democrat. Every visitor to his home, from the Governor of the West Bengal to the street peddler receive equal respect and hospitality at his hands. Genial, child-like, gifted with a whimsical sense of perennial humor, yet serene and profound, he is the representative man of letters in Tamilnad who spends every waking moment of his life, thinking and talking about poetry and art, enabling and exalting the life of those who come into contact with him and demonstrating with irrefutable evidence, the unrivalled capacity of Tamil poetry and Art to educate the perception of Beauty.

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RAJAJI'S CONTRIBUTION TO TAMIL PROSE

*(SAHITYA AKADEMI NEW DELHI SEMINAR ON RAJAJI -
MADRAS 7 February 1979)*

Replying in the Legislative Council to the Rt. Hon'ble Srinivasa Sastri's criticism of Rajaji's taxation measures as Chief Minister of Madras, Rajaji compared the speech of Sastri to a lady's parasol, beautiful and elegant, but affording no protection against Sun and rain. Rajaji's Tamil writings are the reverse of a lady's parasol-rugged and sturdy, occasionally even inelegant and uncouth, but adequate to withstand the strain of Sun and rain. Discussing the Tamil style of Rajaji, Rasikamani T.K. Chidambaranatha Mudaliar once told Kalki Krishnamurti, "Kalki, your style is like Dacca muslin, smooth, polished and flowing. Rajaji's is like the Khadi that he wears-rough to the touch, but pure and sacred in its contents."

Rajaji's writings were the direct result of a confrontation between Life and himself and of his gallant attempt to eliminate

Injustice and Evil from the Earth and to remould life after his heart's desire. He had, therefore, neither the time nor the inclination to polish his phrases and indulge in merely charming writing. The swift and summary brevity of Rajaji's Tamil prose, in all its rich implications and ethical grandeur, its innuendoes and impatient sarcasm, derives directly from the socio-political pressure under which he spent most of his 94 years on the Earth.

What is the urge, we may ask, which precipitated the writing by Rajaji of Socrates in Tamil? This book deals with the last days of Socrates—the dignified calm with which Socrates defended himself against a trumped-up charge, the noble fortitude with which he received the death sentence imposed on him, the clarity and detachment with which he conversed with his friends on the date appointed for his death, the magnificent understanding and graciousness with which he drank the cup of hemlock and the fearlessness with which he faced physical death in the knowledge that his soul would survive. All this Rajaji paints in words which reveal the recognition by him in Socrates of a kindred spirit suffering physical pain in kindred circumstances. Rajaji says, in his Preface to Socrates, “I wrote this book to while away my time while undergoing solitary confinement in the Vellore Jail”. This apparently light-hearted statement conceals the tremendous physical and mental agony Rajaji was put to in the Vellore Jail.

His biographer tells us, “C.R.'s solitary Cell was 11½ feet long and 8½ feet wide; at its highest point the arched roof was 10 feet from the floor. A 4 foot by 1½ foot barred opening in the rear wall, just below the roof, occasionally let in urine smell from a drain along the wall's outer side. There was not the least

movement of air inside the Cell (for this asthmatic prisoner) while the breeze outside whistled through the leaves of the trees all the night long. Flies often filled the cell by day and mosquitoes by night. A brick platform was the bed; a straw mat and a blanket formed the mattress, on which C.R. spread his Jamakalam. Four feet from this bed lay two uncovered, unglazed, absorbent mud vessels serving as chamber-pot and commode at night". The porridge given to him was "unparalleled in horrid taste." From the neighbouring cells came the wailing and lamentations of condemned prisoners, who were to be hanged the next day or the day after. "We are not going to break for all this treatment", wrote C.R. in his diary, "The Government does not know that this merely strengthens our determination. Special comforts would undermine our strength in a subtle manner." It is in the teeth of such a hostile environment that Rajaji translated an English book on the last days of Socrates, and like Socrates, went beyond the infirmities of his frail body and sang hallelujahs to the eternal spirit of Man. With the prison-walls around him and in the absence of fresh air and human company, he chose to walk in the company of Socrates and found it uplifting and edifying. His work "சோக்ரதர்" (Socrates) is, therefore, the result, not of a writer's itch, but of a passionate and successful transcendence of a dehumanizing Space-Time predicament.

In his short-stories, Rajaji reveals a masterly grasp of the short story techniques. He is, however, unabashedly didactic in his short stories as in whatever else he has written. He never allows his characters to dominate him; he keeps them severely under his control and makes them ruthlessly expose the tyrannies he saw around him. Take, for instance, his short story, "Mukundan."

Mukundan is a Brahmin boy, who catches hold of a baby monkey. The mother monkey, a huge beast, attacks and mauls Mukundan. Mari, a Harijan boy, rescues Mukundan, renders first aid to him and then physically carries him to his house. Seethammal, the mother of Mukundan, after finishing her bath and Puja, is working in her kitchen, when she sees her bleeding boy being carried inside her house. She leaps towards her boy in shocked anxiety and laments over his bruises. As Mari recounted the entire incident, a feeling of gratitude rose from her heart and broke into a beautiful and luminous smile on her face. The woman asked Mari, "Who are you?" "We are Pariah boys," he replied. Hearing this, the mental condition of Seethamma changed suddenly. She shouted, "You pariah boy, how dare you enter my house. You have come near my kitchen! Alas! You, sinners!" She forgot everything and making a frenzied cry, she picked up a piece of firewood and flung it with all her might at Mari. It fell on his feet, injured him and felled him to the ground. The fallen boy slowly raised himself and pressing the injured foot with his hand, said, "Madam, I rescued your son from the monkey and you have fractured my foot in return." At this stage, the story-teller interrupts the story to make the remark, "Low caste children can speak like men mature in age."

"You and your monkey be damned! How will I ever be free from this Pariah pollution and achieve salvation! A pariah's shadow is adequate to pollute my house. They have come near the place where I keep my Deity. Oh! God! Have mercy upon me and save me". So saying, Seethamma flung another piece of firewood at Mari. This hit him more violently than the previous one. Unable to bear the pain, Mari let out a piercing cry and fled the house, catching hold of his leg.

Now, the treatment meted out by Rajaji to the Brahmin women seems more harsh than that meted out by her to the Harijan boy. In order to bring home the guilt of the guilty, Rajaji makes them behave with more than normal cruelty. He might have spared the infliction of the second blow on poor Mari. Of all his great qualities, there is nothing more resplendent than his righteous indignation.

The drink evil is another frequently recurring theme in Rajaji's short stories. In the collection (Short stories for children), there is a story entitled, "குழந்தைகளுக்கான குட்டிக்கதைகள்" the story of how toddy came. In reach and imagination, the story has an epic grandeur. The ancient sages assembled together and jointly created a tree, which could produce leaves, on which their wisdom could be engraved and transmitted to posterity. On the leaves of that tree, they wrote the sacred mantras, the Dharma Sastras, the Vedas and the Upanishadas.

Then there came into being Pandits, who read what the palm leaves contained and became arrogant with their own learning. Each Pandit said "I am clever and you are a fool". There was much quarrelling and much wrangling among them. Mother Saraswati, who was observing all this, grew wild and had urgent consultations with Lakshmi and then converted the tree that gave cadjan leaves for scholars into one that would give intoxication to men. Thereupon, men began to tap from that tree a juice which could produce as much ignorance and stupor as the cadjan leaves could produce enlightenment. The tree started weeping, "Alas! they are destroying my foetus and sucking up my life energy." The tears shed by the tree and the juice of its destroyed

foetus dropped into the pot and became toddy. People, instead of pitying those who drank this toddy, sold it and became rich.

The tree observing this travesty of things, lamented, “You men, what great tapas did you not perform to acquire knowledge! And what tricks are you resorting to now to lose that knowledge!” This English summary has lost the magic of the original, which edifies the reader by its preternatural profundity.

Dream motifs in Rajaji’s short stories may well form the theme of a thesis on Rajaji’s expertise in psychopathology. In (Pacchaathaapam), he attributes to the Sita of Asokavanam, a dream through which her Sub-conscious works out her repressed and unspoken sense of guilt against Lakshmana. The dream is elaborated with uncanny subtlety and intricacy. So also the story under the title “ஜகதீச சாஸ்திரிகள் கனவு” (The Dream of Jagadeesa Sastrigal). In Hunch-back Sundari, we see her stepson lavishing his affections upon her and overcoming disgust with devotion. Says the boy, “Mother, when I see you, I do not see your hunch-back, but when I see the hunchback, I don’t see you”. Such gems of intuition can be found in plenty in Rajaji’s short stories.

Rajaji has written innumerable essays in Tamil on a bewildering variety of subjects ranging from B.C.G. to Birth Control, from the Atom Bomb to the Permit-License Raj; most of these essays are marked by extraordinary lucidity and frugality of words. It is a marvel how by his parables, analogies, fables and metaphors he could confound his opponents, though sometimes this very capacity created the suspicion that he was capable of “proving” that black was white.

Rajaji was famous for his reticences and under-statements, the cumulative effect of which was more deadly than over-statements. Once the writer of this paper went to Rajaji's house and presented him with his Tamil Hamlet. Rajaji asked with his usual cynicism, "Do you think your Tamil translation has done justice to Shakespeare?" I said, "I don't think so, but I may add I have put across 99.9% of the contents of the original, 60% of the moods of Shakespeare and 20% of the shadow of his poetry". The great master of under-statements was so pleased with my remark that he said, "This is one of the most honest statements made by a man of letters. I want you to give the widest publicity to it."

Rajaji was a pioneer in the translation of the Sciences into Tamil. He and a few friends formed in October, 1916 an association for coining scientific terms in Tamil and started for the purpose the Journal of the Tamil Scientific Terms Society. We have it on the authority of Masti Venkatesa Iyengar that Rajaji was Joint Editor of this journal and four issues of this journal came out containing terms in Botany, Chemistry, Physics, Physiology, Astronomy and Arithmetic. In his (Chemistry on the pial) Rajaji introduces three characters, viz., Ganapaati Swaminatha Dikshitar, a self-complacent Vedic scholar having contempt for science, Rao Bahadur Sesha Sastrigal, who is a B.A. L.T., and who has faith in science and the Scriptures and believes in reconciling the two, and Venkataraman, the newfangled son of Sesha Sastrigal, who does not believe in translating Scientific terms into Tamil. The conversation among these three characters raises issues of topical importance. "People who have studied science in English," says Sastri, "as they are accustomed to English

technical terms feel the joy of meeting a good, old friend when they hear of Hydrochloric Acid. For those who know only Tamil, it is the coined Tamil equivalents that sound sweet to the ear and the mind. If Tamil words are coined, it would be easier to produce derivatives like அனலித்தல் (oxidation), அனலதை (oxide) and ஈர்னலதை (dioxide). If the English words like oxygen are retained, only ungainly derivatives will be produced by tacking on Tamil prefixes and suffixes to the English words.” Ganapaati, who does not know English, welcomes this statement heartily, though the young man, who has learnt science in the English medium, remains unconvinced and deprecates the attempt to translate scientific terms into Tamil. Rajaji has coined a number of Tamil equivalents for scientific terms and some of them have been accepted by later Text book writers in Tamil as handy.

Rajaji has in collaboration with Somu written two celebrated works, முதல் மூவர் & திருமூலர் தவமொழி expounding respectively the thoughts of the first three Alvars and Tirumoolar, a great Saivite mystic.

Rajaji’s most popular works are the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. K.M. Munshi reports that when a member of the U.P. Service Commission asked a candidate, “Who is the author of the Mahabharata?” pat came the reply, “C. Rajagopalachari”. We are indeed lucky and grateful to re-read the episodes of the Mahabharata with the aid of the microscopic eyes and the myriad faceted mind of the Bhishmacharya of the 20th Century. He guides us wisely and dexterously through the labrynthine, but thrilling epic, making us pause, where we caught to, and whispering into our ears his own reactions to, and reflections upon the epic in the light of contemporary happenings.

As for his Ramayana, he closely follows the story as told by Valmiki, but flavours his narrative with exquisite quotations from Kamban's poetry. His close association with Rasikamani T.K. Chidambaranatha Mudaliar educated his perception of Beauty and added colour to the warmth and light that were native to his writings. More than the epic role that Rajaji has played in India's history, it is his retelling of these two Epics that will secure for him an abiding place in the national memory.

* * *

PROF. A. SRINIVASA RAGHAVAN AS A CRITIC

My recent Malaysian tour enabled me to size up Prof. Raghavan in a new setting. Though delegates from 24 countries of the world took part in the International Conference-Seminar of Tamil Studies at Kuala Lumpur, and though most of them were deeply read in Tamil, I could meet at the Conference none, to whom, as to T.K.C., Literature had become the most important concern of life; the European and American delegates were more interested in linguistics, philology, lexicography or history than in Literature, whereas the delegates from Tamil Nad and Ceylon showed little interest in aesthetics or literary criticism, and those who did, had little acquaintance with the tools and disciplines of Western literary criticism.

It is against the background of this saddening discovery and in the light of his speeches, inside and outside the Conference Hall, that I set out to re-assess Prof. Raghavan's Contributions to literary criticisms in Tamil. As an English Scholar, who has laboured for nearly 40 years in the larger field of European literature, his speeches command a larger perspective. Parochialism does not constrict his vision. While interpreting Tamil Poetry, he speaks not merely with thousands of years of Tamil Literary Tradition in his bones, but with a fine perception of relationships which only a deep study of comparative literature and a many-sided equipment could induce. His criticism forces us both to see and to think.

In his conference thesis on the mysticism of the Alvars, Prof. Raghavan quoted Andal's songs:-

“பாசிதூர்த்துக் கிடந்த பார்மகட்கு பண்டொருநாள்
மாசுடம்பில் நீர்வார மானமிலாப் பன்றியாம்”

Referring to Andal's frustration at the inconstancy of her Divine Lover, the Prof. explained:-

“You have not come”, she says to the Divine Lover, “and that is to be expected. For, were you not once a Pig, a shameless, dirty, unwashed Pig, all for love of the dirt-covered woman, the earth?”

Lest his European listeners, reared in a different tradition, should feel shocked by the Pig-image of God, the Professor cunningly drew their notice to the passage, in which Francis Thomson likens God to a hound and added that Thomson's hound-symbolism was of his private making, whereas the Pig-

Symbolism of Andal was part of the Vaishnava epos and, consequently, more evocative.

Addressing a Coimbatore audience, a few years ago, Prof. Raghavan adroitly solved a riddle, which Tamil scholars, including Pandithamani and Somasundara Bharathiar, had either misconstrued or declared insoluble. The riddle song is believed to have been sung by Kamban's Sita, when she was ungraciously challenged by Rama to prove her chastity by going through an ordeal of Fire. As the down-hearted Lakshmana was making the fire, Sita went round the Fire and before leaping into it, declared:-

“மனத்தினால் வாக்கினால் மறுவுற்றேனெனில்
சினத்தினால் சுடுதியால், தீச்செல்வா” என்றாள்

If I have been sullied
In mind or speech,
Burn me, Oh; Fire-God,
With all thy ire.

If Sita had remained pure of body, argued the Devils' Advocates, would she not have said, “மனத்தினால், வாக்கினால்” and “மெய்யினால்”? The old-world scholars could find no argument to counter this insidious suggestion. But Professor Raghavan, in a scintillating speech, clinched the issue by quoting a parallel passage from Othello. The motiveless malignity of Iago had persuaded Othello to suspect innocent Desdemona's Chastity and to call her a “strumpet”. Desdemona, who was angelic in her innocence, could not bring herself to utter that unthinkable word. She asks Iago -

“Am I that name, Iago?”

Iago - What name, fair lady?

Des - Such as she says my Lord did say I was.”

After quoting this passage of exquisite delicacy, Prof. Raghavan pointed out that Sita, who was the very apotheosis of chastity, could not bring herself to imagine a slur involving her physical purity. This explained the Professor, was the reason why Sita exclaimed-

மனத்தினால் வாக்கினால் மறுவுற்றேனெனில்
சினத்தினால் சுடுதியால் தீச்செல்வா என்றாள்

This exposition of Prof. Raghavan was hailed by the Tamil Pandits present as a most convincing and exalting explanation of an omission, which had puzzled the Tamil scholars for decades.

By his speeches and writings, Prof. Raghavan has thus brought to the quality of Tamil Literary Criticism, the quality of his mind, which is endowed with extraordinary intellectual fineness and subtlety, a rich and abundant literary and philosophical scholar.

An ability to cut, through irrelevant data, to the heart of a problem, and a penetrating, if some-times abstract, analytical thinking characterize the Professor's critical approach to Literature. Over 35 years ago, Prof. Raghavan was taken to Sir Alladi Krishnaswamy Iyer, the Doyen of the Madras Bar to brief him in connection with a complicated Zamindari case. After listening to the Professor marshalling the facts of the case with an austere sense of relevancy and proportion, the great Lawyer was amazed to learn that the man, who had been briefing him, was not a

Lawyer, but a Professor. Clarity, which normally comes with the laborious study and practice of the Law, has come naturally to the Professor by some gratuitous grace.

As a Poets, Play-wright, Essayist, Letter-writer, translator, Critic and Controversialist he has developed almost incredible powers of articulation and he is one of the three or four writers of Tamil who have developed a characteristic and recognizable style of their own. Of the three Masters, who have inspired me with a love of literature, T.KC. and Dr. R.P.S. are, alas, no more. May the third, whose sixtieth birthday we are celebrating today, live to inspire us for many, many years to come.

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THONDAMAN – A GREAT LITERARY FORCE

*(19th July 1964- on the occasion of the 60th birthday celebration of
T.M. Bhaskara Thondaman M.A; I.A.S.)*

It was in May 1934 that I first met Bhaskara Thondaman. I had just completed my studies in the Trivandrum Law College and had come down to Palayamcottai. Bhaskara Thondaman attended a meeting at the Centenary Hall, at which I spoke on “Wanted A Red Revolution in Tamil Literature”. Although I had heard of Bhaskara Thondaman before, it was at the conclusion of that meeting that I met him in flesh and blood. He greeted me with that broad smile which I invariably associate with his colourful personality - a smile which bespeaks child-like and uninhibited simplicity.

Whether he was clerk in the Tirunelveli Collectorate, or the District Collector of North Arcot, he was functioning with remarkable freedom from any kind of complex. Throughout his

entire official career, he has worked passionately for the advancement of Tamil Literature. The “Vatta-Thotti” , the Literary Circle, over which T.K.C.(T.K.Chidambaranatha Mudaliar) presided, at Vannarpet, extended to the very limits of Tamilnad, mainly as a result of the efforts of Thondaman. I recall, with nostalgic pleasure, the several expeditions of the Literary Circle, organized by Thondaman;- the one to Papanasam, where T. K. C. expounded Kamban’s Agathiyar Padalam in the premises of Agathia’s temple, another to Nambinagar in Nanguneri where Thondaman functioned as Sub Magistrate; a third to Sankaraokoil where he was Tahsildar ; a fourth to Tindivanam where Thondaman was Sub Collector; and the myriad other literay excursions, which Thondaman organized in different parts of Tamilnad, under the presidentship of Rasikamani T.K.C. By these expeditions, he not only brought T. K. C. into contact with vast audiences in different parts of Tamilnad, but also did he conduct an infectious crusade in the cause of Kamban.

I followed in the footsteps of Thondaman in two Districts viz.. North Arcot and Coimbatore. And I can personally vouch for the enduring literary spade work which he has done in these two districts. Before his advent, there was little literary awakening in either of these districts. The numerous literary conferences and festivals which have been celebrated in these two districts during the past 8 years bear eloquent testimony to the literary enthusiasm, which he generated. “Nanneri Kazhagam” in Coimbatore, which has been conducting, with remarkable regularity, a monthly literary festival for the past 8 years and which has instilled an abiding sense of literary values in thousands of people, has been the progeny of Thondaman.

He has cultivated and enjoyed the friendship and confidences of several outstanding Men of Letters - Rasikamani T. K. C., Dr. Swaminatha Iyer, Rao Sahib V. P. Subramania Madular, Kavimani Desika Vinayakam Pillai, Dr. R. P. Sethu Pillai and A. C. Paul Nadar. Although there was hostility between some of these literary men, Thondaman was, by his genuine literary avidity, able to retain the friendship of them all.

To literary problems, Thondaman has given much thought. The outspoken and forthright manner in which he has given expression to his views, has greatly baffled and annoyed his critics. When ununderstanding Pundits and pedants came out with a printed pamphlet calumniating T. K. C., out came Thondaman with his biography, which acted as a balm to the bruised heart of Rasikamani and gave him a new lease of life.

As Collector, he was an uncompromising friend of the poor and he fearlessly snubbed, ridiculed and froze the busybodies who, by unholy pressure, sought to persuade him against his own convictions and conscience. His work as Administrator was singularly free from meanness and vulgarity and was inspired by a broad sympathy and understanding which only a genuine lover of art, literature and religion, can bring to bear upon his work.

As a literary speaker, he deservedly enjoys a high reputation throughout Tamilnad. Whether he addressed the Badagas at Ooty or the Students' Union at Tiruchirapalli, or an assembly of Saiva Siddhanta scholars at Tuticorin, he would keep his audience enthralled for hours. He has a simple direct style which appeals to the heart. He has a fund of anecdotes which, besides relaxing

the audience, bring home his point. Above all, he has a redeeming sense of humour which puts him on the friendliest of terms with his listeners. The other day, a rabid politician addressed an audience on a literary theme. Although the politician claimed to have laid aside his political shirt at the gate before entering the hall to speak on literature, his speech bristled with political innuendoes. At the conclusion of the meeting, Thondaman, the Chairman, stood up and raised uproarious laughter by remarking “Evidently, the speaker, who has laid aside his political shirt, has forgotten to lay aside his banian”.

