

---

---

# KAMBAN AND HIS ART



C. P. VENKATARAMA AIYAR

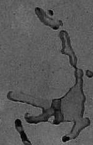
---

---





KAMBAN AND HIS ART



BY THE SAME AUTHOR,

**YOUTH AND CHARACTER (As. 8).**

The boys' own favourite story book :—*The Madras Standard.*

A well written story in Tamil, suitable for home reading by the youths of both sexes. This is used in Elementary and Secondary Schools as a supplementary reader. For opinions please see elsewhere.

**A CRITICAL STUDY OF TIRUMURUKATTRUPPADEI (As. 4)**

A literary estimate of the great classical poem by Nakkirar in praise of God Subrahmanya.

**KAMBAN AND HIS ART (Re. One).**

*Apply to:—*

C. COOMARASAWMY NAIDU & SONS,

35, Chinnatambi Street, MADRAS.

THE CUDDALORE GENERAL TRADING CO.,

CUDDALORE.



# Kamban and his Art

BY

C. P. VENKATARAMA AIYAR, M. A., L. T.,  
*Tamil Prizeman, Presidency College, Madras,*  
*Sub Assistant Inspector of Schools, Saidapet Range,*

AUTHOR OF

*Youth and Character : A Critical Study of*  
*Tirumurukattrupadei*

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

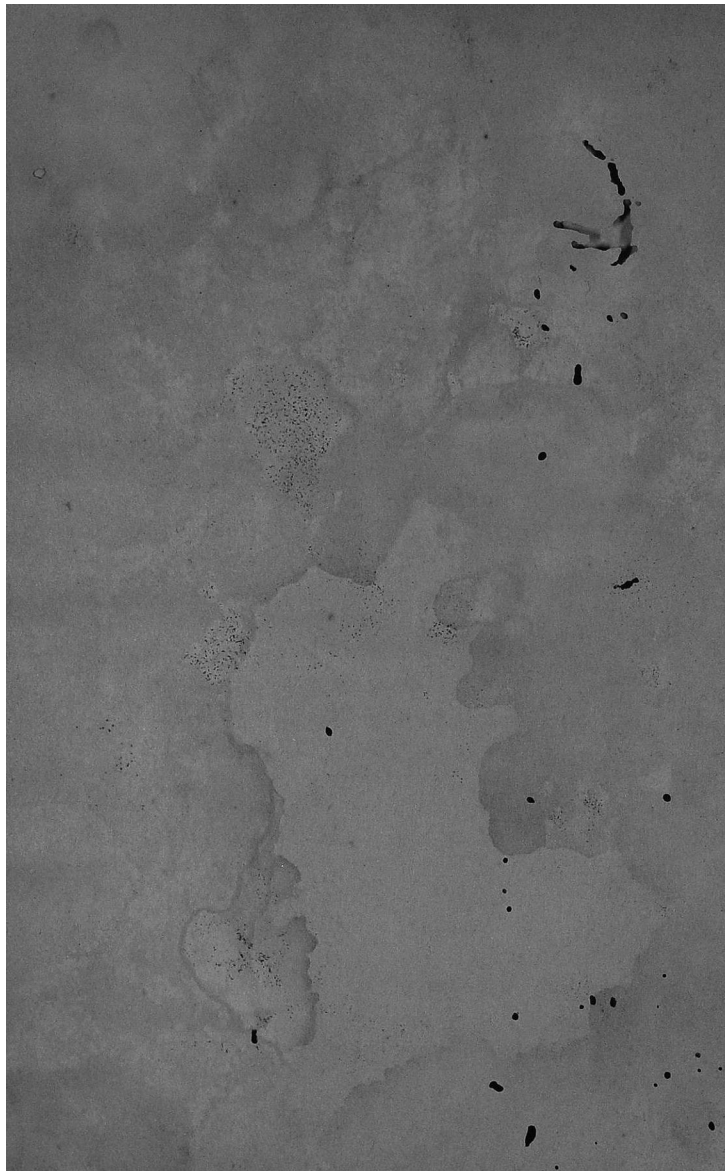
The Hon'ble Mr. T. V. SESHAGIRI AIYAR, B.A., B.L., F.M.U.

MADRAS :

C. COOMARASAWMY NAIDU & SONS

1913

*All rights reserved*



## PREFATORY NOTE

"Books we know

Are a substantial world, both pure and good ;

Round these with tendrils strong as flesh and blood

Our pastime and our happiness will grow" — *Wordsworth.*

As the title of this book indicates it is a monograph on a great poet in Tamil literature. It was my ambition for a long time past to present to readers unacquainted with Tamil, an account of the writings of a few of the best poets in Tamil literature, and with this aim in view I have here attempted a literary estimate of Kamban, the author of the Ramayana in Tamil.

Kamban's fame as a poet of enduring excellence and as the author of a very great work of literary art is no news to the Tamil world. A study of a few verses in Kamba Ramayanam has always been held to be very efficacious in purifying the mind and soul of the reader and hence even the modest beginner in Tamil generally knows by heart at least some verses of this immortal masterpiece of the poet.

But the task of presenting to readers unacquainted with Tamil, an idea of the superb excellence of this poet is rendered difficult by the fact that they have to appreciate the original only by means of a translation. Translations have ever been held to be weaker than the original and in the present literary endeavour I am ruefully conscious of this fact. The poet exhibits a remarkable power of insight into human nature; and the excellence of his diction and rhythm and the richness of his suggestive imagination baffle all attempts at a completely successful translation.

Still an honest endeavour has been made to present in the translation the different shades of meaning &c. suggested by the form of the original, and it is hoped that readers will find it easy to appreciate the purport of the original. I must moreover admit that this is a modest and unpretentious attempt laying no claim to any exhaustive treatment of the subject. The literary merits of the poet are so various that each detail of it may form the subject-matter of a separate dissertation; and hence I have herein summed up in brief outline merely the many characteristic traits which a student of Tamil may discover in the poet.

And as the comparative treatment of literature is one of the most stimulating processes imaginable to quicken literary taste and appreciation, I have often compared Kamban to one or two of the best English poets in point of both form and content.

I would deem myself amply repaid if this humble endeavour evokes the sympathy and kindly interest of the English reader in a critical study of the Vernaculars, which in my humble opinion, possess literature which will do credit to any nation; and arouse in him a warm appreciation and an enduring admiration of the inexhaustible variety and abundance of literary excellence exhibited by this Prince of Tamil poets.

It gives me no small pleasure to express herein my cordial appreciation of the very great kindness of my friend M. R. Ry. T. S. Sreenivasa Iyengar Avl., M. A., (English Prizeman, Madras University) whose critical reading of the proofs has been very much to the advantage of the book.

SAIDAPET, }  
August 1913. }

C. P. V.

# CONTENTS.

---

|                             | PAGE. |
|-----------------------------|-------|
| <i>Introduction</i> ...     | ix    |
| CHAPTER.                    |       |
| I. INTRODUCTION ...         | 1     |
| Ideal of Poetry ...         | 3     |
| II. TREATMENT OF NATURE ... | 7     |
| Truth and Beauty ...        | 14    |
| Emotions ...                | 15    |
| The Lyric ...               | 16    |
| Pathos ...                  | 27    |
| Despair ...                 | 31    |
| Ecstasy ...                 | 33    |
| Disgust ...                 | 34    |
| Conflict of Feelings ...    | 36    |
| Love and Ties ...           | 40    |
| Rama addressing Sita ...    | 42    |
| III. IMAGINATION ...        | 47    |
| Simile ...                  | 51    |
| Suggestive Imagination ...  | 54    |
| Truth and Beauty ...        | 57    |
| Rama ...                    | 58    |
| Sita ...                    | 62    |
| Hanuman ...                 | 63    |
| Kausala ...                 | 63    |
| Sumitra ...                 | 63    |
| Vali ...                    | 63    |



|                         |     |     |     |
|-------------------------|-----|-----|-----|
| IV. ART IN POETRY       | ... | ... | 63  |
| Epic of Art...          | ... | ... | "   |
| Art in Description      | ... | ... | 66  |
| Art in Statements       | ... | ... | 70  |
| Minuteness...           | ... | ... | 72  |
| Climax                  | ... | ... | "   |
| Brevity                 | ... | ... | 73  |
| Sound and Sense         | ... | ... | "   |
| Thought                 | ... | ... | 78  |
| Vedanta                 | ... | ... | 79  |
| Dramatic Effect         | ... | ... | 80  |
| Word-painting           | ... | ... | 81  |
| Sympathy                | ... | ... | 84  |
| Worldly experiences     | ... | ... | 85  |
| Custom and Civilisation | ... | ... | 87  |
| Common sense            | ... | ... | 88  |
| V. STYLE                | ... | ... | 92  |
| Learning                | ... | ... | 94  |
| VI. MOTIVE AND MESSAGE  | ... | ... | 96  |
| VII. INFLUENCE          | ... | ... | 100 |
| Wonder in Poetry        | ... | ... | 107 |
| Patronage               | ... | ... | "   |
| Conclusion              | ... | ... | 108 |

## INTRODUCTION

---

In these days when it is boldly asserted that there is no vernacular literature in this country, Mr. C. P. Venkatarama Aiyar's temerity in venturing to write on *Kamban and his Art* is in the nature of a challenge to these critics. *Kamban* occupies a position in Tamil Literature which is unique. It is not easy to compare the position of a poet of one language with those who have composed in other tongues. It is as difficult as comparing different literatures. Yet, to those who may claim to have a fair acquaintance with the literary productions of different languages, it is by no means an uncongenial undertaking to try to fix the place comparatively of eminent poets. Mr. Venkatarama Aiyar is a Master of Arts of our University and his acquaintance with the works of Tamil authors is considerable. He has been at pains to arrive at a judicious conclusion, regarding the merits of *Kamban's* great poem. His knowledge of English writers and his study of literary criticism have enabled him to examine *Kamban* with great care and caution. Mr. Venkatarama Aiyar's conclusion that "*Kamban* can stand very fair comparison with the author of the *Raghuvamsa* in Sanskrit and the inimitable Shakespeare" is not far off the mark.