As a literary writer, Thondaman enjoys very considerable popularity not only in Tamilnad but also in countries colonised by the Tamils. The series of articles he has been writing on Temples, have aroused widespread interest. His cinematographic Tamil would arrest even the attention of those who frown upon religion. With the tricks and wiles of a scenerio-writer, he has made puranic stories presentable. And, by an appropriate exposition of religious poetry, he has rendered religion aesthetically attractive. Many ‘Perhapsists’ have been converted to religion by the intense Bhakti produced by Thondaman’s writings. The effect of his recent writings is so durable and wholesome that Sa.Ganesan rightly burst into verse and proclaimed that the gods and goddesses of Tamilnad stand in a queue at Thondaman’s threshold each clamouring for an article from his persuasive pen.

Of all his writings, the most outstanding, in my view, is his book entitled “Pillaival”. The hero of this book is a prosaic appointment clerk in the Tirunelveli Collectorate. But the

vividness and the liveliness with which the word-portrait of ‘ Pillaival ‘ has been done are so masterly that a common man has received unexpected literary immortality at the hands of Thondaman.

As the foremost disciple of T. K. C., Thondaman has, by adoption, become my elder brother. Our fraternal friendship which was founded in 1934, has been growing stronger with the passage of years. On this, his sixtieth birthday, I salute him and pray that he may live to score his century.

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SOME PROBLEMS OF SHAKESPEARE TRANSLATION INTO TAMIL

*CONFERENCE – SEMINAR OF TAMIL STUDIES - IATR (1966),
Section : E (World Tamil Conference, Kulalampur, Malaysia)*

Translation, says Sir Walter Scott, is the noble alchemy, which converts gold into lead. Some hold the more cynical view all translation is treachery. A distinguished English writer has gone the length of defining poetry as that which escapes translation. These statements are merely angular presentations of half-truth. While they may warn us against the intrinsic limitations of the medium of translation, they ought not to blind us to the achievements of translators in the past.

Many Persians Scholars regard Omar Khayyam's *Rubaiyat* as third- rate verse, but we know how Fitz Gerald has, with his sovereign touch, turned it to immortal poetry. This illustrates the reverse alchemy of a translator making gold out of lead. The admirable translation of Tagore's *Gitanjali* from Bengali into

English is a striking instance of the achievement of the Translator's Art.

Having gone through the travail of translating *Hamlet*, *King Lear* and *Macbeth* into Tamil, I wish to share, with my co-translators, my experience of the difficult terrain and the pit-falls we have to guard against. It is my claim that within the limitations of my faculties, I have found it possible to put across in Tamil 99.9% of the contents of Shakespeare, 60% of his moods and about 20% of the power of his poetry.

Fortunately for the translators, Shakespeare offers through his plays not only untranslatable imponderables but also other things, which are worthwhile translating and which are susceptible to translation, such as his presentation of the great panorama of life, the motive-springs of human action, the grand cross-currents of impulses and emotions, the march of Destiny, his reflections on the incongruities between life and death, between human weal and human woe, between finitude and Infinity. As an incomparable story-teller, as a psychiatrist, as a philosopher, as an artist and as a mystic, he conveys many things, which can be caught by the translator. His tricks as a play-wright, his technique of dramatization, his architectonics, his crafty resort to angle characters and back narration equally lent themselves to translation.

Ideals of the Translator:

The supreme purpose that the translator should constantly bear in mind is that the spirit of Shakespeare should, *at any cost*, be put across in Tamil. In fulfilling this purpose, the translator

may permit himself certain freedoms. He must not fetter himself with the exact word and letter of the original. The curse of literalness has vitiated many a translation of Shakespeare, turning life into death and poetic dynamics into ludicrous insipidity. On the other hand, the translator should not, under the pretext of distilling the pure essence of the original, abuse the admissible freedoms. Such liberty as he may take with the original shall be directed solely towards achieving essential fidelity to the original and shall not degenerate into an adaptation or an irreverent adulteration of the original.

Faithfulness to the original frequently makes the translation outlandish and unreadable. A readable and powerful translation is very often found to be faithless to the original. The translator is constantly in the awkward predicament of that puzzled bridegroom, who is forced to choose between a charming wife and a faithful wife. Charm without fidelity is as tantalizing as fidelity without charm, if not more. It is by un-sleeping vigilance and constant self-restraint and self-scrutiny that the translator can hope to adhere to the straight and narrow path of translating Shakespeare, charmingly and yet truthfully.

Liberty of Omission

In some cases omission to translate certain words occurring in the original may not impair the functional efficiency of the translation and may in fact be called for in order to convey better the general mood of the original. I shall illustrate this proposition with reference to the most vituperative passage in Shakespeare, which is to be found in Scene II of Act II of *King Lear*. Oswald,

the Steward of Goneril, is accosted by Kent in the following words:-

“A knave, a rascal, an eater of broken meats;
a base, proud, shallow, beggarly, three – suited,
hundred – pound
filthy, worsted – stocking knave; lily – livered,
action – taking knave,
a whoreson, glass – gazing, super serviceable,
finical rogue;
one trunk – inheriting slave; one that wouldst be a
bawd, in way of good service, and art nothing but
the composition of a knave, beggar, coward, pander, and
the son and heir of a mongrel bitch.”

I think it is needless to religiously translate all these words. It would serve the purpose of the original if the mood of the vituperation is transported. I make the tentative suggestion that this passage may be translated as follows:-

கயவன், அயோக்கியன், எச்சில் பொறுக்கி,
தரங்கெட்ட, திமிர்பிடித்த வெங்கன், அட்டுப்பிடித்த
ஓசிச்சட்டை, கூலிக்காரச் சல்லி, பயந்தாரி,
டம்பாச்சாரி, வேசிமகன், தளுக்குக்காரப் போக்கிரி,
ஒற்றை டப்பாப் புழுக்கை, கூட்டிக்கொடுக்கிற
பயல், போக்கிரியையும், பிச்சைக்காரனையும்,
கோழையையும், டாப்பர் மாமாவையும் ஒன்றாகப்
பிடிச்ச வைச்ச நரி நீ, ஜாதி கெட்ட நாய் போட்ட
சொரிக்குட்டி, அதுக்குத் தனி வாரீஸ்.

This is certainly not a word for word translation of the original, for some of the words in the original have been omitted and a new combination of words of abuse has been effected, but I think the freedom of omission has not compromised with the spirit of the original.

Perhaps, this passage may be translated into Tamil as Follows-

“தந்தையென்று பார்க்காவிட்டாலும், பிச்சிப்பூப்
போன்ற இந்த வெள்ளை முடியைப் பார்த்தாவது
அவர்கள் இரங்கியிருக்கக் கூடாதா? குமுறும்
காற்றினோடு போராடுவதற்குரிய முகமா இது?”

“பிச்சிப்பூ” I admit, is a far cry from “White Flakes”, but I can offer no better solution to the problem on hand. Acclimatization in this sense is regrettable, but the only alternative is dismal un-intelligibility.

Take again, a passage from *Macbeth* – Act I Scene V. Lady Macbeth is tuning herself up psychologically and physiologically for the murder of the King and invokes the evil spirits to unsex her and fill her with cruelty. She exclaims:-

“Come to my woman’s breasts,
And take my milk for gall, you murdering ministers,
Wherever in your sightless substances
You wait on nature’s mischief!”

“Woman’s breasts” do not perhaps sound as indelicate to the English ear as the raw Tamil equivalent would to the Tamil ear. The translator has, therefore, to choose a less sexy word like “கொங்கை” or even a loan-word from Sanskrit like “ஸ்தனம்” But the right word “முலை” loses its vulgar sexiness in a particular company as in “முலைப்பால்” in which context it becomes a symbol of maternal love.

“கொலைக்கு உடந்தையாயிருக்கும் சக்திகளே, என்
பெண்மைக் கொங்கைகளினுள் புகுந்து
முலைப்பாலைப் பித்தமாக மாற்றி உங்களுடைய

வன்கன்மையின் துணைகொண்டு இயல்பான
தீவினைக்கு ஏவல் புரியுங்கள்.”

This translation of the original illustrates the need for acclimatization in the manner of expression.

The need for a third kind of acclimatization may next be indicated. There are numerous mythological references in Shakespeare and there are very few Gods and Goddesses in the Tamil or Hindu Pantheon corresponding to those mentioned by Shakespeare, but when there is close correspondence between the two, I think it permissible, and even necessary, from the evocative point of view, to use the corresponding Tamil God or Goddess. Consequently, I suggest the translation of Neptune into “Varuna” and of “Cupid” into “Manmada”. In matters of religious culture the problems of translation are the most perplexing.

Liberty of Inversion

In the matter of syntactical structure, there is great dissimilarity between English and Tamil. In narrating the temporal sequence of events, English is illogical, as for instance in the sentence: “This morning I met the man who came from Singapore yesterday.”

Though the coming of the man from Singapore yesterday is an event which has taken place anterior in point of time to the meeting of the man this morning, the sentence puts the later event earlier and *vice versa*. Tamil, on the contrary, preserves inviolate the time – sequence – e.g. “நேற்று சிங்கப்பூரிலிருந்து வந்தவரை இன்று நான் சந்தித்தேன்”.

The Tamil translator, who fails to invert the syntax of the original, will produce something hideous and unacceptable.

Untranslatableability of Puns and English Institutions

The Clowns of Shakespeare are chronic punsters and it is impossible to translate their puns into Tamil. I have been trying my best to find a Tamil equivalent for “Lying”, which could connote at once physical posture and the uttering of untruth. I have given up the attempt in despair.

Similarly, the translator has to give up finding Tamil equivalents for peculiarly English institutions like boots, shoes, socks, stockings, garters, cakes, beer, ale, Duke, Marquis, Earl, etc. the Flora and Fauna peculiar to England do not lend themselves to translation either.

Verbal Inventions of Shakespeare

A libertine critic said of the English Language that it is like a woman who will not love you unless you take liberties with her.

Shakespeare has not only taken liberties with this lady, but has also molested and outraged her, as no other man has done, and yet this Chary maid has unmasked her beauties to Shakespeare, as she has to no other English-speaking man, since or before. Shakespeare intimidates nouns into performing the function of verbs as in, “He childed as I fathered” (Act III scene VI, King Lear.) He mixes and compounds words with incredible

and audacious inventiveness. Take, for instance, the ingredients that boil and bubble in the Witches' Cauldron (Act IV, Scene I, *Macbeth*)

“Nose of Turk and Tartar's lips
Finger of birth-strangled babe,
Ditch-delivered by a Drab.....”

It is an open question whether the translator's art can rise equal to the inspired inevitability of these words.

Splitting up of Shakespearean Sentences

Shakespeare, by a strange aerial magic, weaves complex sentences together with the aid of long parenthetical clauses, without at the same time sacrificing lucidity. Here is a passage taken at random from *Hamlet*, (Act III scene II), where the Prince of Denmark gives advice to actors:

“Speak the speech I pray you, as I
Pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue;
But if you mouth it, as many of your players
Do, I had as lief the Town-crier spoke my lines;
Nor do not saw the air too much with your
Hand, thus; but use all gently; for in the very
Torrent, tempest and-as I may say- the whirlwind
Of passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance,
That may give it smoothness. O, it offends me
to the soul, to hear a robustious periwig-pated
Fellow, tear a passion to tatters, to very rags,
To split the ears of the groundlings. who, for the
most part, are capable of nothing but inexplicable
dumb-shows and noise.”

Such long-winded passage constitute a puzzle to the translator, who will get into a breathless mess, if he tries to convey in Tamil the involutions and nodosities of the sentence-structure of the original. The only way in which the problem can be solved is by boldly splitting up the sentences, rearranging the pieces in a different rhythmic pattern, and communicating the intensities of the original by adopting a different syntactical structure. The following draft translation illustrates my suggestion:-

“நான் பேசினமாதிரி அந்தப் பேச்சைப் பேசுங்கள். சொற்கள் நாக்கிலே சுகமாக உருளவேண்டும். உங்களில் சில நடிகர்களைப்போல சொற்களைக் குதப்புவதாக இருந்தால், ஊர்ப்பறையனை (there is no other equivalent for the town-crier) அழைத்து இதைப் பேசச் சொல்லிவிடலாமே. காற்றைப் போட்டு ரம்பத்தால் அறுப்பதுபோல் இப்படிக்கையை ஆட்டாதீர்கள். மென்மையாக மெய்ப்பாடுகளைக் காட்டுங்கள். உணர்ச்சி மழையாகப் பெய்யலாம், புயலாக வீசலாம், சூறாவளியாகச் சுற்றியடிக்கலாம். ஆனால் அப்படி அடிக்கும்போதும், நிதானத்தைக் கைவிட்டு விடாதீர்கள். நிதானம் இருந்தால்தான் நடிப்பிற்கு ஒரு மெருகு உண்டாகும். டோப்பா அணிந்த தடியர்கள் உணர்ச்சிகளைக் கிழித்தெறிந்து களமாக்கி, கேட்பவர்களுடைய காதைப் பிளக்கும்போது என் ஆன்மா பதைபதைக்கிறது. கேட்கும் தரைமகாஜனங்களோ, அர்த்தம் புரியாத ஊமை நாடகத்தையும் கூப்பாட்டையுந்தான் ரஸிப்பார்கள்.”

Uninhibited translation of this kind is subject to many criticisms. A distinguished critic complains that this mode of translation is guilty of oversimplifying Shakespeare. There might

be some truth in this charge, but the illusion of over-simplification might be the result of converting 16th Century English blank verse into 20th Century Tamil prose. To a Tamilian, the former is more opaque and obscure and the latter is more direct and lucid. There are two kinds of obscurity in Shakespeare; one is there by the necessary intendment of Shakespeare, who uses obscurity as an artistic symbol for those spiritual experiences which can only be half-revealed. It is wrong for the translator to attempt to remove such obscurities, for he would thereby succeed only in blurring the half-occult visions of the great Master. But there is another kind of obscurity in Shakespeare, which is due either to the slovenliness of hasty improvisation or to the words, current in his times, having become obsolete and, therefore, opaque. There is no sanctity about this kind of obscurity and it is the duty of a translator, as an interpreter of Shakespeare, to remove these opacities.

Another charge against this mode of translation is that it indulges in disreputable colloquialism. The obvious answer to this charge is that Shakespeare would not have achieved much of his dramatic appeal but for his deft handling of live, pulsating colloquial words. His main merit is that he raised the common speech of his people to undying literary status. Any translator of Shakespeare, who fights shy of colloquialism, may, therefore, turn his prudish gifts to the translation of heavier, more respectable and less popular poets like Milton.

One other criticism against uninhibited translations of the kind quoted above is that they contaminate the Tamil language by impure foreign words. Importation of a foreign word, which

is not current among the Tamils, is certainly to be abhorred, not even because it contaminates the Tamil language, but because it has no connotative significance to the Tamils. If, on the other hand, the foreign word has acquired by long usage among the Tamils, a power of articulation, which a pure Tamil equivalent does not possess, it is the duty of the translator to employ it unblushingly. As has been already observed communication of the spirit of the original to the Tamil-speaking people must be the paramount consideration of the translator and any other consideration, which is ineffectual from this point of view, must be discarded as irrelevant. Emphasis must, therefore, be laid on the difference, not between an indigenous word and a foreign word, or between a reputable word and a disreputable word, or between the spoken word and the written word, but between a live word and a dead word, between a word that puts across the flavor and aroma of the original and a word that does not.

Untranslatable Imponderables

We shall next consider how best the translator can tackle the almost untranslatable imponderables of Shakespeare such as his poetry and his exquisite moods.

Pedestrian prose is totally ineffective to deliver these goods, for such prose is amorphous and has no form whereas the poetry of the original resides in the very form of the poetry. If we reduce a Persian rose to a pulp, the contents of the rose may remain intact, but its form, which is about the most significant thing about the rose, would be most certainly destroyed. How best can the translator preserve the form of the original? He must

aim at recreating the rose, even though the recreated rose may be less ruddy and less fragrant than the Shakespearean rose.

It is my view that verse translations of Shakespeare have failed to do justice to the original. All of them are anaemic, inexpressive and for the most part, unintelligible. Lack of requisite poetic efficiency on the part of the translator is one reason for this defect. Another reason is that the exigencies of rhyme and alliteration tempt the translator to go farther away from the original.

“Ahaval” in Tamil is the nearest approximation to the Shakespearean blank verse, but it is the most difficult of metres and it has to be skillfully handled in order to compensate for the absence of rhyme and in order to make it an effective and arresting poetic movement. In modern times, no one with the possible exception of Bharathy Dasan, has handled the Ahaval metre forcibly and arrestingly.

I would, therefore, reject conventional verse forms as ineffective to translate Shakespeare. Probably my own inefficiency in handling verse-forms might explain part of my prejudice, but I advocate resort to rhythmic Tamil prose as the best available and the most supple instrument for translating the blank verse of Shakespeare. By rhythmic prose I mean a prose which may not conform to conventional rules of prosody and yet has a hidden metrical pattern, that is to say, a flexible pattern which enables you to communicate the original Bhavas by deft variations of the pauses, by an ever-changing distribution of caesura, by a skillful combination of long and short vowels and by consonantal variations and assonance.

It may be useful to illustrate this point. Let us take one of the loftiest passages in Shakespeare, which occurs in Scene III of Act V, King Lear. Lear and Cordelia have been taken prisoner and the shock of his new-found love for Cordelia purges Lear of his insanity and temporarily elevates him to a transcendental level, where from he looks at mankind with the clear and steady sight of a Jivan Mukta. This is what Lear tells Cordelia:-

“Come, let’s away to prison;
 We two alone will sing like birds ‘n the cage:
 When thou dost ask me blessing I’ll kneel down
 And ask of thee forgiveness: so we’ll live,
 And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh
 At gilded Butterflies, and hear poor rogues
 Talk of Court news; and we’ll talk with them, too,
 Who loses and who wins; who’s in, who’s out;
 And take upon’s the mystery of things,
 As if we were God’s spies: and we’ll wear out,
 In a wall’d prison packs and sects of great ones
 That ebb and flow by the moon.”

A lover of Shakespeare may think it a sacrilege to translate this intensely elevating passage, but if we must translate it, we may do it in the following words:-

“வா நாம் சிறைச்சாலைக்குப் போய்விடுவோம்.
 கூண்டுக்குள்ளிருக்கும் பறவைகளைப் போல,
 நாமிருவரும் தனித்திருந்து பாடுவோம். நீ
 என்னிடம் ஆசீர்வாதம் கேட்கும்போதெல்லாம் நான்
 மண்டியிட்டு உன்னிடம் மன்னிப்புக் கேட்பேன்.
 தொழுதும், பாடியும், பழங்கதைகள் பேசியும்,
 பசப்பும் வண்ணாத்திப் பூச்சிகளைப் பார்த்து
 நகைத்தும், அரண்மனைச் செய்திகளைப் புல்லோர்
 சொல்லக் கேட்டும், யாருக்குத் தோல்வி, யாருக்கு

வெற்றி, பதவி யாருக்குக் கிடைத்தது,
பதவியிழந்தவன் யார் என்று ஊர்வம்பு பேசியும்,
பேரண்டத்தின் அற்புதத்தையே
மேற்கொண்டவர்களாய் இறைவனுடைய
வேவுகாரர்களைப்போல, நாம் வாழ்க்கை
நடத்துவோம்.”

This translation may not be perfect, but, in my view, it does indicate the direction in which the translator may usefully bend his energies in his attempt to reproduce Shakespeare in Tamil.

Pre-verbal Tapas of the Translator

The most important pre-requisite to the translation of Shakespeare is that the translator must discipline himself by performing a prolonged Tapas. He must walk in the constant company of Shakespeare. He must steep himself in the pages of Shakespeare, in an attempt to participate in his creatorial functions. He must efface his own ego and merge himself, without reservations, in the characters of Shakespeare and souse himself in the moods and rhythms of the poet. If the Translator could keep his mind long enough in this dedicated condition of reverence, humility and Advaita, his subconscious would become a fit medium for receiving and communicating the width, volume and richness of Shakespeare's genius. In this condition of intensity the subconscious invents appropriate combinations of words and patterns of rhythm, which have the power to crystallize the authentic Shakespeare in the Tamil language.

But this process of Crystallization is conditioned and limited by the medium's knowledge and understanding of the linguistic

and cultural traditions of English and Tamil. Further, the translator must have made a thorough study of the different readings of Shakespeare with reference to the Variorum edition and exercised a sound discretion in choosing the most appropriate text. He must also have studied deeply the interpretations of wise Shakespearean critics such as Johnson and such sensitive critics as Charles Lamb and Coleridge, and come to a definite and independent conclusion of his own as to the meaning and purport of every controversial passage in a play. If, after equipping himself with an intellectual preparation of this kind, the translator has the courage to consciously throw all these accretions overboard and then enter into a Tapas of the kind already described, he is bound to succeed in recreating Shakespeare in Tamil.

As for the Ballads and Folk Songs of Shakespeare, I think they can be effectively translated in popular “Themmangu” tunes.

Potentialities of Tamil as a Translation Medium

Speaking of the difficulties of catching the subtleties of the English language in French and Bengali, Shri Aurobindo has some penetrating remarks to make. He says:

“There is one supreme faculty of the English Language, which none other I know possesses, the ease with which it finds the packed allusive turn, the suggestive unexpressed, the door opening on things ineffable. Bengali like French is very clear and living and expressive but to such clear languages the expression of the inexpressible is not so easy. One has to go out of one’s

way to find it. Witness Mallarme's wrestlings with the French language to find the symbolic expression, the right turn of speech for what is behind the veil."

Sri Aurobindo winds up with the hope that even in French and Bengali the power to express the inexpressible with less effort must come, but mean while the difference remains.

In my judgment, though Tamil is clear and living and expressive enough, it has also developed the capability of communicating the incommunicable. A perusal of the songs of Tirumoolar and the 18 Tamil Siddhas would show how the Tamil language has been trained by them to effortlessly express those occult experiences, which linger on the borderland between language and wordless thought.

Here is a song of Thirumoolar, which illustrates my proposition:-

ஆறு தெருவில் அகப்பட்ட சந்தியில்
சாறு படுவன நான்கு பணையுள
ஏறற் கரியதோர் ஏணியிட்டு அப்பனை
ஏறலுற்றேன், கடல் ஏழுங் கண்டேனே.

The Tamil translator need not, therefore, despair of those passages of Shakespeare, which impinge on the inexpressible.