Students of literature are familiar with the great hold which the story of Ramayana has upon popular imagination in this country. Valmiki is read and expounded at least once a year in every village. No man who lays claim to some knowledge of Sanskrit has not read this great epic. But the popularity of the story is not entirely due to the versification

of Valmiki. Some stories have been rendered great by the greatness of the writer. Others have gained reputation by the merit of the story which they had the good fortune to versify. It is not a bold assertion to make that great as is the poem composed by Valmiki, greater is the theme, greater still is the veneration for the hero. Valmiki has been supplemented in the various literatures of this country by adaptations of the incidents of the poem in different languages. Every language has immortalised itself by reproducing this story. Poets and devotees have sung it to every tune. But, perhaps, the most comprehensive reproduction of the tale is that to which *Kamban* has given his name. *Kamban* says at the outset that he had before him not only Valmiki, but two other poets. There are indications that *Kamban* was a Sanskrit Scholar. His *Ramayanam* is, in no sense, a translation of the great Sanskrit poem. In the *Balakandam*, the description of the City of Ayodiah borrows nothing from Valmiki; and as we proceed we find that while loyally keeping to the main incidents of the story, he is not inclined to slavishly follow Valmiki.

I can lay some claim to a knowledge of Tamil, because my optional language up to the B. A. Degree Examination was Tamil; and I have no hesitation in saying that apart from indenting for the incidents of the story upon Valmiki, *Kamban* nowhere tries to follow him without discrimination. Mr. Venkatarama Aiyar has done full justice to the many-sided nature of *Kamban's* literary skill. He has examined *Kamban* from every stand-point, and his quotations show how great the author was, how varied his attainments and how carefully he had studied nature.

Mr. Venkatarama Aiyar has done great service to the cause of Tamil Literature by his critical study of *Kamban*. The "*Modern style and spirit*" of which we hear so much

*ad-nauseam* will not be so assertive if it will show some inclination to study Tamil Literature as carefully as Mr. Venkatarama Aiyar has done. There are people—most of them have not read a syllable of Tamil—who barefacedly proclaim that there is no Vernacular literature. May I ask them, in all humility, to study this book of Mr. Venkatarama Aiyar? No exercise in *composition* can give the student an insight into the beauties of the language which *Kamban's Ramayanam* can give, which the songs of *Avvai* and the pithy sayings of *Tiruvalluvar* alone can impart. A knowledge of the language is not synonymous with proficiency to write a few words in *Modern style*. That will not enable a man to understand the people, and appreciate their feelings. That can come to the Indian and no less to the foreigner, only by studying classics like the *Kamba Ramayanam*; and the modern style will not lose but will gain by reading *Kamban*.

Mr. Venkatarama Aiyar is entitled to the best thanks of the Tamil public for his erudite and able treatise on *Kamban* and his Art.

"PAMMAL HOUSE," }  
Vepery, Madras. }

T. V. SESHAGIRI AIYAR.

# KAMBAN AND HIS ART.

---

## I. INTRODUCTORY.

The story of the Ramayana, originally written in Sanscrit by Valmiki, has, by reason of its absorbing interest engaged the attention of many a poet in different Indian languages. And such poets have generally vied with one another in portraying the character of the consummate hero and heroine of the epic. In Tamil literature, this great epic has been sung in 12,000 verses by the renowned Kamban. The poet's name is quite a familiar one to the Tamil world, and he can stand very fair comparison with the author of the Raghuvamsa in Sanscrit, and the inimitable Shakespeare.

The caste and origin of this immortal poet are enveloped in mystery. Tradition has it, that he was somewhere found as a waif on the street by a couple eagerly longing for a child, and that he was thereafter brought up by them. His guardian was an Ovachan by profession, whose duty it was to blow the conch at break of day, in a temple at Teralundur, in the Tanjore District. The only truth that could be gathered from this story is that he was born and bred up in an unostentatious way; and that when his name was first known to the literary world, he was already great.

It has been roughly estimated that the poet lived some 1,000 years ago, as poet laureate at the Court of the Chola Kings. It is not here proposed to enter into a discussion of the origin, the caste, etc. of the poet, but an attempt will be made to analyse the many literary excellences of the greatest of Tamil poets—excellences which earned for him, in his own age, — a rather unique event, — the proud appellation of Kavichakravarthi meaning Emperor of Poets. This would mean that he was the most prominent poet of the age and that there was no one then who could presume to occupy so much as even a second place to this great poet.

He occupies in Tamil literature, a place marked for himself, an eminent pedestal which no other poet has till now reached. The poet's literary attainments are so very unique and many-sided, that critics, out of sheer despair to account for such extra-ordinary skill generally hold that he was a gifted poet and that he was the favoured son of Saraswati, the Goddess of Learning. This is only an acknowledgment of the great erudition of the scholar who had such a wonderful command of language and precision of thought. There is ample internal evidence to show, that far from being a poet, who, by mere divine guidance lisped in numbers unconsciously, Kamban read almost all works in Tamil, which were recognised by the Academy of his age, and assimilated what was best in the thoughts of the older authors. He not only read and assimilated ideas but he went a step further. He was himself a critic besides being a poet, and he set up for himself to follow a noble ideal



of poetry, which in its essence was drawn from the poet's best friend, Nature herself.

## IDEAL OF POETRY.

It is in exceedingly sweet lines breathing the inward rapture and profound knowledge of the poet, that Kamban describes what the aims of a true poet should be. He compares the art of poetry to the majestic and easy flow of a great river ; and herein is to be found the great secret of his magic power. Nature opens her treasures only to those of her sons who implicitly obey and watch her. The poet, who according to Kumaragurupara Swamigal, is, as regards the creative art, greater than even God Brahma himself, in that his creations unlike those of Brahma are all of them permanent and imperishable, embodies in his works all that is best and noblest in his thought. Just as the great Creator involves His own meaning in His creations, so also a great poet embodies his doctrines and principles and the message of his life in his poems. And where we get a mind of an unruffled and calm temperament disposed to view Nature ideally and understand her purpose aright, all the hidden beauties of literature and thought are bound to shine in their true brilliance.