Take, for instance, the context (Act V, Scene IV) in which Seyton announces to Macbeth the death of Lady Macbeth with an abruptness, full of pathos:

“The Queen, my Lord, is dead”.

Macbeth is moved by these words to reflect upon the emptiness of human life in words at once sublime and obscure. He exclaims:

“She should have died hereafter;
There would have been a time for such a word
Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
To the last syllable of recorded time
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death”.

There is an eerie spaciousness and mysticity in the expression,

“To the last syllable of Recorded Times”

In this line we hear the foot-falls of Man marching to his inexorable doom – a march along the unending corridors of time. This line can be translated without loss of mysticity as follows:-

“காலக் கணக்கின் கடைசி எழுத்துவரை”

“காலம்”, which is the Tamil equivalent of “Time” has a richer metaphysical connotation than its English compeer. “எழுத்து”, while communicating the impression of “recorded time” does more; it evokes in the Tamil mind by sheer association the tyranny of Destiny.

Numerous instances can be given of the superiority of Tamil over English in the matter of expression of the eternal verities of life. This superiority is due to the fact that some of our greatest mystics and metaphysicians have, by expressing their experiences

in Tamil, trained the Tamil language to effortlessly express the ineffable.

But it is a sad fact that in expressing the every-day occurrences of modern secular life, Tamil lags far behind English and requires to be tutored and trained. This deficiency can be made good only by a conscious effort on the part of the intelligentsia of Tamil Nadu to think in Tamil and to express in Tamil all the facts and subtleties of contemporary thinking and living.

Conclusion

By translating Shakespeare into Tamil, the translator performs a double service. In the first place, he offers to the Tamils glimpses of a new world of vision and experience. In the second place, in the very process of translation the translator will be amazed to find how Shakespeare forces the Tamil Language to speak in new accents, and adds to Tamil a new dimension of expression. The afflatus of Shakespeare, the creative breath of his inspiration is bound to quicken and energize the Tamil language. In fact, Shakespeare-Translation is a wholesome mode of blood-transfusion, which can impart a fresh vigour to our language and strengthen the seeds of future creativity.

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SOME PROBLEMS OF LAW TRANSLATION INTO THE INDIAN LANGUAGES

“Trying to communicate your innermost sentiments and thoughts through a foreign tongue”, said Rabindranath Tagore, “is like trying to convey your smiles to your sweetheart through an Attorney”. Law, which is a shaping force, is closely connected with the expression of our intimate feelings, attitudes and sense of values. It is, therefore, imperative that we should not only draft our legislative enactments in our regional languages but should also translate into our mother-tongue all the Indo-Anglian laws, which govern our daily lives and yet, bafflingly enough, continue to be in English.

An astute politician of Tamil Nadu who, though a great scholar in Tamil, has no knowledge of English, rightly complained to me, “You, Judges in India act on the basis that ignorance of law is no excuse. But, when the vast majority of Indians don’t know English, how can you apply that principle and penalize them, not for ignorance of law but for ignorance of English?”.

This poignant remark throws new light on the Indian legal predicament and emphasizes the wisdom of the steps taken by the Government of India and the State Governments to expedite the translation of the Indian Enactments into the regional languages.

The State Official Languages (Legislative) Commissions of India have a historic role to play in translating the English laws into the regional languages. I admit that the translations we have to effect are most challenging and baffling, because most of the subtle legal concepts, which are native to the English language, are foreign to the regional languages of India. In effecting the translation, we have to strain every nerve and press into service all our available legal, juristic and linguistic resources.

Words are the tools with which we have to work. If we wish to work effectively, we must keep the tools in good order. Unfortunately, even after the Englishman left our shores, we have had to use English, a foreign language as a tool of expression.

Draftsmen, who are not to the language born, use clumsy long-winding sentences, each of which crawls awkwardly like a tapeworm across a whole printed page. Take, for instance, Section 133 of the Cr.P.C., which fills one and a half printed pages, or Section 167, Cr.P.C., the length of which chokes our breath.

Such circumlocutions add to the troubles of the translators.

Two thousand years ago, the Tamil Poet Tiruvalluvar wrote a couplet, which may be translated into English as follows:-

“Utter not a word without making sure
there is no other word to beat it”.

If we cannot follow this advice to use the inevitable word, while employing the foreign medium of English, let us honestly switch over to our own mother tongue and use it as the instrument of legislative, judicial and forensic expression.

The minimum objective in passing an enactment is to convey meaning, but beyond that are the really fascinating objectives of precision, clearness, logic and grace. Thomas Jefferson spent 18 days writing and rewriting the Declaration of Independence. Voltaire was known to spend a whole night toiling over one sentence.

We have a great many statutes, thousands are passed each year, if we add up the total production of our Parliament and State Legislatures. Several thousand English judgments are written interpreting these English Enactments. It is imperative that the needed amount of toil goes into the production of these enactments and judgments as well as into the translations thereof.

The formidable difficulty, which faces us in Law translations, is that our Legislatures are following the British method of draftsmanship, which tries to put the concepts of the Legislature into breathless, complicated and circuitous sentences. In the U.S.A., a different kind of draftsmanship is adopted, whereby the principal idea is stated in the form of a simple rule and the conditions and qualifications, which the British draftsman would put into the adjectival and adverbial clauses of one compound sentence, are expressed by his American counter-part in the form of separate, lucid sub-rules under the main Rule.

Another difficulty we have to face is this. In the matter of syntactical structure, there is great dissimilarity between English and the Indian Languages, especially the Dravidian group of languages. In narrating the temporal sequence of events, English is illogical, as, for instance, in the sentence— “This morning I met the man who came from Singapore yesterday.” Though the coming of the man from Singapore yesterday is an event, which has taken place anterior in point of time to my meeting the man this morning, the sentence puts the later event earlier and vice versa. The Tamil language, on the contrary, preserves inviolate the time sequence.

While translating the English sentence structure into the Indian languages, we have, therefore, to invert the syntax of the original, and when the English sentence is a long-winded and circumlocutory one, we have to take it by the tail, as it were, and unravel it putting the translation process in the reverse gear, and proceeding from the tail to the head. This inversion treatment has to be given not only to the principal and subordinate clauses in the English original, but also, to the qualifying phrases and idioms. This is a process which has to be effected with the greatest care and circumspection. In the process of reversal, the main idea of the original is likely to be thrown out of focus and what occupies the background in the original comes to the forefront in the translation, with the result, the perspective is disturbed and the distribution of emphasis is altered, sometimes radically. What looked like a camel in the original English with its humps, angularities and nodosities becomes in the translation as flat and straight as a water-snake. Such a translation is bound to distort the meaning of the original. It is, therefore, necessary that before

we effect the translation of an English Section, we split it up into its component parts, translate each part separately and then weave the translated parts together without doing injury to the meaning of the original text and at the same time, without violating the genius of the regional language concerned. While translating the Criminal Procedure Code, the Tamil Nadu State Official Language (Legislative) Commission found it necessary on one occasion, for the sake of clarity, to split a single sentence in the original into two sentences in the Tamil translation. In a few other instances, we had to put in parenthesis or within brackets certain clauses, which formed an organic part of the original. This had to be done in order to avoid clumsiness of expression in Tamil. An English sentence, which has a graceful or majestic movement, becomes an uncouth, ill-walking sentence in Tamil, when literally translated.

Take, for instance, the Indian Evidence Act, which is a masterpiece of draftsmanship and a triumph of precise, terse and artistic expression. Sometimes we have had to spend one whole day to translate with reasonable elegance one Section of the Indian Evidence Act.

In order to make the translation of such Acts intelligible and elegant, the translator must be constantly aware of the difference in the entire range of culture represented by two languages which are so alien to each other in temperament and genius as English and Tamil or Malayalam or Kannada or Telugu or even Hindi. The pre-condition to an accurate, intelligible, readable and live translation of Statutes is possession, on the part of the translator, not only a deep and practical understanding of law but also a

continuous awareness of the dissimilarity between English and the regional language in the matter of syntactical structure, as well as an intimate knowledge of, and the faculty for creative expression in, the regional language.

It is very rarely that these three kinds of talents co-exist in the same individual. But then it is possible to put together the resources of individuals endowed with these different and separate faculties. It is my conviction that in the translation process we must associate not only experienced men of law but also men of letters and outstanding creative writers in the regional languages. While the men of law, who would have a working knowledge of the regional language, will be charged with the responsibility of seeing that the content of the original with all its legal nuances is correctly put across in the translation, the men of letters and the creative writers will see that the translation is rendered readable and elegant.

While translating peculiarly English legal concepts into the regional languages of India, coinages in the regional languages cannot be wholly avoided, but such coinages must be reduced to the irreducible minimum and must be designed in such a manner that by their shape, look and sound they suggest to the speaker of the regional language the new concept sought to be conveyed. Such coinages should violate neither the laws of euphony nor the raciness of the regional language. It is only creative writers, who have mastery of word-magic that can assist in the proper coinage of words and in burnishing the translation.

The Evidence Act, as I have said, is a model not only of legal precision but also of literary artistry and excellence as well as of

profound psychological insight. The Tamil Nadu State Official Language (Legislative) Commission has completed and published the translation of the Evidence Act into Tamil. I think that the entirety of the contents of the original has come through in the translation and I believe that something of the artistry of the original has also percolated into the translation. One of the problems we faced in translating the Evidence Act was that some of the words used therein are deceptively simple. For example, the word “date” in illustration ‘c’ to Section 21, the word “verbal” in Section 32 (main paragraph) and the word “protest” in illustration ‘h’ to Section 32 of the Evidence Act do not connote the meaning we usually attribute to those words. The word “date” means, not what we mean usually by the word “date”, but the specification of the time (and often the place) of execution of a writing or inscription, affixed to it; the word “verbal” does not mean merely ‘oral’ but is broad enough to embrace “words and gestures and signs”. The word “protest” does not connote ‘objection’ but a written declaration made by the master of a ship, attested by a justice of the peace, stating the circumstances under which injury has happened to a ship or cargo or under which officers or crew have incurred any liability.

In this connection, I must call attention to the danger of relying upon the regional lexicographers who have given the regional equivalents of English legal terms. Most of these lexicographers have had no training in or knowledge of law. I would, therefore, expect the Law translators and the Official Language (Legislative) Commissions, which have jurists and legal experts serving as members thereof, not to accept uncritically the equivalents given for law terms in the regional language

Dictionaries but to bring a fresh mind to bear upon the translation of those terms and see that the words are translated with precision, exactness and fidelity.

I may, however, add that it is wrong, in the name of fidelity, to yield to the curse of literalness. The same English word varies in meaning with the context in which it is used. Words change their complexion in accordance with the company in which they are found. For instance, the word 'consider' and the phrase "in the case of" connote different things at different places in the Criminal Procedure Code and it is wrong in the translation to mechanically give the same regional language equivalents for the same English words and phrases ignoring the context in which they occur. Unlike in French, where there are very few synonyms, there are too many synonyms in the English language carrying the same meaning. As the regional languages also contain many synonyms, the translator need not feel constrained to use the same equivalent for the same English word; he may permit himself, atleast for the sake of avoiding monotony, to use different regional language equivalents for the same English word.

But that does not mean that the translator should be oblivious to the nuances and shades of meaning conveyed by such groups of English words as :- (1) Vitate, invalidate, render null and void; (2) Irregular, illegal, invalid; (3) Vacate, set aside, cancel, annul, revoke, modify, reverse; (4) Motive, intention; (5) Consideration, deliberation, examination.

We of the Tamil Nadu Official Language (Legislative) Commission have taken great pains to give distinct and different

Tamil equivalents in an attempt to bring out the subtle distinction between the words in each of the groups above-mentioned. As Bacon said, "Law maketh an exact man". It is my hope that the law translations made by the different Language Commissions of India are going to give greater precision in the use of the regional language concerned. In most of the Indian languages, words have been subjected by verbose and indifferent speakers to indiscriminate usage, and, consequently, words have gone far astray. It is the function of Law translators by their precision to bring the erring words back to the "strait and narrow" path of precise articulation.

As for English words, which have by long association penetrated the Indian languages, it would be better to use them in the translation, without making an attempt to coin some outlandish and unintelligible equivalents for those words. It is futile to translate such English words as "Sessions, Will, Attorney, Notary, Company, etc." If we must needs translate such words to satisfy our puristic tastes, let us be merciful enough to give the transliterated English word in brackets after the coined word.

From information received from the Tamil Member of the Central Official Language Commission, I have reasons to think that Keraleeyas have the most uninhibited translations of law. They have retained without translation even such English words as "Appeal, Award, Arrest, Act, Certificate, Judge, Magistrate, Notice, Parliament, Prosecutor, Process-server, Summons, Warrant, Vote, etc." In Kannada translation, I find, 39 English words have been retained such as "Appeal, civil, claim, Decree, Domination, Police, Stamp, Warrant etc." In the Marathi

translation, only seven English words have been retained e.g., Appeal, cheque, notice, Railway, Telephone, ticket and Warrant. I don't know about the position in Telugu. In Hindi, 19 English words have been retained such as "Appeal, Consul, Decree, Fees, Magistrate, Nuisance, Pension, Quarantine, Summons, Warrant etc. The puristic movement in Tamil demands the total rejection of all Sanskrit, Hindi and English words, even as the parallel movement in Hindi demands total rejection of words of Persian origin. But we of the Tamil Nadu Official Language (Legislative) Commission have retained in our Tamil translation a few English words like "Sessions, Will, Notary, Attorney and some Urdu words like Jamin and Japti" which have become part of the common parlance of the Tamils since the Moghul days.

While translating the English enactment, let us have the following order of priorities:

(1) Intelligibility: The translation must be intelligible, not to the average man in the street, (if that is possible, well and good), but to the average man of law.

(2) Clarity: There are two kinds of obscurity we come across, (a) obscurity of expression & (b) the expression of obscurity. The first can be eliminated and every effort must be made to eliminate it. But the second cannot be eliminated.

(3) Terseness: must be aimed at but it must not be achieved at the cost of clarity. A repetition which makes the translation intelligible is more pardonable than a terseness which casts a cloud upon the meaning.

These Do's and Don'ts are exacting but the thought that by translating law we are making law accessible to our countrymen who don't know English and the thought that law translation is bound to give a new exactness, direction and momentum to our regional languages ought to sustain us in our labours.

We shall not rest content with mediocrity when excellence is within our reach.

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ADMINISTRATION OF FRANCO- INDIAN LAWS- SOME GLIMPSES

*[Lecture delivered under the auspices of the Dr. C.Vijayaraghavachariar
memorial Library, Salem- 24th December, 1971.]*

Mr. President and Friends,

I am deeply thankful to Mr.Vijayaraghavachariar and Mr.Parthasarathy for having conferred upon me the privilege of delivering one of the series of lectures organized in loving memory of Mr. Justice. Sundaram Chettiar. There is nothing in common between that celebrated Judge and myself except that both of us started our judicial careers as District Munsifs and were first posted in that capacity to the same station-Vridhachalam. It was on the 23rd July, 1943, just before I occupied my seat on the Bench, that I learnt that something of the shadow of Mr. Justice Sundaram Chettiar's greatness had fallen upon me. The Deputy Nazir of the Vridhachalam District Munsif's Court, who was on the verge of retirement, came into my chambers,

garlanded me and said: “I have conducted 56 yagas in my life. It is my ambition to conduct 44 more. I have served under Mr. Justice Sundaram Chettiar, when he was District Munsif here. Your honour has, like him, received your first posting to Vridhachalam, and I predict that one day you will like him, be elevated to the High Court”. I do not know if it is the prediction of that Deputy Nazir or the shadow of Mr. Justice Sundaram Chettiar, which has placed me where I am today, but I must say that Mr. Justice Sundaram Chettiar’s incredible rectitude and judicial honesty have been a source of great inspiration to me throughout my career. The same Deputy Nazir used to recount to me several anecdotes about Mr. Justice Sundaram Chettiar, which it will not be out of place for me to share with you. It appears he had two blotting pads in his chambers, one prepared at his own cost and another with materials supplied by the Government. Whenever he wrote private letters in his own hand, he always insisted on using his private blotting pad, because he regarded the use of the Government blotting pad for private purposes as temporary misappropriation. Such was his punctilious sense of propriety and rectitude. I was also told that after closing the Court at 5p.m., every day, he would always go to the strong room of the Court, put the lock upon it himself and after locking it, would pull the lock to see if it had properly locked. Such was his sense of duty; and every one, who had served under him used to look back with adoration upon his lofty simplicity, moving affection for his subordinates and his extraordinary sobriety and sagacity. I congratulate the Dr. C. Vijayaraghavachariar Memorial Library, Salem, upon keeping alive in these days of deteriorating values the memory of an outstanding exemplar of virtue.

Of all the assignments I have had during the 28 years of my judicial career, my assignment to Pondicherry as Chef du Service Judiciaire (Chief of the Judicial Service) was the most venturesome and thrilling. At the time of my posting to Pondicherry, I did not know the A, B, and C of the French languages or of French jurisprudence. In fact, a great statesman-lawyer, who hails from Salem, wrote to me a letter congratulating me on becoming what he called “the Chief Justice of French India,” and warning me that the acceptance of the assignment involved administration of a strange system of laws in a strange language. I accepted the assignment, not because I was unaware of my limitations, but because certain distinguished Judges of the High Court including Mr. Justice M. Anantanarayanan, the then Chief Justice told me: *“We have chosen you in the confidence that you will project a bright image of British Indian Justice to the people of the erstwhile French India and thereby prepare them for a smooth and gradual change from the French Judicial system to the Indian.”* After arriving at Pondicherry, I felt that I should have at least ten days time to acquire the rudiments of the French system before beginning to administer it. But, Mr. Silam, the then Lt. Governor of Pondicherry, told me, “You may have one month’s time, if you please. But I will be happy, for certain administrative reasons, if you take charge immediately.” Fortunately, the President of the Bar Association at Pondicherry, consisting exclusively of French Advocates, had already rushed to the Madras High Court with a petition for a writ of quo warranto, and obtained an injunction restraining me from sitting as a Judge and administering the French laws. This injunction gave me nearly five months’ breathing time to become acquainted with the esoteric of the French civil and criminal procedure and the substantive laws of

France. The French Bar was understandably indignant that a person, who knew nothing of French laws, and who was only a District Judge, had been appointed as the Chief of the entire French judicial system and as the President of the Tribunal Superieur d'Appel, which during the French days had the status of a High Court and was manned mostly by Frenchmen, who were paid a salary exceeding Rs.10000/- per mensem. Further, they were proud of their great French heritage and were convinced that the French system of laws was superior in every respect to the Indo-Anglian. In fact, they had been living under the French system since 1701 under a Royal Edict passed by the French Emperor in February of that year. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, the French Indian Colonies passed into the hands of the English by conquest and remained under their control for about a decade, and then were returned to the French under a treaty. Even during the decade that the East India Company was in possession of the French Indian territory, they kept intact the French judicial system without trying to supplant it with the British system. The French *Avocats* (Advocates) argued: *"If the British, who conquered our territory by armed might, did not choose to change the French Judicial system, why should you, the Indians, meddle with our system, especially in view of the fact that we have acceded to India out of our own free will and not as a result of any conquest by you?"* This was an argument, which, for constitutional and other reasons, the India Government could not accept. But lawyers being conservative in nature all over the world, the French Advocates resented the proposed intrusion of the Indian laws and described my posting as the beginning of the 'invasion des Barbares' (invasion of the barbarians). The chief reason for this bitterness is to be found in the fact that the Bar

at Pondicherry, Karaikal, Mahe and Yanam, felt that its monopoly was being threatened. By a Law dated 7th June, 1848, as amended from time to time by gubernatorial orders up to 10th January, 1945, it was provided that there should be no more than 12 Advocates and 9 Apprentices in the Pondicherry Bar, 8 Advocates and 4 Apprentices at Karaikal, 5 Advocates and 2 Apprentices at Chandernagore, 4 Advocates and 1 Apprentice at Mahe and 4 Advocates and 1 Apprentice at Yanam. The qualification for these Advocates was that they should hold the degree of '*Licence en Droit*' (Licence in Law), which was awarded by the Universities in France. The French Government would not send any French Indian citizen to the Universities in France for the study of law unless a vacancy arose at the Bar as a result of death, retirement, infirmity or serious misconduct. There was no Advocate in the erstwhile French Colonies, who got an income of less than Rs.2000/- per menses, and there were several Advocates, who got more than Rs.10000/- per mensem. The Indian Bar, the ranks of which are swelling alarmingly from day to day, would grow green with envy at the French Colonial Bar which constituted a veritable lawyers' paradise. However lucrative such a system of monopoly might be, it is, in my view, most injurious to public interests that the number of members of the Bar should be artificially limited in the manner I have already mentioned. It leads to unholy alliances between the senior member of the Bar and works ultimately to the detriment of the litigant. It is not proper for me to give instances of the grave abuse it has led to. Even as the foreign policy of the British was to divide and rule over the Colonies, it was part of the French foreign policy to create vested interests and pamper those interests in return for their support to their imperial rule. The privileges enjoyed by the

French Advocates under the law are numerous. Under the rules, no citizen could bid at public auctions held in Court except through an Advocate, and no purchase at such public auctions could be made except in the name of an Advocate. One could imagine what kind of abuse this would lead to. The disciplinary jurisdiction over the Advocates vested in the Judges. There have been great and honest Judges in the French Indian Judicial hierarchy. But there have been a few, who by influencing the Advocates concerned, have knocked off for a song, properties put up for sale in Court auctions. It is small wonder, therefore, that the attempt to break this system of monopoly was resisted fiercely by the vested interests concerned. Every time a British Indian Advocate attempted to appear for parties in Court. The French Bar Association would raise an uproar and quote chapter and verse to show that under the French system those 'interlopers' should not be granted any audience. I regret to say that the law, as it then existed, constrained me to accept these objections, and prohibit Indian Lawyers from handling briefs before me or the inferior Courts. Once, I gave a ruling that an Indian lawyer might be allowed to assist the French Advocate in Courts. But even that was resisted on the ground that it was derogatory to the dignity of the French Bar. It was not till the Indian Advocates Act was extended to Pondicherry that the flood-gates were opened and the monopoly system buried five fathoms deep. The post of *Procureur de la Republique* is something peculiar to the French system. He is supposed to represent Society at large. He is entitled to intervene in every civil suit or criminal case and make representations to the Court in the interests of Society. Any proceeding conducted in court without the Procureur de la Republique is void under the law. He has also certain semi-judicial

functions, besides being the Head of the Police Judiciare (Judicial Police). In the French system, the police are divided into two sections, one section which looks after traffic as well as law and order, and another section, which is in charge of the investigation into crime. The Procureur de la Republique could issue an arrest warrant to any one or cancel the arrest warrants already issued. He has the sole power to direct prosecutions and withdraw them as he pleases. In fact, Napoleon once declared: "*The one man I fear most in the French Empire is the Procureur de la Republique.*" One of the Chief Ministers of Pondicherry told me that in the French days, no political party, which was not backed up by the Procureur de la Republique could ever be returned to power. It follows that the Procureur is a little Mussolini, wielding very considerable power. Some centuries back, he used to stand on the floor of the Court along with the members of the Bar and argue, but with the passage of time, and with the French revolution, this symbol of people's power grew in influence and dignity, with the result he was given an honoured seat in Courts at some distance from the dais on which the judges sit. I found that while cases were going on in my Court, the Procureur would be absent most of the time, leaving his hat on his seat as a token of his presence. When I made enquiries about his absence, I was told that it was the immemorial custom of Procureurs to leave their hats on their seats and go away to attend to more important work. Unfortunately, the Procureur de la Republique in the French Colony is subject to the disciplinary jurisdictions of the Chef du Service Judiciare, and when a complaint of grave misconduct was received against a Procureur, I had no option but to exercise that jurisdiction, thereby disturbing another hornet's nest, and giving rise to another Writ Petition.

As for the Ministerial Service in the French Judiciary, it also had its special privileges. The Registrar of the Court, who was called the *Greffier-en-Chef*, was entitled under the law not only to his salary, but to emoluments based upon the value of every plaint and petition fielded in the Courts. Usually, these emoluments would come to more than Rs. 1200/- per mensem. I found that this practice of giving emoluments started somewhere in the earlier part of the Nineteenth Century, when qualified people were not available for manning these posts. These emoluments were intended to enable the Greffier to pay remuneration to Clerks appointed by him and also to buy stationery for the use of the Courts. Vested interests, however, conspired to keep the law in force long after the need for it had disappeared, and the Government itself had begun to supply clerks and stationery for the use of the Courts. When I enforced the Central Government Rules and stopped the payment of emoluments a hue and cry was raised, in which all the disgruntled vested interests joined hands with the entire Ministerial staff. This is the atmosphere into which I was inducted, when, like Mark Twain's "Innocents Abroad", my innocence of the French system enabled me to see without inhibitions the defects to which those who were steeped in the French system were blind. My administration of the French laws enabled me also to see the relativity of things and to realize that there is nothing sacrosanct or absolute about that legal dispensation under which we, Indian Jurists, have been living.

The five months' holiday, which the injunction of the High Court gave me, enabled me to pick up the fundamentals of the French substantive and procedural law. I conferred daily with a

number of French Judges and had six hour sittings every day for four months, translating with their aid, the entirety of the French Civil Procedure Code into English. This enabled me incidentally not only to learn something of the French language but also the French legal jargon and the intricacies of the French law. After the injunction was dissolved, the Tribunal Superior d' Appel, which was a Bench of three Judges presided over by me, commenced its sitting in open Court. All the members of the French Bar and hundreds of litigants were present on the opening day to watch how the "Barbarians" were going to tackle the problems of French law. When I took up the first case and wanted the Advocates to argue, the President of the Bar Association stood up and said that it had been resolved by the French Bar to argue only in French. I knew that most of them knew English, but refused for tactical purposes to argue in English. I told them in Tamil, "The Frenchmen taught you French and have parted with you. The Englishmen taught us English and have parted with us. What is left to us in common is our mother tongue, Tamil. You may, therefore, please argue in Tamil, switching on to French whenever you cannot help it." But then, the President of the Bar Association obstinately refused to argue in Tamil because it would be undignified. There was thus a deadlock and a moment of dramatic suspense in Court. At that moment, I got a brain wave. I told them in Tamil, "Here are hundreds of litigants, who are your pay-masters, listening to your arguments. If they conclude that you cannot argue their cases in a language intelligible to the Judges, what will happen to you?" This question had an electric effect, and immediately the entire Bar started arguing in English.

Let me now turn to the substantive law of France, which is to a great extent derived from Roman law, though it has been adapted and assimilated to the French genius in a manner different from that in which the Anglo-Saxon genius adapted the Roman law.

The one thing that struck me most in the French system was the scant respect they show for precedents. This is in singular contrast with the attitude of the British. In *London Street Tramways v. London County Council* (1898 Appeal Cases 375), the House of Lords decided that it was bound by its own decisions. Respect for precedents is ingrained in the British character. In fact, Lord Tennyson sang of England as a country:

“Where Freedom slowly broadens down
Form precedent to precedent.”

The excessive reverence for precedents was imported into India by the British Judges. You may be aware that when a distinguished Civilian District Judge refused to follow the legal propositions laid down by the Madras High Court in a remand order and stated his reasons for disagreeing with those propositions, Chief Justice Beasley got so wild that he directed him to be shunted out of the judiciary to the executive. Further disciplinary action would have followed but for the fact the District Judge was the son of an illustrious Judge of the Madras High Court. This horror for any disregard of precedents is founded upon the Britisher's innate sense of discipline. In his Preface to Volume 126 of the Revised Reports, Pollock, however, attacked the decision of the House of Lords in 1898 Appeal Cases 375 in these words: “No other Court of last resort in the world,

it is believed, has fettered its own discretion in this way.” It may be noted that even Pollock did not advocate that precedents shall not be binding upon subordinate courts. But the French people are passionate lovers of individual freedom, and therefore, are strong opponents of the doctrine of precedents. Article 5 of the Code Civil prescribes:-

“Judges are forbidden, when giving judgment in the cases which are brought before them to lay down general rules of conduct or decide a case by holding it was governed by a previous decision.”

In fact, when I remanded a case to the Court of First Instance at Pondicherry, the President of that Court refused to carry out my directions in the remand order on the ground that my view of the law was, in his view, erroneous. This shocked me into making a research into the history of French law. I found that about a century and a half ago, a case went up before the Supreme Court of France, which quashed the judgment of the trial Court after giving a ruling on a point of law, and sent it back. The trial Court, relying upon Section 5 of the Code Civil, refused to accept the ruling of the Supreme Court of France. The matter was taken up to the Supreme Court twice again, and the Supreme Court reiterated its original view of the law and sent it back to the trial Court, but the trial Court refused to abide by the ruling. It was at this stage that the law was amended on 1st April, 1837, whereby it was provided that if a case between two parties is brought up before the Supreme Court and the decision of the inferior Court is quashed on a point of law and the case again comes up before the Supreme Court, to have the lower Court’s decisions again quashed on the same grounds, all the Chambers

of the Supreme Court of France consisting of about 48 Judges should sit together and their joint decision on such a point of law should bind the inferior Court and form a rule of guidance and that too only for that particular case. The other Courts which may have the same point of law before them are not bound by even by the decision of all the Judges of the Supreme Court of France; nor is the Supreme Court itself bound by that decision – (vide Notes 107 to 110 to Article 5 of the Code Civile – Dalloz). It will thus be found that the French are extremely jealous in guarding the independence and freedom of the inferiors Courts, evidently on the basis that the decision on a question of law given even by the highest Tribunal in the land shall be confined to the facts of that particular case, and shall not fetter the creative approach of the Courts to the ever-varying circumstances of human life.

One other noteworthy feature of the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court of France is that it can only quash a decision, which is wrong in point of law, but it cannot modify or reverse the decision. It will merely send it back to the lower Court with a direction that it should be tried “*autrement compose*” (otherwise composed). When under an Act of Parliament, viz., Pondicherry (Administration) Act, 1962, the Madras High Court was invested with all the powers of the Supreme Court of France in respect of pending cases at the time of the merger of French Settlements with India, the French lawyers insisted that the Madras High Court should not have the power which it enjoyed under the Civil Procedure Code and the Letters Patent, of modifying or reversing the judgments of the French Courts, and that the utmost it could do was to set aside the judgments and send back

the cases. This proposal was stoutly resisted by the then Chief Justice of the Madras High Court, Mr. Justice Ramachandra Iyer, who insisted on a provision to the effect that even in respect of the French cases, the High Court should have unfettered powers not only of '*cassation*' (quashing) but also of modification and reversal.

Another interesting provision in the Civil Code of France is to be found in Article 4 of the Code Civil, which prescribes that Judges, who refuse to decide a case on the pretext that the law is silent or obscure, or does not cover the case, are liable to be prosecuted for denial of justice. To the Indian jurists, this provision may sound formidable. But then it can be appreciated in the context of French history. In the medieval days, the French Judges used to refuse to decide cases on the ground that the law was obscure and refer the cases to the French Parliament, so that it might, elucidate the particular law by laying down a general rule for its interpretation, and the French Parliament used to oblige by formulating elucidatory rules, which operated both as general rules of interpretation and as judgments in the particular cases referred to them. *These rules were called "arrets" of Parliament and were subject to "bon plaisir du roi" (subject to the sweet will and pleasure of the King)*. The Parliament became so much annoyed with the frequent references made by the Courts that it felt bound to enact Article 4 of the Civil Code, which threatened to prosecute the Judges for denial of justice if they refused to decide cases on the grounds stated.

Unlike in India, in France, the opinions of great French legal academicians and jurists like Planiol and Colin enjoy greater

authority and influences than even the decisions of the Supreme Court of France; though in recent times there has been an increasing tendency for Judges to pack their judgments with citations of judge-made law. But the fact remains that in France, the *lex scripta* (the written code) is regarded as supreme and self-sufficient at least in theory. Genie in his “Method d’interpretation” has vehemently criticized the rigidity of the traditional French view of the supremacy and sufficiency of the written law.

Though the French genius is much more artistic, subtle, logical and idealistic than the British, my four years’ experience of the French law has led me to the conclusion that the British genius is more pragmatic and close to the earth. Because the British have a profounder practical knowledge of human nature and human failings by virtue of their contact with several peoples in their far-flung empire, they have been able, unlike the French, to build into their system of jurisprudence, checks and counter-checks, which have made their system almost fool-proof and knave-proof. The French, on the contrary, in their superior idealism, have failed to make allowances for the infirmities of human nature. In fact, while I was discussing with some Judges of the High Court of England about the merits and de-merits of the British and the French system of law, I told them, “The French have built their judicial system on the basis of an implicit faith in the goodness of human nature, with the result it requires is a race of flawless supermen to work that system and arrive at justice. On the other hand, the British, with their superior worldly wisdom, have built their system of laws upon an implicit distrust in human beings, with the result that the Administrators of the British law are forced and helped by the very system to do justice,

and the effect of the human weaknesses of the administrators, working within that system, is reduced to the minimum.” Take for instance, the French concept of the functions of a trial Judge. He is regarded merely as an umpire in a wrestling contest. When the players in the game appeal to him for a ruling, he gives a ruling “Out!” or “Not out!”, “Foul!” or “Fair!”. A trial Judge in France cannot direct a party to produce his accounts in order to find out if his case is true, nor can he, in the interests of justice, summon third parties to produce documents on pain of arrest if they fail to produce them. The conduct of a case is left entirely to the parties, and the Judge may make adverse inferences from non-production of vital documents, but he cannot compel production. I was surprised to learn that I could not, under French law award even day costs if either party was unready. Not infrequently it happens that both the parties request the Court to adjourn the suit *sine die*, and the Court has no option but to adjourn it because in the eye of the French law, the litigants know their interests best and if they want the suit to be taken off the file, it must be taken off, to be restored only if and when they want it to be restored. Many suits are kept in cold storage like this for decades and our concept of forcing the pace of disposal against the will of the parties or their pleaders is something outrageous to French Lawyers.

Take, again, the system of *Huissiers* or Bailiffs through whom judgments of French Courts are executed. The number of Huissiers in a place is limited by statute. They are not attached to any Court. The litigant can choose any Huissier he likes and entrust him with the execution of judgments. The Hussiers, without any order from Court and without filing any execution

petition in Court, can straightway execute the judgment by attachment of movables, immovables, etc. The party aggrieved may, of course, go to what is called the Refere Court and initiate proceedings challenging the steps taken by the Huissier. In the case of a sale of properties, the Huissier after issuing notices to the judgment-debtor, has to seek the help of the Court under whose auspices the auctions are held. Even plaints and petitions are not straightway filed in Court. It is the Huissier chosen by the litigant, who issues summons straightway to the opposite party and calls upon him to appear in Court and then registers the plaint in Court. One unfortunate rule of French law is that if the Huissier says that he has personally served the summons or notice upon the opposite party, the Court must presume it to be true till the opposite party takes forgery proceedings against the Huissier and establishes in the criminal Court that the endorsement made by the Huissier is false. The burden of proving fraud on the part of the Huissier is very heavy and difficult to discharge. A French Advocate, who was dissatisfied with this French Procedure, came and complained to me about the abuses to which this procedure is exposed. He illustrated his objection with reference to certain extreme instances. If there is a rich man in the moffusil and a dishonest Huissier covets his property, the procedure he adopts is this: He asks one of his relatives to make a claim in Court against the rich man, gets himself appointed as the Huissier for the proceedings, causes records to be made to the effect that he has personally served the summons upon the rich man, and causes the Court to pass an *ex parte* judgment. In the process of execution of the judgment also, he adopts the same procedure with the result the property is brought to sale behind

the back of the judgment-debtor and confirmed. The French law is very strict in the matter of limitation, and after the period of limitation is over, the Huissier takes proceedings for delivery of possession. Only then the rich man wakes up to his predicament, but by that time his relief would have been effectively barred by the law of limitation. Some such instances were brought to my notice and as Chef Du Service Judiciaire exercising disciplinary jurisdiction over the Syndicate of Hussiers, I issued a circular calling upon the Hussiers to take the signatures of the opposite party at the time of service and in case he was not available for service, to take the attestation of at least two neighbours in proof of the affixture of the notice or summons at the residence of the opposite party. This circular, which would appear quite innocuous in the eyes of the Indian Lawyer, upset the Syndicate of Huissiers, who immediately rushed to the High Court, filed a writ petition and got my circular stayed. I am glad to say that very recently in about 1957 during the Regime of General De Gaulle, a rule was framed to that effect in Continental France. But then, according to the Huissiers, it did not apply automatically to Pondicherry, because it had become part of India. This is the kind of hardship that arises when too much faith is reposed in the presumed integrity of the minions of law.

It is not possible within the limitations of this lecture to deal with the different aspects of the French substantive law. If we take the French law of Contracts, there are different species of it:

- 1) A contract is called unilateral when a person is bound to another person, but the latter has not bound him. (Art. 1103, Code Civil).

2) A contract is symmallagmatique or bilateral when the parties bind one another reciprocally. (Vide Art 1102)

3) The contract is commutatif (commutative) when each of the parties binds himself to give or do something which is considered as an equivalent to that which is given or done for him (e.g. exchange).

When the equivalent consists in a chance of gaining or losing for both the parties depending upon an uncertain event, the contract is called alcaitoir (alcatory) – (Vide Art. 1104).

4) A contract of Charity (*Contrat de bienfaisance*) is one by which one of the parties secures the other a benefit which is entirely gratuitous – (Art. 1106).

5) An onerous contract (*Le Contrat a titre onereux*) is one which obliges both the parties to give or do something. (Art. 1107).

All these contracts, whether unilateral or bilateral, are enforceable at law.

The concept of consideration in the French law of contract presents certain features which may strike the Indo-Anglican jurists as odd. Our notion of consideration is that it must have some value. But Article 1131 of the French Civil Code requires that a Contract must be supported, not by consideration in our sense but by “cause” which must neither be false nor illicit. The word “cause” means any motive or inducement. Affection, for instance, is a sufficient “cause” which satisfies the French law. Any moral obligation, which binds the conscience, is also sufficient

to validate the contract. The French jurists argue that even a unilateral contract is enforceable. As an instance of unilateral contract, Laurent, a French jurist, says that in the case of a loan, the borrower alone is bound by virtue of a contract, and he must return the thing lent, whereas the lender is not bound in the sense that the borrower has no right of action against him. It may no doubt be objected that the lender is obliged to allow the borrower the use of the thing lent for the period agreed upon, and, therefore, he is under an obligation. But the answer, according to Laurent, is easy and decisive: "An obligation cannot exist without correlative right. Thus, where there is a true obligation, there is necessarily a right of action by a person to whom such obligation is due. What then is the right of action to a borrower? What sort of action has he against the lender? He has neither a legal right nor a right of action. He has the right of using the thing, no doubt, as it was given to him for this purpose. But this right of user gives him no right of action against the lender. So, the latter is under no obligation." Laurent concludes that by the loan contract, there is only one person who is under an obligation, and only one person to whom the obligation is due.

If we turn to the French law of sale, we find that the sale is complete as between the parties from the moment they have agreed as to the identity of the property to be sold and the price thereof and as between the vendor and the vendee, the property passes to the purchaser as of right, although the thing may not yet have been delivered nor the price paid. There are certain exceptions to this rule. For instance, with regard to wine, for which the French are famous, the sale is not complete until the buyer has tasted the wine and approved it. When goods are sold

as a lot, subject to being weighed, counted or measured, the sale is not complete until the goods have been weighed, counted or measured. If the seller fails to give possession within the time agreed, the purchaser has the option of applying to the Court and asking for cancellation of the sale. If the vendor of immovable property has been damaged by receiving $\frac{7}{12}$ ths less than its true price, he has the right to demand that the sale should be rescinded even though by the terms of the contract itself he has renounced any right to ask for rescission and the contract recites that the full value has been given. This action for cancellation for under-value is maintainable although there was no cheating or undue influence proved. The mere fact of under-value to the extent of $\frac{7}{12}$ ths in the price implies under the French law that there was no true consent under the ordinary principles laid down in the Code Civile.

Turning to the law relating to gifts and wills, the French law prescribes that a man can only dispose of half of the properties by gift inter-vivos or by will if he leaves one legitimate child surviving him. If he leaves two children, he can only dispose of a third. If he leaves three or more children, he can dispose of a quarter. The share which he can dispose of is called '*Quotite Disponible*' and the share which he cannot dispose of is called the 'reserve'. If a man has disposed of by gift or will any share in excess of the disposable share, the disposition is reducible down to such quota or share when the succession opens. Doctors of Medicine or Surgeons or Chemists, who have treated any one while he is suffering from disease of which he dies, cannot benefit by any dispositions of property made in their favour, whether such dispositions are made by gift inter-vivos or by will in the course of such illness.

A will can be in three forms: (1) *holographic*, (2) *by public record*, or (3) *Mystic or secret*. Numerous formalities are prescribed for the latter two categories of wills. But in the case of a holographic will, no formality is required, except that it should be entirely written, dated and signed by the testator.

I shall next proceed to refer to the manner in which the French juristic mind was brought to bear upon the interpretation of Hindu Law. It is not unnatural that during the clash of cultures, which are so different in genius and temperament as the Indian and the French or the British the law of the subject people should receive some amount of blood transfusion from the law of the rulers. Even as the Privy Council in its brilliant and careful interpretation of the Hindu Law freely engrafted on the Hindu Law English notions of justice, equity and good conscience, the French jurists very ingeniously grafted on to Hindu Law their notions of the Code Civil. The Supreme Court of France, which would interfere with the judgments of the French Indian Courts only on questions of law, evaded responsibility for interpreting Hindu Law by saying that questions of Hindu Law being questions of customary law, were not questions of law, but questions of fact. The result was that the French jurists, who presided over the French Indian Courts, gallantly and freely applied certain principles of the French Civil Code while solving problems of the personal law of the Hindus in French India. The French Government established a 'Comite Consultatif' (Consultative Committee) composed of representatives of different castes of Hindus, whose opinions on questions of Hindu Law were considered but not always accepted by the French Judges. Jurists like J. Sanner, who was a Frenchman and who was

a Procureur de la Republique at Pondicherry and who wrote "*Le Droit Civil applicable aux Hindus*" (The Civil Law applicable to Hindus in French India), found great difficulty in regarding the principles of Hindu Law with sympathy. In his book, he frequently denounces the Hindu Law-givers for their "miserable" subtly, for their "unjust discrimination between the sexes" and for their caste prejudices. As a result of the labours of the French jurists like Sanner, the rights of the Hindus in French India in relation to property have become very much like the rights of Frenchmen in France. The Hindu Law notion that a son acquires interest in the joint family property by birth has been done away with. According to French jurisprudence so long as a Hindu father is alive, he can sell his properties for good consideration, because he is the sole and exclusive owner of the properties of the family. His sons would have no power to impugn his sales so long as the sales are genuine. The French Courts, however, have endeavoured to do equity by permitting the sons to file suits restraining prodigal fathers from wasting their properties. If waste is proved, the courts appoint an Officer of Court, without whose approval the father cannot alienate the properties. The Hindu Law notions of pious obligation or of debts tainted with immorality or illegality have played no dominant part in the shaping of French Hindu Law in view of the almost absolute rights of ownership attributed to the Hindu father in French India. But so far as gifts and bequests of Hindu fathers are concerned, some French jurists like Sanner attempted to transplant the concept of "reserve" from the Code Civil into Hindu Law. In other words, a Hindu father, according to them, could not gift or bequeath more than half a share if he has one child, more than one-third if he has two children, and more than one-fourth share if he has

three or more children. When this problem came up before us, Indian Judges, repeatedly, we, by reasons of our own psychological conditioning gave solutions different from those given by the French jurists. We discovered that the French “Arrête” dated 6th January, 1819, whereby the Civil Code of France was extended to French India, made it clear that Indians, whether Christians, Muslims or Hindus, shall be judged as in the past in pursuance of the laws, usages and customs of their caste. In 1902, the Supreme Court of France held that though the Hindus in the French establishments of India are governed in accordance with their personal laws, usages and customs, they are, however, subject to the general provisions of the French Codes in cases where the personal law makes no provision therefor and the provisions of the French Codes are not incompatible with the personal law of Hindus. (*Vide: Dalloz—Jurisprudence Generale 1902—Part I page 300*). The French Jurists like Sanner overlooked this arrête of 6th January, 1819, in their anxiety to ignore the Hindu Law principles and import French notions. We held that it is wrong to contend that the Hindu Law as it is in force in Pondicherry had failed to provide for what is called in French law “*Quotite Disponible*” or the portion which is at the absolute disposal of the father by way of gift or bequest. A custom has been prevailing among the Pondicherry Hindus based upon the text of Brahaspathi, which has been quoted at page 322 of the Collection of Opinions of the ‘Comite Consultatif’ made by Leon Sorg, the President of the Tribunal de Premiere Instance, Pondicherry, in the year 1896. According to Brahaspathi, the father can donate whatever is in excess of what is necessary for the ‘conservation’ of the family and where immovable properties such as house, land, garden, etc., are concerned, whether they are self-acquired or ancestral, the father

cannot denote more than $1/8^{\text{th}}$ share therein. In fact, it is on the basis of this text that the 'Comite Consultatif' gave an opinion on 13th December, 1871, to the effect that a Hindu cannot will or gift away more than $1/8^{\text{th}}$ share of his properties. On the basis of this opinion, we held that there has been a longstanding custom among the Hindus of Pondicherry based upon the text of Brahaspathi prohibiting the Hindu father from gifting or bequeathing more than $1/8^{\text{th}}$ share of his properties. The $1/8^{\text{th}}$ share, which the father could absolutely gift and bequeath has been described by French jurists in the language of the Code Civil as 'Quotite Disponible' and the balance as the 'reserve'. As this custom had been recognized from time immemorial we refuted the argument of Counsel that the principles of Code Civil relating to the quantum of the 'Quotite Disponible' should be applied to the Hindus in Pondicherry, because the Code Civil would only apply where the personal law made no provision therefor.