According to Kamban, ideal poetry is to the poet, what a river is to the Naturalist, an object beautiful to look at, and pregnant with meaning.

“புவியினுக் கணியாயான்ற பொருடந்து புலத்திற்குகி  
அவியகத் துறைக டாங்கி யைந்தினை நெறியளாவிச்  
சவியுறத்தெளிந்து தண்ணென் றெழுக்கமுத் தழுவிச் சான்றோர்  
கவியெனக் கிடந்த கோதா விரியினை வீரர் கண்டார்”

It will be seen that the words in the above stanza denoted in the footnote below are capable of being interpreted according as the object to be considered is a river or a poem. He held that the function of all good poetry was to teach humanity and guide their conduct in life. He set to work with this high ideal before him and nowhere has the beauty of his poetry been spoilt by the ethical note it contained. He was a master in combining truth with beauty. Art and ethics are so harmoniously blended in his work that we not only appreciate the art, but at the same time we cannot forget the import of the poem. In fact it is because of the inimitable art in his poetry, that his morals are indelibly impressed upon the minds of his readers.

The heroes soon came in sight of the Godavary — who in her meandering progress resembles poetry, beautiful and majestic in its course, bringing fertility to the land it traverses, and carrying in its bosom such articles as are to be found in steppes and mountains, deserts and plains. When the words (1) அணி (2) பொருள் (3) துறை (4) தினை (5) ஒழுக்கம் refer to *poetry*, they mean (1) figures of speech (2) wide meaning and suggestive thought (3) modes of expression (4) love and war, the themes of poetry (5) excellence of diction.

But when they refer to a river, they mean (1) the beauty of the river (2) the fertility of the water and of the alluvial deposits; the sandalwood and stone, etc. that a river carries (3) the several ghats or flights of steps in a river (4) the regions a river traverses (5) the meandering course of a river.

Thus, while the pleasing rhythm and the easy flow of his verse satisfies our æsthetic sense, the sublime philosophy of the Vedanta and the Upanishads revealed therein, satisfy our intellect. Kamban therefore saw that poetry in its highest sense, was but a mediator between Nature and Man, and that its chief function was to teach us Nature's best lessons in an easily understandable way. The truth and beauty of an impartial administration, obedience to elders, divine friendship, affection of kith and kin, love of husband and wife, devotion of servant to master, and other human relations, are all very vividly described in his greatest masterpiece but nowhere is ethics so much overloaded as to spoil poetry. Kamban's Ramayanam is therefore not a mere record of many historical facts connected together by cause, effect, and time, but there is a strong undercurrent of human element pervading the whole work, which makes it the more interesting and instructive.

The Ramayanam of Kamban is written on the lines of what is known in Tamil as Perunkapiyam (பெருங்காப்பியம்) or the great epic. The essential requisites of matter and style distinguishing this form of poetry from others is detailed out in a Sutra. It should begin with a prayer or salutation to God, and relate the lives and deeds of a consummate hero and heroine. Descriptions of the mountain, sea, country and town, the seasons, the rising and setting of the heaven's lights, marriage, Coronation, strolls in parks and gardens, merry making in the waters of a limpid stream, love making, dalliance and wit and strife, birth of sons, council meetings, ambassadorial duties,

war and victory, are all considered to be the most essential requisites of matter; and as regards style, the best possible art, revealing the intense ardour of thought and the imaginative excellence of the poet, is insisted upon. And such subjects like love, courage, mercy, wonder, mirth, fear, etc., should shine in their greatest possible excellence. This ideal which is set by the ancient Tamil grammarians, before the poet who strives to narrate an old story, is in itself proof sufficient to show the high degree of culture and critical faculty developed in the Tamil world some thousands of years ago. Whether or not Kamban has achieved his object, whether by the application of the above canons of criticism he can be said to have had a mastery of style conforming to the matter will be the subject of our investigation here. And his success or failure will have therefore to be judged according as he followed the above rules. But in this connection it should however be remembered that these rules set forth above are not in the nature of set rules of poetry laid down with a dictatorial authority. On the other hand they only serve as guidance for the beginner and lay down the broad principles of all true epic poetry. And the poet is not bound to confine himself to the four corners of the rules given above. He may use his best art and the best thought and his work may no doubt bear the special impress, the "hard acorn of his own thought". But, he should on no account fail to dwell on such objects of true beauty and taste, given out in the Sutra above referred to. The detailing of the matter and form tends only to help and not embarrass the individuality of the poet and of his work.

## II. TREATMENT OF NATURE.

To begin with, a poet's real art, his perception of things, and his appreciative faculty are all best known only by his treatment of Nature in his poems. As regards Kamban, even before he attempted to write the epic, he was already struck with the beauty of the Southern Tamil country, a region of beauty and delight and in his descriptions of Ayodhya, Mithila, and the Kosala country, he only transcribes what beautiful objects and scenery he daily saw in the Chola country.

He had a very keen perception of Nature. Whether in his descriptions of things or statement of facts, he embodies the truth of things as observed by him, and inimitably joins actual human existence with the common occurrences in Nature, thus showing the higher connection that subsists between man and the beautiful world around him. He has to say how Sita passed a moonlight night. Instead of simply expressing himself upon the circumstance he states that the lotus flower closed its petals in the moonlit night, and so also Sita; thus leaving the reader to infer his idea. The closing of the petals is significant of distress and want of cheer.

“சேக்கை யாகி மலர்ந்தசெந் தாமரைப்  
பூக்கள் பட்டதப் பூவையும் பட்டனள்.”

(பாலகாண்டம் — மிதிலைக் காட்சிப்படலம்.)

The lotus flowers which had blossomed at the dawn of the day closed their petals in the moonlight night. The experience of the lotus was similar in character to that of the maiden Sita.

He is always true to Nature. He is a very strict follower of the natural phenomena and nowhere is his own interference or personality perceptible. In describing the things that Rama found in the forest he makes mention of a kind of paddy, found only in the forest and mentioned in ancient Tamil literature, like *Pathupattu* and *Purananuru*. He talks of *Aivana Nel*, the paddy above referred to, the millet, the beans, the bamboo corn, honey, the jack fruit, and the other characteristic vegetable products found in the mountainous country. Nothing in Nature is too trivial or unimportant for him. He does not miss to find the tiniest flowers, and the colour and fragrance of their pollen. He was sympathetic towards the lives of the hunters and other people living in the forests, and, as if by contrast, makes mention of the innocent and happy lives spent by them, as compared with the artificial lives in the towns. Even the dry river-bed, he does not forget to describe.

Likewise he makes mention of the merry pranks of the monkeys as truly as he observed them. Thus he refers to the monkey beating the drum placed on the floor by the inhabitants of the forest who used to guard their fields and drive away birds by beat of that drum.

“அறைகழற் சிலைக் குன்றவ ரகன்புனங் காவற்  
பறையெடுத் தொரு கடுவனின் றடிப்பது பாராய்.”  
(அயோத்தியாகாண்டம் — வனம்புகு படலம்.)

Behold a he-monkey beating the drum left by the hunters who used to beat it in order to frighten away birds from destroying the vast fields of corn.

And as truly he refers to the merry play indulged in by the monkeys in the forest streams, and his sense of colour and light is nowhere better seen than where he describes in most musical lines, the reflected light of the Sun upon the red stone quarry.

“ஈறுவெங் கதிர் செறிந்தன பேர்கல திரியா  
மாறில் மண்டில நிரப்பிய மாணிக்க மணிக்கற்  
பாறை மற்றொரு பரிதியிற் பொலிவன பாராய்.”

(அ — வனம்புகு).

With the instinct of accurate observation and ideal thought characteristic of a great poet, he saw that joy and sacrifice were the ever abiding external principles of Nature. A poet's inward delight in Nature is only shown in his minute descriptions of natural objects and scenery. The manner of his referring to the feeding of the pregnant elephant by its loving mate which brings good sweet honey from distant forests, is therefore characteristic of the greatest of Tamil poets.

“உருகு காதலிற் றழைகொண்டு டுழலைவண் டோச்சி  
முருகு நாறுசெந் தேனினை முழைரின்றும் வாங்கி  
பெருகு சூலிளம் பிடிக்கொரு பிறைமருப் பியானை  
பருக வாயினிற் கையினின் றளிப்பது பாராய்.”

(அயோத்தியா — வனம்புகு படலம்.)

(i) Behold ! the hot rays of the Sun fall on the red stone quarry and as the quarry reflects that light, it dazzles as another Sun on earth.

(ii) Behold that elephant ; out of his unbounded affection for the she-elephant, he draws fresh honey from the trees above and after driving away the flies with leaves, takes the honey in his trunk and inserts it into the mouth of the pregnant she-elephant.



He had an appreciative joy of the eye for seeing natural objects, and of the ear for hearing Nature's music. He therefore puts into the mouth of Rama words breathing genuine delight in observing Nature's beauty. The deer, the huge mountain serpent, the young of the elephant, the tiger, the trees, the high cloud-capped mountains, and the rivulet, are all graphically described. Similarly the *Konrai* flower, the parrot, the peacock, the busy bee, and the bamboo reed, all possess some beauty for the poet's eye. The beautiful gait of the swan which has found more than one votary among the Tāmil poets attracted the eye of Kamban also, and he shows that he has a superb admiration for that most beautiful sight in Nature. Without therefore putting it into the mouth of Rama, he himself says that he (Rama) saw such a sight.

“தளியன்னமு மடவன்னமு நடமாடுவ கண்டான்.”

It is further an easily observable excellence in Kamban, that wherever his deepest and sincerest feelings are touched and such occasions are of course not a few in the Ramayana his language answers to them in the deepest strains of the soul's natural voice, and becomes simpler, matter of fact, and plain—a plain transcript of actual experience without one word of commentary or explanation. In describing Sumitra's state when she heard that her son Lakshmana was immediately to leave the country, accompanying Rama to the dense forests, the poet accomplishes his result by the simplest of means, to wit, mentioning the bare fact true in Nature.

---

He saw the swan and its mate walking happily.

“பான்முலை சோரநின்றான்.”

(அயோத்தியா — நகர் நீங்குபடலம்.)

But when he has to describe an intense satisfaction of heart, an ecstatic delight, he uses his powers of description to the best advantage without at the same time striving after effect. Here too, he uses only the simplest means, but he uses more than one comparison just to convey his sense of satisfaction to others also. Thus in describing the state of rapture felt by Sita on getting Rama's ring through Hanuman, he brings in for comparison four of the best occurrences in Nature where such a satisfaction is felt, as would be felt by one who gains back, what he thought to have been irretrievably lost. Even so was Sita.