I may next refer to another principle of Hindu Law, which is peculiar to Pondicherry. Although the Hindu son has no interest by birth in the property of the father, yet if he makes any acquisition in his own name when he is under parental authority, the French Courts have been presuming that the son's acquisition would form part of the family property. But this presumption would not be available if during the life time of the father, the son goes away from the parental roof and control and acquires properties in his own name with his own earnings.

I shall next refer to the problem of conflict of laws which is peculiar to the erstwhile French Colonies. After the annexation of Goa, Portuguese laws were replaced over night by the Indian laws. But unfortunately, due to certain historical reasons, this

process was not adopted in relation to the French Indian territories. The *de facto* merger of French Settlement with India took place under a treaty of Cession in 1954. But it was not until August, 1962, that the *d'jure* merger was brought about by an Act of Parliament. During these eight years, the French system of laws continued to be in force. Even thereafter the Indian Laws were extended only in inconvenient instalments. By the Pondicherry Laws Regulation of 1963, the Indian Penal Code, Criminal Procedure Code and the Evidence Act were alone extended to Pondicherry. But the Code Civil which dealt not only with civil rights but also with rules of evidence was left intact. Questions arose whether the rules of evidence laid down under the Code Civil in respect of civil matters had been abrogated or not by the Extension of the Indian Evidence Act. Further, all Acts passed by the Indian Parliament subsequent to the *de jure* merger automatically extended to the Union of Pondicherry because it had become part of India. Subsequently, in 1968, the Pondicherry Extension of Laws Act was passed, which left it to the Lieutenant Governor to extend the Indian Acts by notification. 96 enactments came into force by notification made by the Lieutenant Governor on 10-6-1968, 41 came into force on 1st August, 1968, 9 on the 5th September, 1968, 22 on the 18th December, 1968, and 3 on the 9th January, 1969. This gradual Indianisation of the laws led to great difficulty in application without a precise knowledge of the exact dates on which and the extent to which the corresponding French laws were repealed. Even after the coming into force of all the Indian enactments, there are still certain areas of French law which remain unrepealed and which continue to be in force in the Union Territory, with the result that the administrators of law in the Union Territory

will have to continue forever to apply the French law in those areas which have not been repealed by the Indian enactments. In other words, isolated islands of French law continue to survive, surrounded by vast currents of Indian enactments. As for 'renoncants', they are persons whose forefathers under a French law dated 21st Sept. 1881, renounced their personal laws and opted to be governed by the French civil laws. Under the treaty of cession between France and India, they have been exempted from the operation of their personal laws, and they continue to be governed by the French laws in relation to minority, guardianship, emancipation, adoption, marriage, divorce, succession, etc. Although the hierarchy of French Courts has been supplanted by the hierarchy of Indian Courts under the Pondicherry Civil Courts Act with effect from 5 Sept-1968, the 'renoncants' are still entitled to obtain from the Indian Courts the peculiar reliefs provided by French law in respect of matters of personal status. Apart from Indian 'renoncants' there are thousands of 'renoncants' who have opted for French nationality and who continue to live in the erstwhile French India. Important questions of Private International Law arise frequently for adjudication in proceedings initiated by these French nationals. The Consul General of France raised a question as to whether these 'renoncants', who have opted for French nationality, are not entitled to apply to the Indian Courts or the French reliefs. It is one of the elementary principles of Private International Law that a foreign national including a Frenchman cannot ask the Indian Courts to resort to the machinery of the French Law or to adopt the procedure prescribed in the Code Civil, because the machinery and the procedure contemplated by the Code Civil are incompatible with the Indian law. In fact, I had to point out

that even International Law and have been refusing to give to aliens the benefit of the procedure prescribed by the alien law when it is incompatible with the rules governing the French Courts. (Vide Note 777 under the heading 'Tutelle' in Dalloz Droit Civile Tome V) French Nationals residing in Pondicherry, though they may be renoncants, will not, therefore, be entitled to the reliefs and exemptions, which renoncants enjoying Indian citizenship will be entitled to. As regards the Christians in the erstwhile French India, they have throughout been governed by the Hindu Law, because in the view of the French jurists Christians in French India remained deeply attached to their customs, and the code Civil could not been made applicable to them. The Indian enactments relating to Christians regarding divorce, marriages etc., have not, therefore, been extended to the erstwhile French India. On the other hand, the benefit of any statutory amendment of Hindu Law made by the Indian Parliament exclusively for Hindus will not be available to the Christians in the Union of Pondicherry, even though they continue to be governed by Hindu customary law.

One other difficulty felt was that before French India became merged with India, the Judgments of the French Indian Courts were foreign judgments in the eye of the Indian Courts. But after the merger, the French Indian Courts have become Indian; but the judgments obtained in the French Indian Courts after the *de jure* merger could not be executed in the Indian Courts because the Indian Courts insisted upon the production of the decree of the court as well as the non-satisfaction certificate. The notion that every judgment must be accompanied by a decree and every order must be accompanied by a decretal order is a notion peculiar

to the Indian Civil Procedure Code. In the French system, there are no decrees as such. The judgments would contain what is called a *formule exécutoire* (*executory formula*), which would be to the following effect:

“In the name of the French People, we, sitting in the Palace of Justice call upon all Huissiers to execute this judgment and call upon all Commanders of the Army and the Police Officers and Officers of Government to give every aid to the Huissiers in the execution of this judgment.”

When these judgments were sent to the Madras Courts for execution, the Madras Courts refused to execute them because they were not decrees but judgments. This difficulty was solved by the Madras High Court amending the rules in this behalf.

There are several other fantastic anomalies and conflicts of law, which the erstwhile French India is bristling with. When the Indian Law Institute at New Delhi invited me to suggest the line of research it could conduct at Pondicherry, I told them that the Union of Pondicherry is a veritable jurists' paradise, because, so far as my knowledge goes, nowhere else in the world does a medley of laws belonging to different system of jurisprudence co-exist in the same place and at the same time.

Lastly, I might refer to four concepts which we can profitably borrow from French jurisprudence and assimilate into our own:

(1). *Assistance judiciaire* or judicial assistance to poor litigants has been much more generous and less niggardly in French India than under Order 33 of the Indian Civil Procedure Code. In

France, once the Court declares a litigant entitled to legal assistance, he is exempt not only from paying the Court fee due but also from paying out of his pocket a single paisa towards the expenditure of litigation. The court appoints an Advocate to conduct his case and a Huissier to serve his processes. The Advocate nominated by the Court is obliged under the French law to advance out of his own pocket the entire expenditure including payment of batta to witnesses. He has to maintain an account in respect of the expenditure. If ultimately the litigant he represents succeeds in the litigation, he is granted a decree for the amounts which he has advanced and he can execute it straightway and realize the amount. If, on the other hand, the indigent litigant fails in the suit, the French Treasury pays the Advocate the entire amount advanced by him. This is a system, which I would heartily commend to Indian jurists for acceptance.

(2). *Conseil De Famille*: This institution of Family Council, which has been fostered by the French, will also be of special interest to Indian jurists. Where a minor has neither father nor mother, the Family Council is appointed by the Judge de Paix (Justice of the Peace), who presides over the Council. The Family Council shall be composed of six relations, half of whom should be taken from the father's side and half from the mother's side. The meetings of the Family Council ought to be held in an informal atmosphere at the residence of the Justice of the Peace. The family Council appoints a guardian and a substitute guardian in such a manner that the relationship between the two does not make for collusion. The property of the minor cannot be sold by the guardian except in accordance with a resolution of the Family Council approved by the Court of First Instance. Most

of the personal problems of the minor relating to maintenance, education, etc., are solved by the Family Council. This institution, in my view, is superior to that of the Judge under the Indian Guardians and Wards Act, deciding questions of great importance to the minor in a formal manner after hearing legalistic arguments from Counsel and without any informal consultations with the near relations of the minor.

(3). *Police Judiciare* (Judicial Police): We can emulate the French by bifurcating the Indian Police into two divisions, one concerned purely with the maintenance of law and order and detection of crime and regulation of traffic; and the other concerned exclusively with the investigation and prosecution of crime under judicial auspices. If such a bifurcation were made, confessions to the judicial police can be made admissible in evidence, and the British suspicion of confessions to the police as enshrined in the Indian Evidence Act can be eliminated.

(4). *Partie Civile*: In a recent Referred Trial Case, a Bench consisting of Krishnaswamy Reddy, J., and myself imposed heavy fines upon the accused persons, who were found guilty of rioting, and directed compensation to be paid out of the fine, if collected, to the victims of murder, hurt and arson. Owing to the inherent defect in the Indian legal procedure, we found difficulty in ascertaining the names of the dependents of the victims and quantifying the compensation payable. It would be more proper if all the victims or their dependents were allowed under the law to join as parties to the criminal proceedings for the purpose of claiming compensation. Damage to the victims of a criminal offence must be as much the concern of the State as any damage to Society at large caused by the criminal offence as such. Before

fixing the quantum of damages awardable to victims, it is useful and necessary for the criminal Court to record evidence, which, though not germane to the proof of the crime, would be relevant to the proof of the crime, would be relevant to the proof of the quantum of the injury suffered. Though Section 545 Cr.P.C. empowers the awarding of compensation to the victims, it is deficient in two respects: (1) It does not provide that the victims of the offence should be made parties to the criminal proceedings; and (2) nor does it provide that evidence bearing upon the quantum of compensation is admissible in the criminal proceedings, even though such evidence may not be relevant, under the Indian Evidence Act, to the proof of the crime. The merit of the French system is that it allows the victim of a crime to implead himself as a party to the criminal proceedings as *partie civile* (*civil party*). Another merit of the French System is that the victim of a crime is entitled to file an *action civile* (civil action) in the criminal Court even if the State has failed to launch a prosecution against the criminal (Vide Code De Procedure Penale – Article 85). Even if a prosecution is launched and the accused are acquitted, it is still open in the French system for the *partie civile* to ask the Court to award damages resulting from the fault of the accused in so far as it has been established by the evidence on record – (Vide Article 91, Code De Procedure Penale). But the demerits of the French system are (1) that it needlessly calls upon the *partie civile* to pay court fee at the time he files his claim in the criminal proceedings; and (2) the Prosecutor does not take any interest in substantiating the claim of the *partie civile* or in advocating his case, but leaves him to fend for himself. On the other hand, in Australia, Sweden, Spain, Colombia and Italy, the prosecutor himself is empowered to demand damages for the

victims even where no *action civile* had started – (Vide pages 390 and 391 of the Modern Law Review – Volume 21 – 1958 Edition). The Italian Positivist, Ferri, recommended that the State itself should first compensate the victims out of the general revenue of the State and subsequently recover the damages from the criminals and add the same on to the general funds. His argument was that in principle, compensation for the damage caused by the criminal offence is a duty of the State, and when the State fails in its duty, as it does whenever crime is committed, it should repair the damage caused by its fault and be subrogated to any right of the injured party against the offender. This suggestion was considered by the International Penological Conference at Paris and Brussels and rejected, curiously enough, as being in conflict with sound Penological principles. I think that humanitarian considerations, rather than the logic of penology, should guide us, and if our State, which is committed to the welfare of the people, would undertake this noble burden, it will go a long way towards creating a proper psychological climate in which citizens will feel impelled to give more hearty and effective support to the State in the prevention of crime.

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THE ENGLISH AND THE FRENCH SYSTEMS OF JURISPRUDENCE

(Mr. Justice Maharajan's impression on his foreign trip)
Interview- Law Weekly, Part 26, dated 22-08-1970

We offer our congratulations to Mr. Justice Maharajan, who has returned after a successful tour for about three to four weeks in the Continent of Europe as a delegate to the International Conference of Tamil Studies held at Paris . While in Great Britain , Mr. Justice Maharajan had interesting meetings with Lord Denning, Master of the Rolls, and Lord Justice Pennycuick, and when interviewed by our Editor and Associate Editor and requested to give an account of his experiences, Maharajan, J., said:

“We In India have been under the impression that the Englishman is a very formal person, who would dress elaborately for dinner even when he has none but himself to dine with and who would travel for hundreds of miles without exchanging a word with you unless he has been properly introduced. This

image of the Englishman has been projected by the English humorists themselves. But the spontaneous informality displayed by the two English Law Lords of England was in refreshing contrast with this traditional image.

As soon as a message was sent from the office of the Indian High Commissioner in London that I wished to meet him, Lord Denning took over the phone himself and telephoned to me, "Come straight on, Mr. Maharajan. I wish to take you out for a garden party at Lincoln's Inn". I cancelled all my other engagements out of deference to the warmth of Lord Denning, accepted his invitation and went straight to his Court House, where Mr. King, the Secretary of Lord Denning, was waiting for me. As soon as Mr. King took me to Lord Denning's Chamber, the Lord greeted me very warmly and asked if I would follow him to the garden party. I said "Yes", and he led me all the way to Lincoln's Inn, where there was a gathering of about 400 men and women. Lord Denning blushing pointed out to me his own statue which stands installed in Lincoln's Inn. It is good to remember that the English are slow to honour living men by erecting statues for them. The statue bears testimony to the great esteem in which Lord Denning is held by the British Bar. Then Lord Denning introduced me to a number of persons at the party in the following words:

"Here is a Judge from the Madras High Court. He does not drink; he eats no meat; and he is a non-smoker," The ladies present were shocked that I could subsist without meat and wine, and asked me how I managed to live. I said, "I am quite an abnormal monster and I can teach you the trick." The Bishop of

London, who was present at the gathering and about whose food habits I know nothing, declared in a solemn ecclesiastical tone: “That is the way spiritual men should live.” Lord Denning introduced me to Mr. Chitty, who is the son of Mr. Justice Chitty of the Calcutta High Court and the grandson of the celebrated author of “Chitty on Contracts”. The Chittys greeted me with “Vanakkam” and spoke a few words in Tamil, and said that they had been living in Madras for six years in the 1930’s. They were visibly moved when they learnt that I came from Madras, which is so near to their hearts, and they wanted me to convey their “love to Madras”. After spending an hour in this convivial company, Lord Denning said that he had to attend a Magistrates’ Conference and he asked if he might leave me behind and run away. I told him that I would like to run away with him because I had another appointment, too. He asked me, “Are you shy?” I said, “No. I like this company. But I have to attend a reception in the India House.” Lord Denning is about 72 years old, and though he had to go in the opposite direction, he walked all the way escorting me to a place near India House, and after pointing out India House to me, asked me to convey his warmest greetings to the Chief Justice of the Madras High Court and to Mr. Justice Kailasam, who had recently met him. Thus, I parted company with a man whose simplicity and cordiality are magnificent and who has completely shattered my image of the formal Englishman.”

Question: Did you meet any other Law Lord?

Answer: “Yes. Mr. Justice Pennycuick, who was no less informal than Lord Denning, invited me over the phone to lunch

with him at 1 P.M. in the Middle Temple the next day. The first question he asked me as I greeted him was about the Chief Justice and other Judges of the Madras High Court. He told me that his father was the Engineer, who had constructed the Periyar Dam. He also took me very warmly to the Middle Temple, waiting at each door to let me pass it first. He said that some of the buildings in the Middle Temple had been constructed in the sixteenth century and that the Middle Temple was bombed during the last war and reconstructed. He pointed out the portraits of many eminent British Judges since the fourteenth century which adorn the walls of the Temple. He requested me to sit to the left of Lord Justice Paul, who as the elected Treasurer of the year, sits on a high chair and usually presides over the lunch. It was a heart-warming sight to see a number of Law Lords and Queen's Counsel mixing freely in the Middle Temple and taking lunch together without any distinction between Judge and Advocate. When I told Mr. Justice Pennycuik that I am a tea-totaller and a vegetarian, he ordered vegetarian dishes and orange juice for me. Out of courtesy for his guest, he refrained from ordering a hot drink for himself and took only orange juice during the lunch. Lord Justice Paul introduced me to Justice Sterling, whom he described as a great Shakespearean actor and as the "leading light" of the Amateur Dramatic Society, London. Lord Justice Pennycuik intervened at this stage and informed Justice Sterling that I had translated Shakespeare's Hamlet, King Lear and Macbeth into Tamil. At once, Justice Sterling fell into an animated and interesting discussion about the characters of Shakespeare. He told me that he had recently played the roles of Sir Toby Belch and Sir John Falstaff. As a comedian, he wondered why I should

not have translated the comedies of Shakespeare. When I said, “I have not yet”, he remarked: “So there is hope you are going to translate them”. I did not wish to violate the distinguished comedian’s undoubted right to hope, and so, remained silent.

After lunch, Lord Pennycuick took me to the Lounge Room and introduced me to some other Judges and Queen’s Counsel as the man who had administered the French Laws in Pondicherry and translated the *Code de Procedure Civile*. At once, all of them exclaimed: “It must have been a thrilling experience to administer a foreign system of laws. What is your reaction?” I told him, “The Frenchman has based his jurisprudence on implicit trust in human beings and the result is it needs a race of super men to administrate it, and it is more often abused. On the contrary, the Britisher has built his jurisprudence on implicit distrust in human beings”. At this stage, Lord Justice Paul intervened to ask, “Do you think law must be built on trust or distrust in human beings?” I said, “The Britisher is right in distrusting Man. That is why his system is a success and is fool proof and knave-proof. There is in his system a series of built-in checks and counterchecks.” I also told the Judges that we in India have been inspired by the British concepts of justice and law and will continue to be inspired by those concepts. The Judges were naturally pleased to hear these sentiments. Justice Pennycuick said, not without some hesitation, “I believe that the British concepts have come to stay in India”.

After the chat in the Lounge Room, I went with Lord Justice Pennycuick to his Chambers. He said he was going to hear a long winded and rather dull matter, and if I wished to attend his Court, I might feel free to leave it whenever it pleased me. He

asked the Clerk of the Court to provide a seat for me on the dais. I went and occupied it before the Judge arrived, because I was anxious to stand up along with the Members of the Bar and respect the Judge as soon as he was ushered into the Court. The hall is an ancient and solemn one in which the Chancery Division case was being heard. I saw all the Barristers, men and women, wearing wigs. The seats for the Barristers were arranged, unlike in our High Court, in the manner of a gallery, the juniors sitting in the upper back seats and the leading Counsel sitting in the front rows. The Court crier ushered in the Judge softly with “*Silence please*”. I stood up along with the Members of the Bar and resumed my seat after the Judge sat down. For about ten minutes, the Judge was hearing a petition argued by a woman Barrister. After passing orders in the petition, the Judge rose up and went to his Chambers taking me along with him. He told me in the Chambers that the calibre of the Queen’s Counsel, who were going to argue the main case, would be much higher. Evidently, the Judge did not want me to judge the British Bar by the performance of a junior member thereof. It surprised me when he said that there are as many as 60 Judges of the High Court of England. After some time the Judge went back to his Court, myself preceding him, and occupying the seat allotted to me. Before calling the main case posted for the day, Justice Pennycuick was kind enough to tell the Queen’s Counsel present in Court, “Mr. Justice Maharajan of the Madras High Court has come to attend this Court. He wishes to hear your arguments”. This was an introduction which I least expected from the Bench. I wondered if in Justice Pennycuick’s place, I would have introduced a foreign Judge to the Bar *from the Bench*. I must

confess I am even more formal than the English. In fact, a distinguished English writer told me a little later, "A hundred years hence, Englishmen will be found, not in England, but only in India." This sharp remark and Justice Pennycuick's hope about British concepts having come to stay in India still revolve in my mind in uneasy company.

As soon as Justice Pennycuick made the reference to me, all the Queen's Counsel present in Court stood up and bowed very courteously, and I bowed in return. I felt within myself that this thrilling gesture was in truth a message of symbolic significance to the Madras Bench and Bar. I thought to myself, "I may be a small man, but I represent the great traditions and ideals of the Madras High Court, and for that very reason, this forensic tribute has been paid." It looked as though the British Bar stood up and bowed in honour of the hundreds of distinguished Judges and lawyers, past and present, that have contributed to the reputation of the Madras High Court, which the Judges and Barristers in London freely recognise and respect.