“இழந்தமணி புற்றா வெதிர்த்ததென லானாள்  
பழந்தன மிழந்தன படைத்தவரை யொத்தாள்  
குழந்தையை யுயிர்த்தமல டிக்குவமை கொண்டாள்  
உழந்துவிழி பெற்றதொ ருயிர்ப்பொறையு மொத்தாள்.”

(சுந்தர — உருக்காட்டுப்படலம்.)

(i) She stared vacantly while the breasts that had fed Lakshmana in his infancy drooped down out of inexpressible sorrow.

(ii) Her state of mind could be compared only to the state of mind of —

(a) a serpent which had regained its lost ruby ;

(b) people who get back their entire property which they had given up for lost ;

(c) the mother who sees her only child slowly regaining consciousness, when she had given the baby up as dead ;

(d) the born-blind who gain their sight by a miracle.

And what is more natural under the circumstances, than that Sita should bless from the very bottom of her heart the messenger, who, at a time when she was plunged in hopeless despondency and wished to end her wretched existence by committing suicide, brought, not only happy tidings of her lord, and what is more, recounted the high degree of love and affection which Rama bore her during all the years of their forced separation? It is the voice of her soul that speaks out when she addresses Hanuman as her mother, father, and the abiding home of true love towards the suffering.

“அம்மையா யத்தனாய வப்பனே யருளின் வாழ்வே.”

(சுந்தர — உருக்காட்டுப்படலம்.)

And out of her boundless gratitude for Hanuman's service in the cause of the friendless soul who was bewailing her sad estrangement, she sings forth in most musical lines and blesses the *deliverer* as she calls the divine messenger. It seems to be a voice from Nature's own recesses when she blesses Hanuman with a sweet everlasting existence.

“பாழிய பணைத்தோள் வீர துணையிலேன் பரிவு தீர்த்த  
வாழியர் வள்ளலே யான் மறுவிலா மனத்தே னென்னின்

---

(i) O thou who hast been to me a mother, a father, a friend of the friendless and the seat of all beneficent feeling and love towards the distressed.

ஊழியோர் பகலாயோதும் யாண்டெலா முலகமேழும்  
 ஏழும் வீவுற்ற ஞான்று மின்றெனவிருத்தி யென்றாள்.”  
 (சுந்தர — உருக்காட்டுப்படலம்.)

Kamban had the true poet's quality of entering into the feelings of others on particular occasions, and of interpreting and expressing those thoughts and feelings in language which naturally would have been used by the persons affected. Baulked of his purpose to see his eldest son for whom he cherished the greatest affection and love, crowned in his presence, it is but natural that the old Emperor should think all his dominions and rich fields and crown lost to him, as he contemplated the failure of the happy event on which he had set his whole heart. In his utter helplessness and grief he recounts minutely the vast extent of his dominion, the wealth of his country and the prestige of his crown, which he was thus forced to renounce in favour of the “roughish Kaikeyi” as he calls his second Queen.

“அள்ளற் பள்ளப் புனல்குழகன்மா நிலமு மரசும்  
 கொள்ளக்குறையா நிதியின் குவையும் முதலா மெவையும்

(i) O thou of majestic build and huge strength, who thus rescued a friendless being from the unfathomable ocean of grief into which she had been plunged and brought tidings of hope and consolation unto her, even as I am a person of a spotless character, may the God bless you with an everlasting life and may you live as hale and strong as you are now even on the great day of Universal Extinction when all the worlds are swallowed up.

கள்ளக்கைகேசிக்கே யுதவிப் புகழ்கைக் கொண்ட  
வள்ளற் றனமென் னுயிரை மாய்க்கு மாய்க்குமென்றான்.”  
(அயோத்யா — நகர் நீங்கு)

The several உம்ச (conjunctive links between words) in the above verse meaning not only this but also other property, would most effectively show the despondency of the heart and the feeling of jealousy, if not positive hatred, uppermost in his thoughts as he considers the mere possibility of the crown passing to another than Rama, even though that other individual be his own son by another Queen.

Truth and Beauty. Truth and Beauty. describing the extreme anguish of Kosala as she hears of her son's departure to the forest. The feminine quality of just squeezing the belly on occasions of great distress is most truly stated and the beauty lies in the statement itself.

“ஆலிலையன்ன வயிற்றினைப்பெய் வளைத்தளிராற்பிசைபும்.”

(i) The fountain of magnanimity, my darling, my heir apparent, who has this day abdicated his title to the throne and renounced not only all these extensive fields fertilised by the cool stream, but also the dominion of the kingdom, and the vast and inexhaustible treasures of gold and precious stones and gained undying Fame, — he, *he* will now *deprive* me of my life's breath.

(ii) The lady whose arm is adorned with amulets would squeeze her belly which in its shape resembles the banyan leaf.

And what is more natural for that distressed mother than to pathetically ask when the dire event was to happen ?

“என்று போவ தென வெழும்.”

It is in such simple statements of natural truth and daily occurrences that Kampan excels the most. Kampan cannot therefore be open to the blame to which his great English confrère Milton is subject. Raleigh, in his excellent monograph on Milton, complains that in Milton's Eden there are no villages, no farms, no cottages, no traces of human symbols. And though it was given to Kampan to describe the forests throughout the Ramayana as lonely and uninhabited, he has not done so. With him we are not anywhere very remote from daily life.

Nature was all in all to him. He always listened to her voice and drew all inspiration from her. He is her own sweet son and interpreter of the Creator's aim seen through Nature. With him Nature was not only the highest teacher of Love as it was with Shelley, but it was something more. Like Wordsworth his idea mainly rested upon the Thought expression of Nature.

He was a master in the delineation of the emotions of love, rapture, ecstasy, grief, melancholy, despair, Emotions. disgust, and conflict of feelings. He would touch the vital chords in the soul and make it vibrate in its own natural way. And as emotion is perhaps the most

‘She would rise all of a sudden and exclaim “when has he to depart ?”’

fundamental basis of all true poetic expression, we have only to open the pages of the Ramayana to see how far Kamban has described them. Everywhere we find the vast and immeasurable "sea of emotion" within the poet "curdled into thoughts". And the articulate language through which those thoughts are graphically described flow out in a rhythmical arrangement which is true poetry, pure, simple and edifying, and he uses only such language in which the soul of man would naturally express its many and varied emotions.

That Kamban excelled in the absolute dramatic vision which produces the fine lyrical style never The Lyric. admits of contradiction. Though he does not plainly force upon us his own subjective moods and feelings, still, the master's hand is clearly perceptible in all the personal revelations throughout the epic. Like Homer or Shakespeare he is able to sing all tunes. And with the excellent poetic temper which produces the true drama and gifted with a pure dramatic imagination, he reaches the highest forms of pure lyric in many places. And when he sings the lyrics of love and of melancholy, we seem to recognise no art at all therein but the very voice of Nature herself. There are many places in the Ramayana where the author makes the characters reveal their character themselves and the dialogues so naively written and put into the mouth of the respective characters are no doubt in the spirit of the drama. Moreover there is a natural gaiety, a sprightly movement, and an easily perceivable subjectivity of feeling, which go to show that he is a consummate artist at the lyric.



Especially, the stanzas which describe the state of mind of Sita and Rama on the night previous to the day fixed for their marriage, are in their essence purely lyrical in tone and form. There is heartiness and melody in them. What is more natural than that the maiden should yearn for the break of day? It is the ode to morning sung by the bride herself.

“உரவேது மிலா னுயிரீது மெனாக்  
கரவே புரிவா றுளரோ கதிரோன்  
வரவே யெனையா ஞடையான் வருமே  
இரவே கொடியாய் விடியா யெனுமால்.”

(பாலகாண்டம் — கடிமணப்படலம்.)

To the bride feverishly impatient for the approach of the dawn, every moment increased her heart's flutter and her mind's load of anxiety. She therefore says that it is her own fate that is responsible for the undue prolongation of the night and she advises her heart to fly like a bird to Him who is all love and all harmony and to whom her heart has already been undividedly given away.

“கனையேழ் கடல் போல் கருநாழிகைதான்  
வினையேன் வினையால் விடியா விடினீ

---

(i) Would any valorous man first promise to let go a mere stripling and subsequently play false to his plighted word? When it is certain that I would meet my lord at break of day, false night, how heartless you are!

தனியே பறவாய் தகவேது மிலாய்  
பனைமே லுறைவாய் பழிபூ ணுதியோ.”

(பால — கடிமணப்படலம்.)

And at last she became very tired with the fruitless yearning for the immediate dawn of day. She tries one other device; she requests the moon to spring up like the Sun. Her palpitating heart thus solicits the moon to help her.

“ஆயில்வே லனல்கால் வனவா னிழலாய்”

வெயிலே யெனநீ விரியாய் நிலவே

செயிரே துமிலா ருடறேய் வறுவார் •

உயிர்கோ ளுறுவா ருளரோ வுரையாய்.”

(பால — கடிமணப்படலம்.)

She is not successful even here, and when the towering heights of her pure emotions rise higher and higher, the soul speaks out in its sweetest and simplest speech. Thus, the summing up of Sita's state, is to us at least, amusingly pathetic; but to the loving maid with whom cruel Time seemed to pass laden with wings of heavy lead, and rather heartlessly

(i) But if the pitchy darkness of the night, which resembles the mingling of all the dark blue waters of the seas, does not, through my ill luck, pass off soon, how could you ANRIL bird on the tree, so silently enjoy companionship and pleasant repose in the presence of a sufferer? Would not one of you just fly out and call my lord?

N.B.—The Anril always lives in pairs—The male bird rarely separates from the mate—

(ii) The rays of the bright moon are too hot to bear. Why should not the Moon metamorphose itself into a Sun and help me?

put off the wished-for union of hands where there had already been a union of hearts, the state of her mind was indeed heavily distressing. The Sun would not rise, nor could she enjoy quiet sleep, and she knows of no expedient to put an end to her sufferings.

“பண்ணே பொழியா பகலோ புகுதா  
தெண்ணே தவிரா விரவோ விடியா  
துண்ணே பொழியா வுயிரோ வகலா  
கண்ணே துயிலா விதுவோ கடனே.”

(பால் — கடிமணப்படலம்.)

If Sita bewailed the prolongation of the dense darkness of the night, Rama was no less anxious for the break of day. It seems to be rather a serious question which can nevertheless admit of a ready answer as to who suffered the more — the bride impatient from love for her Lord or the bridegroom anxious to see the fair face of the paragon of women. Rama had no delight even in Nature's beauty. To him the whole world of wonder and sweetness was no compensation for separation from Sita. The possession of extensive gardens and the sweet zephyr laden with the fragrance of blossoming flowers could bring no delight to one whose heart was elsewhere.