The Chancery Division case related to water pressure in a mine and involved many technical problems, which were presented by the Bar with great clarity, efficiency and above all, incredible courtesy. As I listened to the arguments for about an hour, I received the impression that the mutual courtesy between the Members of the British Bar was so refined that when one disagreed with the other, he was almost apologetic about it. I left the Court of Justice Pennycuick bowing to him, and he abandoned judicial formality and told me from his Judge's chair, "Please convey my best wishes to Mr. Chief Justice Veeraswami

and also the other Judges of the Madras High Court.”-Now I know that the English, who can be very formal at times, also know where to draw the line”.

Question: Can you tell us something about the Tamil Conference at Paris and about France?

Answer: “Tamil is the only Indian language which has earned the honour of two International Conferences outside India. I found representatives from 34 countries of the world attending the conference at Paris. As for my impressions of the Conference, it would be more appropriate to record them elsewhere than in the Law Weekly. As for France, I must say that of the four countries I have visited (France, England, West Germany and Switzerland) the most fascinating and adorable is France. Though I roamed miles and miles through Paris, I could not see a single hut or slum anywhere. The City, which has been built by architects of great vision during the last 5 or 6 centuries, is most beautiful during day time and even more beautiful at night time. The great Tamil poet, Kamban, while describing the palatial buildings of Lanka, exclaims:

Are they built out of sunlight,
inlaid with flashes of lightning!
Or made out of molten gold,
studded with pearls and gems!
One knows not
what stuff they are made on!
Oh! those towers pierce the giant clouds
and keep knocking against the Moon!

பொன் கொண்(டு)அ மைத்த, மணி
யைக்கொடு பொதிந்த,
மின் கொண்(டு)இ ழைத்த, வெயி
லைக்கொடுச மைத்த,
என் கொண்(டு)இ யற்றிய
எனத் தெரிகி லாத,
வன் கொண்டால் விட்டு, மதி
முட்டுவன மாடம்

- Kambar

It looked as though this dream of the Poet has crystallized into the enchanting City of Paris . There is not one square inch of space which the French artists have left unadorned.

The passion of the French people for freedom is most intense. As Beaumarchais, a great French writer has said, “In a country where there is no freedom to criticise, appreciation can have no meaning or value.” But this freedom has led the young boys and girls of France to break loose from all social and parental control in the matter of sex and otherwise. That this freedom could be used or abused to the maximum extent is demonstrated by what I saw in France . There, I have seen people who can sink to the lowest of depths as well as people who have risen to the highest of heights. When I entered the celebrated Church of Notre Dame and sat on a chair in the aisle along with other pious French people, I found the paintings and architecture of the Church lifting up my soul. With tears gashing down my cheeks, I lost all sense of the ego. The atmosphere of the Church is charged with as much mystic power as the atmosphere in Sri Meenakshi Temple or the Tirupathi Temple ’.

Question: Did you visit any other City?

Answer: “Yes. I visited Frankfurt and Heidelberg in West Germany and Geneva in Switzerland .

Question: What do you think of the conditions of Tamil Nadu after your tour abroad?

Answer: “I think that the culture of the Tamils is as good as any other culture in the West, if not better, and for a Tamilian there can be no country as dear and conducive to happiness as Tamil Nad.

In dress, food and in our manner of living, we are marked by the utmost simplicity. Whereas in the West, they are increasing and multiplying their wants, our social institutions have tended to reduce our wants and our desires to the minimum and thereby tended to secure that mental and spiritual peace, which seems to elude the technologically more sophisticated nations. Psychically, I feel that the very vibrations we receive from the atmosphere here are radically different from, and more wholesome than those I received while in Europe. They have speed in Europe, but without direction; we have direction, but no speed. I suppose it is better to crawl in the right direction than to gallop, you know not whither”.

* * *

ADDRESS AT THE CONFERENCE OF DISTRICT JUDGES AND DISTRICT MAGISTRATES

(15-04-1973)

My Lord the Chief Justice, Hon'ble colleagues and colleagues of the state Judiciary,

While I was a District Judge, I made repeated representations to the High Court about the need and the urgency for convening a conference of this kind. Mr. Justice P.Rajagopalan, who had a passionate preference for District Magistrates, vetoed my proposal on the ground that the government would not pay travelling allowance to the District Judges. I am delighted that our dynamic Chief Justice has found the will and the means to convene such a conference and translate our dreams into a reality. The beneficial effects of such a conference are considerable.

Very often, we start our judicial careers as District Munsifs in some Taluk Centres. I myself was posted as District Munsif first to Vriddhachalam. There you represent the very peak of authority. Everybody looks up to you. Your judgments can make or mar the lives of men litigating before you. If you are young and immature, you become drunk with your own sense of importance and become immune to all possibilities of improvement. A Professor of Literature came and stayed with me for some days while I was a District Munsif and after observing all the incense that was being burnt before me, he said,

“You seem to be a most important person in this place. You are in fact a dog on its own dung-hill”.

I would never forget this cynical yet true remark. Very few could tell a Judge to his face what his defects are. Some sycophant lawyers, on the eve of getting an order of attachment before judgment or an interim injunction, come and tell you in the Chambers,

“During the past 30 years, I have not seen a man with such a wonderful knowledge of law and legal acumen as yourself”.

Most of us take these flattering words at their face value. We never bother to put ourselves under the microscope and detect our own infirmities and limitations. We refuse to grow, because we live in a kind of ivory tower, which is accessible only to a few flatterers who assure us that we represent the limit of judicial wisdom. The only corrective I can think of is to rub shoulders with fellow judicial officers, compare notes with them and discuss administrative and judicial problems with earnestness and with

a view to self improvement. I used to hand over my judgments after they were delivered to senior judicial officers and request them to criticize my judgments candidly and mercilessly, so that I could improve myself. I have benefited very considerably from such discussions. I consider that judicial officers must have enough humility to understand that it is part of their judicial duty to be perpetual students, to learn every minute and to keep sharpening their judicial sensibilities till they retire. That kind of humility is bound to be induced by conferences of this kind.

I may recall the case of a friend of mine, who retired as District Judge and who served under me as a Subordinate Judge. He was blissfully unaware of his judicial infirmities till his promotion was withheld by the High Court on the ground that he did not know how to write a judgment. He came and complained to me:

“All these 25 years, I have been a judicial Officer. I have never been told by anybody that there was anything wrong with my judgment. Will you please tell me what is wrong?”

I told him, “Evidently, you have insulated yourself from all criticism. You reproduce the evidence of each witness in your judgment: “P.W 1 says this, P.W 2 says that, D.W 1 says this, and D.W. 2 says that.” You then list out the Exhibits and give the particulars of those Exhibits. Then in the one and only original sentence of yours, you say in your judgment: “I therefore conclude that the plaintiff has no case and dismiss the suit”.

Now, this Judicial Officer had been doing it for two decades and nobody at the Bar dare bring his defects to his notice. Had

he compared notes with his colleagues and exposed himself to healthy criticism, he could certainly have rectified his defects.

I want that the discussions of this conference must be in groups, intimate and informal. Open yourself out to your colleagues and ask them to criticize you in a friendly manner and learn how to tolerate that criticism. Most of us have to work at high pressure and we, therefore, tend to become mechanical and wooden. Our former Chief Justice Mr. Anantanarayanan used to say that the very act of judging fellow-men vitiates the Judge's personality. That statement contains, I am afraid, merely a half truth. What vitiates the judicial personality is, not the act of judging fellow-men, but the pernicious manner in which the act is performed. If the act of judgment is informed by the cold light of reason and the warmth of humanism and a missionary zeal to render justice, it is bound to contribute to the fullness and richness of a judicial career.

My learned brother, Mr. Justice K.S. Venkataraman, has told you about the number of difficulties which we, at the Referred Trial Bench, had to come up against. Once, my learned brother had to spend six hours before correlating successfully the numbers of Material Objects in a particular case with the item numbers in the Chemical Examiner's report. That was because the numbers given by the Chemical Examiner and the Serologist did not tally, and the numbers given by either of them did not tally with the numbers allotted by the trial court to the Material Objects. Some mistakes committed by an inadvertent Sessions Judge on this account have caused two Judges of the High Court dealing with the Referred Trial Case so many hours to trace the root of the

mistake. If the mistake had not been traced and rectified, the defence counsel concerned could argue with impunity that neither the weapon nor the garments seized from the accused bore any incriminating bloodstain. It is better, therefore, that sessions Judges while examining the Magisterial Clerk and marking through him the Magistrate's requisition and the reports of the Serologist and the Chemical Examiner, do the necessary correlation of the Material Objects' numbers with the item numbers allotted by the three authorities, viz., the Sub Magistrate, the Chemical Examiner and the Serologist. If care is taken to record this correlation in the deposition of the Magisterial Clerk, there will be no need to waste judicial time at any later stage.

Another thing I wish to emphasise is what has been referred to by my learned brother Krishnaswamy Reddy, J., viz., the importance and the value of the great weapon that section 165 of the Evidence Act gives every judicial Officer for getting at the truth. The power given to the Judges under section 165 of the Evidence Act is very much unlike the power a Judge enjoys under the French system. While I was in Pondicherry and by force of habit I tried to apply section 165 of the Evidence Act, I was repeatedly told by French Jurists that the French Law expects a Judge to behave like an Umpire in a boxing contest. He can give a ruling – "It is fair or foul", but he cannot participate in the game or interfere with it. You must allow the parties to lead such evidence as they choose. You cannot direct them to produce documents. When both the parties ask the Judge not to go on with the trial, but to adjourn it, the Judge should put the whole case in cold storage till the parties in God's good time want a revival of the trial. The French theory is that the Court has no

business to poke its nose into the affairs of the litigant, and the litigants know their interests best. On the contrary, as pointed out by my learned brother, section 165 of the Evidence Act assigns a more dynamic role to the Judge in the quest for truth. It enables and empowers the Judge to put any question he pleases to any witness in any form at any time. You can even put irrelevant questions, and neither party can object to it on the ground of irrelevancy. The only limitation upon you is that you cannot act upon irrelevant evidence. The section gives you a precious opportunity to delve deeper and deeper into the case and get at the truth. How many of our Judges have the inclination or the energy to play the dynamic role, which the Evidence Act expects of them? Take for instance, the expert's evidence, which my learned brother was referring to. Most of the doctors come into the box in a sessions trial and impose themselves upon the Court with their sesquipedalian Latinisms. They scare you off with words. How many of you have the curiosity and the inquisitiveness to probe energetically and scientifically into the basis of the doctor's opinion? If you do not understand their quaint medical jargon, tell them, "*I don't understand your Latin. Please explain in a layman's language what you mean.*" After stripping the expert's opinion of its pedantic clothing, we shall be in a position to understand it and then probe into its rationale. As a Sessions Judge, I would never take the correctness of the doctor's opinion for granted. Because my questions were inconvenient, the doctors felt annoyed, and sometimes they felt forced to swallow their own opinions, when they were made to realise that they had been far too dogmatic. In fact, all the doctors at Coimbatore went on a deputation to the Director of Forensic laboratory some years back and reported to the Director that I

was harassing them by putting them inconvenient and some times, uncomplimentary questions. The Director told them, “ I have been reading this particular Judge’s criticism of doctors and I think his criticism is well founded. The doctors have a duty to explain their opinions to the Court, and when confronted by the opinions of authorities in their field, the doctors must have the scientist’s humility to own their errors.” Very frequently, we find young inexperienced men, who have put in just two years service as doctors, getting into the box and giving emphatic and unqualified opinions. Most of them are unscientific enough to feel that they have a vested interest in their opinions. They therefore try to justify their opinions by hook or by crook. Little do they realize that the impact of their opinions on the evidence has far-reaching consequences upon the lives and liberties of citizens.

Once a lady doctor, who had a very bad reputation, - that is what the then Director of Medical Services told me later, -came into the box. She admitted a patient, who had received a stab injury in the abdomen. She stitched up the external injury without bothering to probe into it.

Thirty days later, the injured man died. The question arose as to who was responsible for the murder. I had to decide the difficult question whether it was the simple hurt caused by the assailant that resulted in the murder or whether death was due to the negligence of the lady doctor, who sutured up the wound with unholy and negligent haste without even probing into it. I had no option but to conclude that it was the doctor who was responsible for the death. That doctor filed a petition in the High Court for expunction of my remarks, and an eminent Judge of

the High Court summoned the First Physician of the Government of Madras to find out whether my opinion was correct, and the First Physician was examined here as a witness, - a rather extraordinary procedure. Luckily for me, the First Physician agreed with my opinion and put the blame squarely on the lady doctor. He opined that if the lady doctor had probed the wound and treated the patient, she could have discovered the puncture in the peritoneum and saved the patient by giving him the proper treatment. If I had unquestioningly accepted the lady doctor's opinion, I would have had no option but to send the accused in that case to the gallows. Had I done so, I would have been guilty of a grave miscarriage of justice. That is why I say it is immoral for a Judge to be bamboozled by an expert into accepting his opinion uncritically. It is the duty of a Judge to equip himself with knowledge in the special field of the expert. Otherwise, he will be brow-beaten and confounded by the expert. Take for instance, the Workmen's Compensation cases, in which doctors give gratuitous opinions about the loss of earning capacity of workmen as a result of his losing an eye or a limb or a finger. The doctor can certainly speak with authority about the extent of disability suffered, and say if it is a permanent partial or a permanent total disability. But he does not have the expertise necessary to estimate the loss of earning capacity of the disabled person - which is a matter to be decided by the Judge on the basis of relevant evidence. Most Judges, I find, accept the doctor's opinion as gospel truth and rely upon it, even without discussing it. It is, therefore, good to remind you, as my learned brother Krishnaswamy Reddy, J., has done, of your statutory duty to find out the truth undistracted by the attempts of either party to distort the truth. Mr.P.Ramakrishnan, who retired as a Judge of

this Court, was the Principal District Judge of Tirunelveli, and I had to handle a brief before him, when I was a member of the Turunelveli Bar. Suddenly, the Judge asked, "You say your client is truthful. How are you to find out the truth? I replied, "Truth, they say, lies at the bottom of a bottomless well. You can never see truth uncontaminated in this world. Absolute truth is not available for mortal eyes to see. All truth is mixed with untruth. Therefore, it is all the more difficult for the Judges to sift truth from untruth." Speaking of judicial difficulties in getting at the truth, I desire to say that we must give the Judges every available facility for finding out the truth. When I was a Session Judge at Coimbatore, I made a request that the High Court might be pleased to supply to every Sessions Judge a human atlas produced by an English Company. It gives a three-dimensional representation of the human system and is in three parts. One part gives a three dimensional representation of the skeletal system, the second part, of the muscular system, and the third of the nervous system. If a sword 9" long is thrust upward in the lower part of the abdomen, it is difficult for us to imagine which internal organs will be affected by the thrust. But this atlas will show us vividly the route of the injury. It cost Rs.15 in those days. But the request was turned down by the High Court on the ground that it would be costly to supply the atlas to every Sessions Judge. (At this stage, the Chief Justice announced that he would direct the atlas to be supplied to every Sessions Judge.) I am so happy that my Lord the Chief Justice is now accepting my request, which was turned down previously. I dare say that it will be of immense help to the Sessions Judges.

Another thing which I may refer to is the need for Judges to take special interest in weeding out corruption. I think much can be done by the Sessions Judges in that direction. While I was Sessions Judge at Madurai, I learnt that whenever I passed a bail order, the Bench Clerk concerned would retain the copy of the order with himself and would not part with it to the lawyer till he was paid Rs.100. This had been happening, I was told, for over ten years. I told the Bench Clerk in open Court within the hearing of the Bar:

“As soon as I pass a bail order, I will give the office half an hour to get it typed. It must be brought to my table by 1 P.M. for my signature, and the copies will be delivered in open Court to the lawyers concerned at 1 P.M.”

This practice immediately eliminated the corruption that had been in vogue for over a decade. If you have the missionary spirit, the zeal of a crusader, and if you feel that you are the instrument of a higher power sitting on the Bench, you must be able to find out many other effective ways of eliminating corruption of this kind. Lastly, I wish to say a word or two about exhibitionism in judgments. I have in my hands two judgments of a Sessions Judge. I have regard for his erudition and his wholesome cultural interests. So, I do not wish to mention his name. In one of his judgments, this is what he states:

“The learned Counsel for the accused submitted that there are instances in epics which show that the son had murdered his mother. He quoted in this connection poem No.144 in ‘Uthara Kandam’ in Kambaramayanam at page 643, sixth volume, by

V.M.Gopala Krishnamachariar, 1962 Edition, wherein it has been stated that Parasurama who had been directed by his father Jamathagni killed his own mother Renugathevi since while she had gone to the river Ganga for bathing and bringing water for doing “Omam” by her husband, on seeing Chitrarathan, a Gandharva playing in the river along with Apsara women, had a liking on him and stood for sometime seeing him and when she came back to her husband with the water after some delay, her husband finding out the cause for her delay directed his first four sons to kill her without any hesitation in their mind saying that she had lost her chastity since she had a liking for a moment towards a Gandharva. But they refused to do so; but when Jamathagni directed his fifth son Parasurama to kill his mother, Parasurama killed his mother at once in obedience to his father’s direction in order to save Dharma.”

After dealing with the Parasurama episode, the learned Judge proceeds to quote several songs from Kambaramayana, presumably in order to prove that matricide is not something unusual.

Now, I shall take up the other judgments. That is a case where a mother commits infanticide, and that is the provocation for the Judge to narrate elaborately the story of “Nalla Thangal”, and then to make a reference to Shakespeare’s Merchant of Venice, from which nearly 25 lines are quoted beginning with the line, “The quality of mercy is not strained”. These quotations, apart from failing to clarify any obscure truth of psychology or reinforcing any relevant argument, give the impression of an utter lack of judicial sobriety and dignity. Not that I am against literary

pursuits by Judges. I would certainly like them to have the experience of enlargement of consciousness by sousing themselves in literature. But if that kind of extra-judicial learning is going to affect, impair or subvert the judicial faculty, it would be better for a Judge to abandon such pursuits. Literature ought to give you a correct imaginative and human approach to problems that you have to tackle. It ought not to intrude into the judgments as a piece of exhibitionism. I remember Chief Justice Spens of the Federal Court of India writing a judgment in which he made uncomplimentary references to Mr. Justice Sen of the Calcutta High Court and compared him with Alice in Wonderland. After the matter was remanded to Mr. Justice Sen, the latter in a judgment of austere dignity, admonished the Federal Court Judge for violating all judicial convention by referring to a fictitious character in the judgment. The Law Reports of England show that you can improve your judgments without importing literature into them. One exception to this rule was Lord Birkenhead, who was a triple First in Law, Literature and Politics and who had an extraordinary sense of appropriateness and could therefore quote literature in his judgments and get away with it. Milton, after becoming blind, wrote a sonnet on his blindness. He said, *“God, you have made me blind, I trust you will accept even a blind man’s services. The King has ambassadors, who ride across the hills and dales to foreign lands and serve him loyally. The King has also a Guardsman at his palace gate, who by merely standing and waiting at the gate serves the King with equal loyalty.”* After expressing this sentiment, Milton closed the sonnet with the line, *“He also serves, who stands and waits”*. Lord Birkenhead quoted this line in a classic judgment of his. A man went inside his house

and committed murder, whereas his friend stood at the gate to see nobody interfered with the murder. The question arose whether the accessory before the fact, that is to say, the man, who waited at the gate, would be equally guilty with the principal offender. Lord Birkenhead, while holding that he was equally guilty and inflicting life sentence on both, wound up his judgment with the Miltonic line, "He also serves who stands and waits." I do not think that men of lesser stature should ever attempt to quote from literature in their judgments.

In March, 1943, that is, three months before I was appointed as District Muncif, I happened to make a speech on "Laughter and Tears" under the chairmanship of Mr.P.V.Balakrishna Iyer, who was the then District Judge of Tirunelveli and who later became a Judge of this High Court. The theme of the speech constrained me to send the audience into peals of laughter and then to make them shed tears of pathos. In his concluding speech, Mr.Balakrishna Iyer remarked, "*Mr.Maharajan has been recruited to the judiciary. Very shortly he will be a District Munsif. I wish to give him this warning, If you are going to import laughter into your judgments, you may have to shed tears*". That is a piece of advice which I have tried my best to follow and which I commend to all of you for acceptance.

* * *

REFLECTIONS OF A RETIRED JUDGE

After having been on the Bench for 32 years and previously, at the Bar for eight years since 1935, I have gladly accepted the invitation extended by the Editor of the “CARAVAN” to record the impressions which cross my mind at the time of my retirement, and to formulate some problems, which, in the interests of the nation, require to be tackled forthwith.

As an Advocate, I enjoyed the thrill and joy of battle at the Bar, but my emotional make-up was such that I completely identified myself with my clients and suffered with them their anxieties, frustrations and triumphs in litigation. My vested interests in my forensic fortunes prevented me from seeing Truth in a spirit of detachment.

But, after coming to the Bench, I gained a new freedom and started functioning in an atmosphere of healthy unconcern for the consequences of my decisions. My main concern was with Truth as I saw it, and I found I could see the Truth more clearly from the Bench than I could see it while at the Bar. From the detached elevation which the judicial office gave me, I could see the human drama in all its pathos and splendour, and I could engage myself in the high enterprise of seeing Man in the perspective of his cosmic destiny. This instilled in me a humility of approach to every judicial problem that arose before me, and constrained me to bring to bear on the solution of every problem all the moral and intellectual resources that I could command. A Small Cause suit might be a small cause in the eyes of a statistician, but in my eyes, its adjudication demanded as much judicial attention as a Zamindari suit involving crores of rupees. I have always felt that a wrong decision given hurriedly in a Small Cause suit might possibly inflict more harm upon the fortunes of a poor man than a wrong decision in a rich man's case.

Law is after all a man-made institution intended to give effect to hazy human concepts of justice and it will not work satisfactorily unless the administrators of law are not only guided by the cold light of legal logic, but are also suffused with the warmth of human imagination. The ultimate guarantee of justice, as has been said, is the personality of the Judge.

As I look back in retrospect upon my 32 years on the Bench, I think I have had occasions to err, but I have the satisfaction that those errors were not the result of any conscious prejudice on my part. As I regarded my judicial work as part of my spiritual

discipline ,I have always endeavoured to put myself under the microscope to see that the my sub-conscious prejudices, which, like any other man, I have inherited from the amoeba downwards, did not affect my decisions. But I suspect that the unconscious prejudices of my ego might possibly have, left their stamp upon my judgments.

However, I hasten to add that the judicial process has invariably given me joy,— a joy as great as that I derive from literature, if not as great as the joy that Yogic contemplation has given me. I have revelled in law and in the application of the law to the myriad facts of the human predicament. I do believe that Literature and Art, and above all, a spiritual out look can refine and deepen the judicial perception. I may say that I never allowed narrow legalism to overwhelm my sense of justice and I have never allowed my personal concepts of justice to overspread the limits of law. Thanks to the thousands of lawyers that have appeared before me in the Moffussil and the city, my life on the bench has been most exhilarating and rewarding to me.

Though during arguments, I might have, for the sake of clarification, examined and perhaps disagreed with the views of eminent Judges, I have never allowed myself the indiscipline of ignoring citations, which I was bound to obey. In a country, where freedom is a recent acquisition, it is but natural that many citizens should assure themselves of the reality of freedom by challenging everyone and everything of importance in public life. But this is a temptation which the Judiciary must resolutely resist. We expect the Judiciary to be an exemplar of restraint and reticence. But I am distressed to find an occasional Judge converting the Court

into a pulpit for propagating his pet theories and favourite cliches. Such outbursts are bound to confound and demoralize the subordinate Judiciary, whose unfortunate duty it is to respect even the *obiter dicta* of Courts of record. Not un-often we see the spectacle of a single Judge refusing to follow an earlier single Judge ruling; of a Division Bench showing the blind eye to the propositions of law laid down earlier by a Full Bench; of a full bench laying down law diametrically opposed to that laid down by a Fuller Bench without even so much as referring to the Fuller Bench ruling. If such omissions take place because of failure of the Advocates concerned to bring the earlier ruling to the notice of the Court, such omissions need not cause serious concern. But if Courts at the highest level consciously disregard earlier rulings because it does not suit them, they will be introducing an element of grave uncertainty in the field of law and human relationships.

Illustratively, I may refer to a decision of a Bench of five Judges of the Supreme Court of India in Prabhu. v . Ramdeo and others (1967 I S.C.J. 60). There, it was conceded that a mortgagee could not create an interest in the mortgaged property which would ensure beyond the termination of his interest as mortgagee, and consequently, any lease granted by the mortgagee would come to an end the moment the mortgage was discharged. But the Supreme Court added that where before the mortgage was terminated, the tenant of the mortgagee has obtained certain rights and privileges under a statute, the principle that the lease is co-terminus with the mortgage would no longer hold good, because the statutory rights and privileges of the tenant are neither traceable to, nor derived from, the mortgagee, but have been

conferred upon the tenant by the statute. If the tenant of the mortgagee, during the currency of the mortgage, has been conferred certain rights and protection under a special statute, he would be entitled to those rights and protection notwithstanding the fact that his landlord's rights have terminated as a result of the discharge of the mortgage. This is a proposition, which was laid down by a Bench of five Judges of the Supreme Court. This judgment was pronounced on 28th February, 1966. On 26th September, 1969, two Judges of the Supreme Court, in All India Film Corporation Ltd v Shri Raju Gyan Nath (1970 II S.C.R. 581), without referring to the ruling of the five Judges, held that the East Punjab Urban Rent Restriction Act could not be taken advantage of by the tenant in that case, because the tenant had obtained the tenancy agreement from the mortgagee, and the mortgagee's right had been terminated by the redemption of the mortgage, and there was, therefore, no tenancy to be protected under the East Punjab Urban Rent Restriction Act. In other words, this decision refused to take into account the principle laid down earlier by the Full Bench to the effect that though the lease may terminate with the mortgage, the lessee may, independently of the mortgage and the lease, secure protection under the statute. It is noteworthy that one of the two Judges that gave the later ruling had been a party to the earlier ruling of the Supreme Court. The earlier ruling has not been so much as referred to in the later ruling

Take, again, the ruling of the Supreme Court (K.S.Hegde and A. N. Grover JJ) in the Commissioner of Income-Tax v. Rameshwarlal Sanwermal (82 Income-Tax Reports 628). There, the learned Judges had to consider the question whether the shares

that stood registered in the name of the manager of a Hindu joint family were taxable as dividends in the hands of the Hindu undivided family. Their Lordships held that where the shares acquired with the funds of the Hindu undivided family were held in the name of the Kartha, the Hindu undivided family could be assessed to tax under the Income -tax Act on the dividends from those shares. This judgment was delivered on 22nd September, 1971. On October, 12, 1971, a Bench of two Judges of the same Supreme Court (and one of them was K. S. Hegde J.) in Commissioner of Income-tax v. C. P Sarathy Mudaliar (83 Income-tax Reports 170) laid down the proposition, which is plainly opposed to that laid down three weeks earlier, and proceeded to observe:

“It is well-settled that a Hindu undivided family cannot be a shareholder of a Company. The shareholder of a Company is the individual, who is registered as the shareholder in the books of the Company. The Hindu undivided family, the assessee, in this case, was not registered as a shareholder in the books of the company, nor could it have been so registered. Hence, there is no gainsaying the fact that the Hindu undivided family was not the shareholder of the company.”

The effect of this decision is that even though the shares were registered in the name of the Manager of the undivided Hindu coparcenery, the dividends therefrom would be taxable in the hands of the individual in whose name the shares stand registered, and not as dividends in the hands of the Hindu undivided family,

of which the registered holder is the kartha or the manager. That such conflicting decisions should emanate from the highest Court in the land is perplexing, especially when one remembers that the time interval between these conflicting rulings is as short as three weeks, and one of the two Judges who has been a party to the later ruling had been a party to the earlier one as well. Such conflicting rulings, whatever the reasons for the conflicts may be, would have an unsettling effect upon the Indian citizen. The doctrine of precedents is founded on a basic notion of fairness—that like cases will be decided alike. Consistency on the parts of Courts is an important virtue, because it permits citizens to predict the reaction of Courts in a given situation. It gives the citizens the confidence that a Court will not decide a new case before it according to the impulse it may have at the moment, but will act consistently with prior decisions. No doubt, if precedents are found for good reasons to have been wrongly decided, the prior decisions can be overruled. But to show the blind eye to a precedent without even noticing and overruling it reflects a dangerous trend. As a retiring Judge, I deem it my duty to call attention to it.

Soon after the French Revolution, love of individual freedom was running riot in France, and the French jurists expressed their abhorrence for precedents by prescribing in Article 5 of the Code Civil as follows:

“Judges are forbidden, when giving judgments in the cases brought before them to lay down general rules of conduct or decide a case by holding it was governed by a previous decision.”

In fact, when I was the Chief of the Judiciary in the erstwhile French India, I remanded a case to the lower Court, but the lower Court refused to carry out my directions in the remand order on the ground that my view of the law was, in its view, erroneous. This shocked me into making a research into the history of French law and to find that normally a quashing decision of the Supreme Court of France is not binding on the lower Court, unless all the Chambers of the Supreme Court consisting of about 48 Judges sat together and gave a decision. Such a decision on a point of law would bind the inferior Court and that too, in that particular case. I think it is wise to ignore the French example and follow the British respect for precedents. In fact, Lord Tennyson sang of England as a country

“Where Freedom slowly broadens down
from precedent to precedent.”

I may make use of this occasion to sound another note of alarm. I have always been of the view that the attempt of Courts to legislate must be reduced to the minimum. It is for the legislature as the voice of the people to express through their enactments the desires and needs of the people. Where the legislative intent is clearly expressed and constitutional limits are not exceeded, Judges must defer to the legislative will and give the fullest effect to it, even if it be contrary to the private opinions of Judges. No doubt, legislative enactments cannot provide for the enormous complexities of Indian Society, and where there are loopholes and ambiguities in the enactments, Judges have to exercise their power of interpretation and incidentally, to make law. But, there is a tendency in certain judicial quarters to depart from the letter and spirit of the law under the guise of

interpretation. This leads to needless confrontations and to angry and hasty amendments of statutes, which ultimately give rise to further complications, from the social point of view.

Lastly, I wish to emphasize that words are the tools with which we, Judges, lawyers and legislators, have to work. If we wish to work effectively, we must keep the tools in good order. Unfortunately, we have to use a foreign language as a tool of expression. Draftsmen not well-versed in English, use clumsy long-winding sentences, each of which crawls awkwardly like a tapeworm across a whole printed page. Such sentences very often express the very opposite of what the draftsman intended. Lust for words makes some Judges use a plethora of words where one word would suffice. The result is that precision is the first casualty. Two thousand years ago, the Tamil Poet Tiruvalluvar wrote a couplet, which may be translated into English as follows:

“ Utter not a word without making sure
there's no other word
to beat it”.

If we cannot follow this advice to use the inevitable word, while employing the foreign medium of English, let us honestly switch over to our own mother tongue and use it as the instrument of legislative, judicial and forensic expression. If this is not practicable in the present Indian situation, we must take serious and immediate steps to acquire a mastery of the English language. The minimum objective in passing an enactment or writing a judgment is to convey meaning, but beyond that are the really interesting objectives of precision, clearness, logic and grace. Thomas Jefferson, whose mother tongue was English- and

ours is not- spent eighteen days writing and re-writing the Declaration of Independence. Voltaire was known to spend a whole night toiling over one sentence. We have a great many statutes. Thousands are passed each year, if we add up the total production of our Parliament and State legislatures. Several thousand judgments are written annually interpreting these enactments. I do not know if the needed amount of toil goes into the production of these enactments and judgments. Nor do I know if the persons concerned are making efforts to cultivate the English language for attaining the objectives with which we use it in preparing laws and judgments. This is a problem which we cannot ignore without disastrous and unpredictable consequences.

I retire with the satisfaction that there is sufficient statesmanship and wisdom in our country for tackling these problems satisfactorily. Complexification is the law of evolution. There is increasing tension and violence around us, even around Courts. Problems will become more and more complicated in the future. I do hope that the challenges of the future will be effectively met and the Bar and the Bench will have a creative role to play in meeting those challenges.

* * *

"THE HIGH-BROW"

Dr Justice S Maharajan
(Radio-Talk, 25 May 1957: 9.15 P.M.)

Certain fictions have their use in the field of Law, Life and Literature. They may be fictions, but they serve to demonstrate certain points of view.

Take, for instance, the fiction of the reasonable man in law. Nobody has seen him in flesh and blood. He has no habitation except in the imagination of the jurist. But the behavior of the "reasonable man" is held up to us as a model. He is the standard by which the degree of care shown by you is judged. Let us suppose you are hauled up in a Court of Law for rash and negligent driving and running over a man. The question the legal folk will ask is, "Did you, in the circumstances of the case, act with the reasonable care of the reasonable man?" If you didn't, you will have to serve a term for manslaughter.

A similar fiction rules the roost in Politics and Economics. There, the question is, not "What the reasonable man would

think or do”, but “what the man-in-the-street would think and feel”. The man-in-the-street may be a myth, but he holds the yard-stick by which political and economic programmes are measured and judged.

As we turn to literary and art criticism, we come across the character called the “High-brow”. He is doubtless a myth, but a myth, which is as handy as the “reasonable man” and the “man-in-the-street”.

The expression, “High-brow” is evidently an Americanism and it requires some research to ascertain what it exactly connotes. Even Fowler, that learned and exquisitely cynical author of “Modern English Usage”, is uncertain whether this word means the same thing or different things. I should think this is a word, which, like the chameleon, changes its complexion with the context in which it is found.

The American, who coined the word, must have been a “Low-brow”, that is to say, a person who was not very intellectual, one who had simple tastes in Literature and Art, one who preferred detective stories to Shakespeare and Thucydides, one who preferred “Dabba Sangeetham” to the abstract graces of higher music. I conceive that this plain person met a gentleman of grave countenance and weighty circumstance, trailing clouds of Teutonic learning and quoting profusely from Latin, Greek and Sanskrit, in a bid to overwhelm his listener’s understanding. It is at this meeting, I fancy, the learned man must have raised his eye-brows in lofty contempt and his victim must have shouted out in agony, “Oh! You are a High-brow!”

The High-brow has the temperament of an Aristocrat and cannot help approaching you from an Olympian altitude of his own. He is sorry to be a little superior, but he cannot help it.

Perhaps, the High-brow's contempt for the Demos is well-deserved. We are living in times when the doctrine of "One man—One Vote" is invading the field of Art and working havoc. The ordinary Philistine is becoming increasingly powerful not only in Politics but also in Literature and Art. As the Philistine pays the piper, he insists on his right to call the tune, and the poor artist is forced to come down from his Ivory Tower to the market place and vulgarize his Art suitably. The man-in-the-street demands excitement; he applauds what is gaudy and bizarre; he responds to loud colours and louder music; he has no patience with the finer cadences, the greater intricacies and nuances. The uncultured man requires to be tickled and harrowed by Art and Literature, because he has little taste and less judgment. This explains the arrogant in-difference of the Scholar and the Artist, who look down on their fellow-creatures from a proper elevation. It is perhaps essential that they should keep the aristocracy of Art from the vulgar gaze. The vulgar may decry them as High-brows, but High-brows will unconsciously continue to play the part of policeman for Art and Literature.

*"We are God's Chosen Few,
All others will be damned,
There is no place in Heaven for you,
We can't have Heaven Crammed"*

However, there is one aspect of the High-brow which I cannot sufficiently deprecate. It is hightime that he realizes that

scholarship need not be as dull and heavy as a maund of scrap-iron; it can be as light as a high explosive.

By the by, my High-brow friend, why do you talk in language so learned, so obscure and so unintelligible that you make me feel unduly inferior? Display of superior knowledge is as vulgar as display of superior wealth. Your knowledge should tend, more definitely than the other fellow's wealth, towards good manners.

Pray, when you talk in English, why do you use those sesquipedalian Latinisms, which I do not understand, and I suspect, you do not understand either. And when you talk to me in Tamil why do you use Sanskrit words, which I do not know or do not fully understand? You pronounce them as if you were one of the select Few, to whom Sanskrit is second nature. You remind me of another High-brow friend of mine, who was repeatedly referring to "*Don Kee Hotay*". As I felt distressed by my ignorance, he proceeded to explain, with great pride, that Don Quixote is pronounced by the Spaniards as Don Kee Hotay. To say a Spanish word in the middle of an English sentence exactly as if it would be said by a Spaniard, no doubt, demands an acrobatic mouth; the facial muscles have to be adjusted to a feat of a different nature and as suddenly, recalled to the original condition. The hearer may wonder what a deuce of a fellow you are, but, nonetheless, he is annoyed and vexed by your vulgar exhibition.

Another handicap of the High-brow is that in the rarefied atmosphere in which he lives he is apt to lose touch with the realities of life and to develop, what I may call, a "sense of

disproportion". There was a distinguished Indian Orator, who wasted his whole lifetime learning the correct pronunciation of English words. The story goes that at dead of night, a neighbor rushed to him and told him excitedly that his grand child was being raped. The great orator raised his very eye-brows in cold disdain and admonished his neighbor, "It is not rape, my young man, and it is *"raipe!"*

Some of the High-brows distrust the masses so deeply that they condemn all Art that appeals to the masses as cheap. To them, real or serious Art must be beyond the comprehension of the masses. They demand of the Artist, not only expression of obscurity but also obscurity of expression. In their eyes, Bharathi's Poetry and Kalki's prose lack art, because they are intelligible and not obscure. Difficulty seems to be the quality which this species of High-brow requires. To him, nothing is art, unless you need commentators to explain it. He would declare a book bad, because it is easy; he would declare it good, because it is difficult. The "High-brow" is "Dwijaha" - a twice born person; he has achieved eminence by hacking through a wilderness of difficult and dull books. An intelligible book, which is non-challantly delightful and which appeals to the masses, appears to the High-brow to belong to the plebian class. The morbid assumption is that what is popular must be inherently and necessarily bad, and that uncultivated human taste is naturally perverse. To wash it of its original sin, the High-brows steep themselves in the morass of obscurity, surrealism, cubism, musicism and what not.

Then, there is the other type of High-brow, who without deep knowledge of Art and Literature, passes for a critic. He is

no more than a Dilettante, who is eager to swim with the fluctuating currents of fashion. Look at those two important-looking persons going round that Picture Exhibition. They go into ecstasies before a certain mystic painting, thinking it is that of Nandalal Bose. Suddenly, one of the two turns to the Catalogue and discovers that the painting is that of a lesser celebrity. Forthwith the two turn away from the picture, which they had been so strenuously admiring and pass on to the other corner where Nandalal's picture is hanging and fall into raptures before it. They do not think for themselves; their thoughts and their very ecstasies are borrowed and second hand.

They remind us of the story of the two Italians, who quarreled so bitterly over the relative merits of Tasso and Ariosto that at last they decided to settle the dispute by fighting a duel. The duel proved mortal to both and as they lay dying on the ground, one of them said to the other "*And to think I have never read a line of Tasso or Ariosto*". "Nor I either", said the other and then both expired.

In Tamil literary history, we have intelligent concretizations of certain wholesome types of Highbrows. We meet the fearless Nakkirar. Lord Shiva had improvised a poem in which he sang hallelujahs to the natural fragrance of Parvathi's lock of hair. Nakkirar, the High-brow, challenged the validity of this statement and maintained that no woman's hair could have natural fragrance. When the Author of the poem threatened to open his third eye, Nakkirar stuck to his guns, and got burnt. Apparently, Nakkirar was too much of a Rationalist to believe in body-odor, but he richly deserved the martyrdom that was thrust upon him.

Seethalai Sathanar, on the other hand, was a sensitive and timid soul. He was so finely strung that whenever he came across Low-brow poetry, he used to maim his own head with an iron stile. Blood-letting of this kind gave him temporary relief from the vulgarities of art.

Then, we have the bullying type of High-brow, represented by Villi; he used to scissor off the ear-lobes of erring poets. Ottakoothar was the most merciless of our High-brows. He enjoyed a great autocracy in the Realm of letters. He decepitated any poetaster, who committed the slightest mistake of grammar, syntax or prosody. Modern trends in Literature and Art indicate the need for such stern Monitors.

* * *

MY EXPERIENCE IN INTER-FAITH DIALOGUE

(Speech Delivered at the commemoration of the 19th centenary celebration of St. Thomas, organised by Fr. Ignatius Irudayam, founder of Aikiya Aalayam, on 15-04-1972)

The very idea of holding an Inter-Faith Dialogue marks a great advance in religious thinking. It implies a refreshing recognition of the fact that all religions have the same goal in view and that by putting their heads together the religions would stand to gain. The Dialogue is also a timely corrective to the assumption of the Established Religions that each of them has a monopoly of spiritual wisdom. Self-Conceit in any sphere is bad, but self-conceit in religion is particularly dangerous, because it stultifies the very purpose of religious pursuit, which is the elimination of egotism and the re-establishment of the Soul's Contact with Ultimate Reality.

In fact, Saint Tirumoolar, the greatest Tamil mystic, has drawn pointed attention to this danger in the following song:

ஓங்காரத் துள்ளொளி உள்ளே உதயமுற்று
ஆங்கார மற்ற அனுபவம் கைகூடார் சாங்கால
முன்னார் பிறவாமை சார்வறார் நீங்காச் சமயத்துள்
நின்றொழிந் தார்களே.

*They care not
that the Inner Light should dawn upon them
and carry them
to the egoless state of Beatitude;
They think not of Death;
Freedom from Birth they seek not;
They damn themselves
By standing ceaselessly
In the Death-grip of the religions.*

This is the warning that Tirumoolar issued, not to men of Religion, but to men of Religious intent. In fact, this is the warning that genuine mystics of all religions have issued to erring mankind. But men have always tried, in spite of these warnings to convert their respective religions into coat-pegs from which they could hang their little egos. The vast majority of men find in their religions a mere outlet for their egotistic effusions or an excuse for displaying their metaphysical erudition. Worse still, they derive from religion an inspiration for wrangling with those who believe in a different Faith and for destruction of those who refuse to fall in line.

Fortunately, mankind has arrived at a stage when it has become disillusioned with the achievements of religions. Some men have become violently anti-religious and assert, wrongly, that the total elimination of religion will cure us of all our ills. A few have, however, started re-examining the fundamentals of all religions in order to find out the greatest common measure and

to salvage what is essential in religion and sift it from what is not.

The Inter-Faith Dialogue represents this attempt of the Few. In these dialogues, we have made an earnest attempt to get rid of our angry incomprehension of the other man's Faith. This does not mean that these dialogues are always free from the possibility of friction. The stubborn attempt to project one's own religion as the most efficacious will be there, but we may claim that the dialogues have induced in us a wholesome reverence for one another's religion and may transform our spiritual perspective. These dialogues have served to convince me that there have been great seers in all religions and all of them speak almost in the same accents about their experience of God. If there is any disagreement among the theologians, it is mostly due to differences in their habits of thinking, in their social and climatic set-up and in their linguistic traditions of expression. It may also be due to the differences in the digestive capacity and maturity of those to whose needs religions have to cater.

Apart from the dialogues, we have had congregational prayers and meditation. Once we went into a silent and solemn meditation, which lasted nearly half an hour and it was memorable for the reason that it was able to unite in communion about 20 persons belonging to Faiths as different from one another as Saivism and Vaishnavism, Catholicism and Protestantism.

The success of these efforts is mainly due to the contagious sincerity of Fr. Ignatius Hirudayam. His genuine reverence for and understanding of other religions are uncommon and his loving personality has been able to smoothen out and tide over

the teething troubles of this new-formed Aikya Alaya. In fact, his knowledge of Saivite and Vaishnavite devotional and metaphysical literature is so intimate and accurate that Saivites and Vaishnavites find his company, particularly congenial and homely. We do hope that further collaboration in this great endeavour may further enrich the participants and enable them unitedly to tread the Unitive Way.

* * *

THE GANDHIAN EPIC IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

[Broadcast Talk by S.Maharajan dated 14th May 1973]

Gandhiji is dead no doubt, but is Gandhism dead? And what is Gandhism? Has it any relevance to contemporary life? How has it influenced mankind? These are some of the questions I shall try to answer in the course of the next few minutes.

First, as to what is Gandhism. It is a bundle of psychic and spiritual energy released by Gandhiji's Experiments with Truth, - - - energy which has survived the physical disintegration of his body. He was in constant touch with the source of his being through prayer. He said, "Prayer has saved my life. Without it, I should have been a lunatic long ago. In spite of despair staring me in the face on the political horizon, I have never lost my peace. In fact, I have found people who envy my peace. That peace comes from prayer. I have given my personal

testimony. Let every one try and find that as a result of daily prayer, he adds something new to his life". It is through prayer that Gandhiji realised inter-relatedness and indeed the oneness of all life. This realisation enabled him to overcome all egoistic fear and hatred and to fill his heart and soul with a self-effacing love. The multitudinous mass of men may present an appearance of diversity. But they are in fact psychically grounded in an ultimate unity. If we go deep down into the sub-conscious mind, all superficial differences between man and man disappear and a harmonising unity is all that remains. The only way to eliminate inter-personal friction is to forge a weapon out of the stuff of that residual unity, and that weapon is selfless love. It harmonises the part with the whole. Hatred, on the contrary, wrenches the part from the whole. So does violence. From an inner discovery through prayer of the unity of all life, Gandhiji proceeded to discover that loving non-violent resistance (Satyagraha) is the only efficacious weapon available to man for fighting against injustice and tyranny.

George Bernard Shaw ridiculed this concept of Satyagraha by saying: "The non-violence of the cow down the ages has not converted the tiger to vegetarianism." The Shavian analogy is striking, but inapt. The non-violence of the cow results, not from a deliberate self-giving courage, but from an unthinking fearful timidity. The cow exerts no soul force upon the tiger for the righting of a wrong, nor is the tiger susceptible to those finer sensibilities, which even the most depraved of humans responds to.

If a man hits another with a stick and the victim hits back with a similar weapon, both act within the frame work of

violence, and every violent blow gives the assailant a certain assurance of superiority. If there is a crowd looking at this single combat, it will applaud the more violent of the two. Suppose the victim, instead of retaliating violently, remains calm and cool and collected, and says that truth is on his side, and that both sides should examine the situation and abide by the truth, such a person would be displaying a superior kind of courage. He would rather suffer at the hands of his opponent than inflict suffering upon him. He bares his chest to the blows of his adversary, but shows no sign of fear or resentment against the evil-doer. His non-violent resistance will surprise the assailant because the victim's scale of values is different from that of the assailant. A little later the assailant would lose self-confidence and poise until at last he becomes thoroughly demoralised. The bystanders would be quick to realise that the courage of the non-violent man is superior to the courage of violence. The justice of the non-violent resister's case would then acquire a new authority and prestige. Love would ultimately reassert itself and the issue would be decided in favour of the Satyagrahi, provided of course he is championing a righteous cause. This is Gandhism as successfully applied by Gandhiji in settling the irritating and stupendous problems that arose between slave India and the mightiest empire in history.

As Albert Einstein, the greatest Scientist of this century, remarked: "Gandhiji demonstrated that the allegiance of men can be won not merely by the cunning game of political fraud and trickery, but through the living example of a morally exalted way of life." He added, "Revolution without the use of violence was the method by which Gandhi brought about liberation of India. I regard Gandhi as the only truly great political figure of our age.

Generations to come will scarce believe that such a one as this, ever in flesh and blood, walked upon this earth". This is the reaction of the most brilliant mind of our times to Gandhism. It is, therefore, idle to ask the question if Gandhism is relevant to contemporary life. The indications are that it will become increasingly relevant as the use of new destructive weapons of devastating effect bring home to us the utter futility of violence as an instrument of arbitration.

We shall next consider if the Gandhian concept of non-violent resistance has been successfully applied in other countries. During the Nazi invasion of Denmark in April, 1940, the Nazis pledged that they would not interfere with the civil liberties of the Danes. Contrary to the pledge, however, the Nazis displayed the Swastika emblem from a Danish public building. The Danish King protested that this act was contrary to the occupation agreement, and demanded that the emblem be removed. The German Officers refused, whereupon the Danish King said he would send a soldier to remove it. The Nazis replied that the soldier would be shot. "I'm that Soldier," retorted the King. At once, the Nazi flag was lowered.

Likewise, during the Nazi occupation of Norway, the Norwegian people silently resisted the invaders' will with grim endurance. But neither the Danes nor the Norwegians underwent any scientific training in non-violent resistance. Their resistance was spontaneous and sporadic, though successful.

It was in the United States that Martin Luther King applied the methods of Gandhiji after giving intense training to his Afro-American followers. In Montgomery, Alabama, racial segregation

prevailed in the buses, though the United States Supreme Court had ruled in 1954 that segregation in public schools was unconstitutional. In the buses, the first four rows of seats were reserved for the Whites and the last three rows for the Afro-Americans. If a Whiteman boarded the bus when the first four rows were filled with Whites, the bus driver would ask the Afro-American to move back and he would have to stand while the Whiteman took his seat. One Mrs. Park, an Afro-American, quietly refused to stand up or move back. She was arrested for violating the Segregation Laws, and this triggered off a Civil Resistance Movement under the leadership of Martin Luther King. Angry and violent Afro-Americans obeyed Dr. King, who told them, "Non-violence can touch men where the law cannot reach them. It is the method which seeks to implement the just law by appealing to the consciences of the great majority who through blindness, fear, pride or irrationality have allowed their conscience to sleep." Dr. King added: "It is my hope that as the Afro-American plunges deeper into the quest for freedom and justice, he will even plunge deeper into the philosophy of non-violence. The Afro-American must say to his White brother, "We will match your capacity to inflict suffering with our capacity to endure suffering. We will meet your physical force with soul force. We will not hate you, but we will not obey your evil laws. We will soon wear you down by pure capacity to suffer." It is this attitude of Gandhian non-violence that had earned for millions of Afro-Americans freedom from injustice.

Dr. King was only 7 years old in 1936 when Gandhiji told Professor Thurman, an eminent Afro-American, that Satyagraha would flourish best perhaps in the United States of America.

Dr. King was so inspired by Gandhian thinking that he felt it a religious duty to visit India. As he landed in India, he said, "To other countries I may go as a tourist, but to India, I come as a pilgrim." Perhaps, the far reaching implications of the Gandhian epic in contemporary society may be best described in the words of Dr. King, and here are his words: "I left India more convinced than ever before that non-violent resistance is the most potent weapon available to oppressed people in their struggle for freedom. It was a marvellous thing to see the results of a non-violent campaign."

* * *

THE JARGON OF THE ART CRITIC

In the north-eastern coast of Ceylon, there is a stretch of sandstone, which is known all over the world as Jargoon or Jargon. It is a species of quartz of the translucent or smoky variety. Light cannot pass through it except with some reluctance. It is suggestive of that smoky underworld, where dialecticians argue, and it becomes darker and darker.

It was a favourite fancy of Samuel Rogers that “perhaps in the next world the use of words may be dispensed with—that our thoughts may stream into each other’s minds without any verbal communication.” It is an idea which is fascinating. It would save us from the terrors, which the clumsy instrument of human speech inflicts.

Language stands like a veil between the writer and the reader. It becomes most effective when the veil becomes thinnest and most transparent. And the texture or pattern of the veil ought

not to distract us from the thought behind it. But, in the hands of some writers, the veil becomes an opaque and impenetrable mask or curtain. Some sardonic genius, who suffered from the tyranny of dense and unintelligible writing, must have called it “jargon”, because it resembled the silicate Zircon, which, as I have said, is found in abundance in the sands of the Ceylonese coast.

Now, the man who is addicted to jargon, is called a jargonist, although I prefer to call him a jargon-wallah. His main demerit is his inability to think straight and write straight. Supposing a man is carried home drunk, he would not say so. He would say that the man was conveyed or transported to his place of residence in an intoxicated condition. He won't ask you for a pinch of snuff, because that would be too honest and straight. He would insist on dipping his digiterial extremities into your odoriferous concavity and taking the pulverized atoms, thrust them into the nostrils of his nose. The roundabout methods of circumlocution gratify his vanity and perhaps impress the ignorant. But they remind us of the spectacle of the domestic dog, whizzing round and round to bite his own tail. One suspects that the dog has an itching sensation in his posterior and his circumlocution has an aim and purpose, which the jargon-wallah lacks.

The Babu may say, “I am glad and sorry to tell you that I have passed and failed in Shorthand and Typewriting respectively.” When he says that, he is not resorting to jargon. He resorts merely to respectively-ism. In his eagerness to tell you all things at once the Babu telescopes his success and his failure, his shorthand and his type-writing, his gladness and his sorrow into a strange juxta-position. But he does not, like the jargonizer, use

words to display his learning or to hide his ignorance or to make you feel inferior. And the poor fellow gains our sympathy.

But, when the Art Critic speaks, I refuse to extend the same charity. He puts me in an atmosphere of painful strangeness with his jargon which keeps intruding between him and me at every step. By all means, let him speak of the treatment of light and shade in a painting. But, why should he keep calling it the chiaroscuro of the painting? He won't call a spade a spade; his pompous vanity requires him to call it an agricultural implement! As the art critic is spouting his chiaroscuro, his poor reader has to painfully turn over the pages of the Dictionary and discover that chiaroscuro means nothing more than light and shade, and that it is an Italian word derived from the Latin, 'ClarusObscurus' (clarity and obscurity).

Hardly have you recovered from the shock of Chiaroscuro, when the critic mumbles something about the "patine" of the painting lacking vitality. Oh! My lord, bring the Dictionary again and what does 'patine' mean? It is an incrustation on surface of old bronze or gloss produced by age on woodwork. Evidently, our jargon-monger has extended the meaning of this word to the surface appearance of paintings. He puts an impossible strain upon words and metaphors, twisting and contorting them and producing savage jargon of yells and brays and screams.

There is an eminent critic nearer home-I shall not tell you his name-He always delivers his verdicts with an air of omniscience. Discussing the art of Vikatam in a Weekly, he utters the following gibberish:-

“The art of Vikatam is a melange of many ingredients” (‘Melange’, mind you, need not drive you again to the Dictionary. I have looked it up myself and it means merely a mixture) “The Art of Vikatam,” says the critic, “is a melange of many ingredients, whose individual flavours are not submerged, but contrapuntally arranged in a complex harmony.” This gentleman mixes in his decoction not only ingredients but also incongruous metaphors. I won’t object to his arranging musical notes in a harmony, simple or complex. But, what he does is to arrange tastes and smells in a harmony and he does so with the aid of that outlandish adverb, “contrapuntally”. It is part of the witchcraft of this critic to hunt for the little known devils and imps in the nether-land of expression and use them to bolster up his fading omniscience. “Contrapuntally” is a poor devil, which has been rusting unused in the dictionary for ages, till it received deliverance from this trafficker in jargon. The word “contrapuntally” is intended to convey what the more familiar word, “counterpoint” conveys. It means the mode of adding melodies as accompaniment, a mode in which the melodies can be changed in position above and below one another. What this musical device has to do with Art of Vikatam, the jargonizer alone can tell!

Obscure and pretentious verbiage of this kind provoked P.G.Wodehouse to create an unforgettable character in one of his Mullinear. Stories Cyprian is the name of the abominable Art Critic, who steps into the studio of a struggling and irritable painter by name Ignatius. The Critic examines the picture through a blackrimmed monocle-He moves his head about in great solemnity, peers between his fingers and makes funny art-critic noises.

“Y-e-e-s” grunts Cyprian.

“M’Yes. Ha! H’M” The thing has rhythm (Evidently he means the painting) It has undoubted rhythm, and to an extent, certain inevitable curves, and yet, can one conscientiously say that one altogether likes it? One fears one cannot.”

“No?” asks the irritated artist.

“No” says Cyprian. He toys with his left whisker, massaging it for purposes of his own. “one quite inevitably sees at a glance the “patine” lacks “vitality”.

“Yes?” growls the artist.

“Yes” says Cyprian. He shuts his eyes, opens them, half closes them once more, fiddles with his fingers and expels his breath with a hissing sound. “Beyond a question, one senses in the patine a lack of vitality, and vitality must never be sacrificed. The artist must use his palette as an orchestra. He should put on his colours as a great conductor uses his instruments. There must be significant form. The colour must have flatness, a gravity, shall I say, an aroma? The figure must be placed on the canvassin a manner not only harmonious, but awake. Only so can a picture quite too exquisitely live. And as regards patine” Before Cyprian could finish his jargonic sermon, the artist bundles him up and sends him rolling down the staircase, which, you will agree, is the only right thing to do. Novelists, like Wodehouse, can take liberties with their characters, liquidating them when they become intolerable. But the difficulty with us, poor mortals,

is that the “contrapuntal” critics are not fictitious characters, but live persons. Much as we would wish to do it, we cannot bundle them up and roll them down the staircase - May we rest content with calling the bluff!

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21

IN RETROSPECT

(1977)

Last May, I completed 64 years on this planet. 64 years has been a big enough chunk of time, if you look at time with the eyes of Youth, but to a Methuselah, 64 years may look trivial. Even to me, who has lived through these 64 years, they look like 64 hours.

In infancy, I found that time was at a stand still, perhaps because as a child, I was so absorbed in life and living, that I didn't psychologically take note of the passage of time. But after crossing the time of manhood in the fifties and sixties, I find that time flies with such rapidity that a week speeds passed like a day. May be that as the last zeal approaches, we become more conscious of physiological time and we wish to slow down its passage.

As I look back at the fabric of my life, I discover in it a design, which was being slowly and mysteriously unfurled in my 20th year, I could not discern it. Even in my 30th year, I had no glimpse of it. But in my 64th year, I see it so clearly with a hind-light, many

events that took place in my life which at the moment of their happening, gave me bitter disappointment; evidently because I didn't have the requisite foresight. But when I look at them in the light of subsequent events, I realize how those temporarily disappointing events are going to enrich me in future.

As a student in St. Xavier High School and College at Palayamkottai, my main ambition was to become a Journalist. I, therefore, equipped myself for the job in several ways. I studied many books and I consciously sharpened my power of articulation in English and in Tamil.

Due to circumstances beyond my control, I had to abandon my ambition of becoming a Journalist. This was in 1931. The very high marks that I had obtained in Chemistry in the Intermediate Examination made my parents to persuade me to apply for the Chemistry Honours Course at the Presidency College, Madras. In those days, it was easier for a camel to pass through an eye of a needle than for a moffusil student to get admission in the Chemistry Hons. Course at the Presidency College. When I got a card admitting me in that course, I felt patent that a signal honour had been conferred upon me. But in my heart of hearts, I was disappointed, that I should give up my long cherished ambition of becoming a Journalist and join a Course which had nothing in common between it and Journalism. It took some days for me to resolve it and when I did come to Madras in the first week of July, 1931, Dr. Fyson, a rather extraordinary Englishman who was the Principal at the Presidency College, snubbed me for coming late and said, "a seat in the Chemistry Hon. Course in the Presidency College will not wait for you young man; because of your delay in coming, it has been allotted to another. You may go back home." After receiving this snub, I turned my back to Madras and proceeded

to Annamalai Nagar and joined B.Sc Course in the Annamalai University, which was then a students' paradise. The foundation for the great and challenging responsibilities, which I was to assume later in life as an adult, was laid in my University life at Annamalai Nagar. I became the Chairman of the prestigious University Union. I became the Student Editor of the Annamalai Nagar Miscellany. Then I became the Chairman of the Tamil Union as well. These offices trained me in those skills and taught me those virtues which were indispensable for the proper discharge of the challenging duties and responsibilities with which I was entrusted later on and of which I had no notion whatsoever at that time. During the Chemistry Course in 1931, a great institution offered me an attractive scholarship for going to Germany and undergoing a course in Textile Chemistry. My ambition was now to become a great Textile Chemist and to restore the ancient glory of India in the manufacture of Gossamer Textiles. I, therefore, started learning German assiduously and with staring eyes looked forward to my visit to Germany. But in 1933, Hitler made a bitterly anti-Indian speech, and my father who read the speech, told me: "My boy, you are not going to Germany." I felt the whole knowledge that I had gathered for the purpose of becoming a Textile Chemist had, like the knowledge that I had gathered for the purpose of becoming a Journalist gone to waste. I felt deeply frustrated, and with a view to make the best of the bad situation, I applied for admission to a Mining Engineering Course of Dhanbad. I got information that I would be admitted; but then my father, who was the Circle Inspector of Police and who had a great admiration for the Judiciary, told me: "I don't want my son to be called a Miner. He must one day become a Judge". This was the prediction made in 1933 and though he died in the succeeding year, in 10 years, I became a member of the State Judicial Service, in 30 years, I

became the Chief of the French-Indian Judiciary and in 36 years after the prediction, I was elevated to the highest Court in the State of Madras.

Usually, lawyers and judges dare not cross swords with witnesses, who are experts in medicine, Engineering or any other branch of science. But during my seven years at the Bar and my 32 years on the bench, the knowledge I had acquired for the special purpose of becoming a Journalist and the knowledge I had acquired for the purpose of becoming a Textile Chemist, enabled me to tackle medical, engineering and scientific experts with a confidence and an insight, which my non-scientific colleagues didn't enjoy. It is true that because I could not peep into the future, I felt unhappy when my well-laid plans for becoming a Journalist or a Chemist were frustrated. But when I look at these frustrations in the light of subsequent events, I see that it had for shaping me all these years with one pointed concentration so that I might ultimately become a Judge of my fellow men – a post which I occupied for 32 years of my life.

I was practicing as an Advocate at Tirunelveli for eight years from 1935 and during that period, I enjoyed the thrill and joy of battle at the Bar. But my emotional make-up was such that I used to completely identify myself with my clients and to suffer with them their anxieties and their frustrations. The litigants judged me purely by the favourable verdicts I could secure. In a fiercely competitive profession like the Bar, I had to keep myself intellectually fit all the time. But vested interest in my forensic fortunes prevented me from seeing Truth in a spirit of detachment.

But after I became a District Munsif in 1943, I gained a new freedom and started functioning in an atmosphere of healthy

unconcern for the consequences of my decisions. I was no longer under an obligation to please my pay-masters (the litigants) by securing verdicts in their favour. My main concern as a judge was with Truth as I saw it, and I could see the Truth more clearly from the Bench than I could see it at the bar. From the detached elevation which the Judicial office gave me, I could see the human drama in all its pathos and splendour and I could engage myself in the high enterprise of seeing man in the perspective of his cosmic destiny.

The Judicial Office instilled in me a humility of approach to every judicial problem that arose before me and constrained me to bring to bear on those problems, all the moral and intellectual resources at my command. A Small Cause Suit might be a small cause in the eyes of a statistician; but in my eyes, its adjudication demanded as much judicial care and attention as a Zamindari suit involving crores of rupees. I always felt that a wrong decision given hurriedly in a Small Cause Suit may possibly inflict more harm upon the fortunes of a poor man than a wrong decision in a rich man's case.

Law is after all a man-made institution, intended to give effect to human concepts of justice. It will not work satisfactorily unless the administrators of law are not only guided by the cold light of legal logic but also suffused with the warmth of human imagination. But the ultimate guarantee of justice, as has been said, is the personality of the Judge. The more enlightened the personality of the Judge, the more satisfactory is the quality of his judgment.

As I look back in retrospect upon my 32 years of the Bench – as a Munsif, s Subordinate Judge, a District Judge, as Chief of

the French Indian Judiciary and ultimately as Judge of the Madras High Court, I think, I have had occasions to err; but I have the satisfaction that those error were not the result of any conscious prejudice on my part. As I regarded my judicial work as part of my spiritual discipline, I always endeavoured to put myself under the microscope to see that my sub-conscious prejudices, which I have inherited from the amoeba downwards, did not affect my decisions. But I suspect that the unconscious prejudices of my Ego might possibly have left their stamp upon my judgments.

However, I hasten to add that the judicial process has invariably given me joy – a joy as great as that I derive from Literature if not as great as the joy that Yogic contemplation gives me, I have reveled in law and the application of the law to the myriad facts of the human predicament. I do believe that literature and art and above all a spiritual outlook can refine and deepen the judicial perception. I tried my best not to allow narrow legalism to overwhelm my sense of justice or to let my personal concepts of justice overspread the limits of law. I found that effecting a reasonable compromise between the litigating parties is more satisfying than delivering a learned erudite and reportable judgment. I recall to mind several divorce cases, in which timely intervention by the Court put broken parts of a Home together and enabled the wife and the husband to live in peace. A college lecturer, after begetting three lovely children, quarreled with his wife and remained separate from her for several years. Ultimately, they resorted to my Court and asked for a divorce. I advised both the husband and the wife to sink their differences and told them how horrible their future was going to be, if their family life broke down. The wife was as indignant as the husband in rejecting my advice. I allowed both to let off steam and to scold each other as bitterly as they could and when I felt that they had given vent to

all their pent- up feelings, I called their three children into the Court, they ranged in age from 12 to 3. I told the youngest of the children, a toddler of 3 years old, “ Your father wants to live away from your mother. Whom would you like to live with?”. All the three children burst into tears and shouted in unison, “ our father and mother must live together and we will all of us live with both of them”. The words uttered by the children especially those of the 3 year old boy, had such a dramatic effect upon the quarrelling couple that they decided to live together with their children. Immediately a compromise was drafted and filed into Court, and I saw to it that the husband , wife and their three children boarded the same taxi in my presence and went home merrily together. Three years later, I accidentally met them at a theatre and I was thrilled and moved to hear from both of them that they were living happily and they had begotten a fourth child and had named him after the Judge, who had made peace between them and saved their family from going to pieces. However, there were a few other cases in which I failed to bring about an enduring reconciliation probably because I failed to show a little more sensibility that leaves me wondering what a disastrous impact judicial insensibility can have upon the lives of individuals.

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