“கல்லார் மலர்கூழ் கழிவார் பொழிலோ  
டெல்லா முளவா யினுமென் மனமோ

---

(i) After all, has it thus been ordained that I should suffer this existence? It is not yet dawn; my mind is wandering; I am cruelly vexed; and my eyelids will not close in sleep.

சொல்லா ரமுதின் சுவையோ டினிதாம்  
எல்லோ தியர்தாம் வினையா டிடமே”

(பால. — கடிமணப்படலம்.)

It is a different strain altogether in which Kamban describes Rama lamenting the loss of his renowned father. And it sounds the deepest depths of the soul's passionate grief for the departed great. Especially Rama could not bear to hear that the death of his father was caused not by any natural disease or other conceivable cause, but that he died of a broken heart, out of sheer grief for the exile of his beloved son into the dark forests. And his grief therefore knows no bounds as he contemplates the immensity of love which his renowned father bore him. And Kamban who thoroughly entered into the thoughts of the grateful son, at this particular juncture, expresses Rama's lamentation in a manner which is at once pathetic in the extreme, and as beautiful as it is true to nature.

“தேனடைந்த சோலைத் திருநாடு கைவிட்டு  
கானடைந்தே நென்னத் தரியாது காவலநீ  
வானடைந்தா யின்ன மிருந்தேனான் வாழ்வுகந்தே  
ஊனடைந்த தெவ்வ ருயிர்குடைந்த வெள்வேலாய்.”

(அயோத்தியா — கிளைகண்டு நீங்கு படலம்.)

(i) Though I roam about in this beautiful garden of flowers surrounded by the crystal waters of the stream, my heart is the playground of a maiden whose words alone are mellifluous.

(ii) O sire who has vanquished all your foes by plunging your lance deep into their entrails! No sooner did you hear the tidings of my departure to the forests, leaving behind me the land flowing with honey, than you let go the breath which sustained your being till then. Look at that picture and look at me. What have I done? I have heard that my father is no more but still I am alive yearning after the evanescent pleasures of this material world.

And it is likewise perfectly natural for the grief-stricken innocent Bharata to fall at the feet of Kausala like a rootless tree and enquire.

“எந்தையெவ் வுலகுளான் எம்முன் யாண்டையான்.”  
(பள்ளியடைப் படலம்.)

And the lyrical expression of the varying moods of one from bitter anguish of the heart to placid resignation to the inevitable, is most wonderfully done in the *Sundarakandam*. Sita is alone and helpless in her solitude in the *Asoka* forest in Lanka. She is surrounded by a number of weird and ugly women of the Rakshasa clan. She is much disgusted with such environments and her heart pants for freedom, and union with her Lord from whom she had been so cruelly wrenched. She has grave doubts whether she would live to see the approach of Rama with his invincible bow. She enquires of her own soul than whom she has then no other companion worth talking to.

“கருமேக நெடுங்கடல் காரணை யான்  
தருமே தனியே னுருயிர் தான்  
உருமே ருறழ்வெஞ் சிலை நானொலிதான்  
வருமே யுரையாய் வலியார் வலியே.”

(சந்தர — உருக்காட்டுப்படலம்)

(i) Tell me the planet where I could hope to find my father now ; and whither has my brother gone ?

(ii) Say, if he, whose complexion is delicious to the eyes even as are the waters of the deep blue sea or the moisture-laden cloud, would go here to give me my life; would I ever hear within a short distance the thundering sound of his strong bowstring as it is drawn to its full tension to dart an arrow.

In her direst distress, she seems to find out a conspiracy as it were in Nature to thwart and molest her. And she requests Nature, her only friend, to just rouse her Lord into activity, for delivering her from the *Asoka* forest.

“கல்லா மதியே கதிர்வா ணிலவே .

செல்லா விரவே சிறுகா விருளே

எல்லா மெனையே முனிவீர் நினையா

வில்லா ளனையேதும் விளித் திலிரோ.”

(சுந்தர — உருக்காட்டுப்படலம்.)

But she has her own strong hopes, that after all, Rama would surely come and deliver her. It is this confidence in the valour and the all-loving heart of her Lord, that sustains her in her worst troubles.

“வாரா தொழியா னெனும் வண்மையினால்

ஓரா யிரகோடி யிடர்க் குடைவேன்

தீரா வொரு நாள்வலி சேவகனே

நாரா யணனே தனி நாயகனே.”

(சுந்தர — உருக்காட்டுப்படலம்.)

(i) O ignorant Moon, everlasting night, and undiminishing darkness! You pester me and torment me thus with your presence. But have you ever approached the Lord of my heart, who, I think has forgotten his spouse all this while?

(ii) I am yet keeping the breath going out and coming in (without letting it go finally) and suffer passively one thousand million and odd of annoying enormities because I firmly believe and hope that He (Narayana) would surely go hither and protect me, for He is so magnanimous and kind to his devotees.

And again her heart sinks into despair. She could not carry the burden of her life in the midst of such surroundings. How long could she reasonably afford to wait for her Lord's arrival? This is the question that now presses insistently upon her pining heart. She bids adieu to her breath and thought, till the happy day on which the Lord of her heart would come and see her.

“பேணும் முணர்வே யுயிரே பெருநாள்  
நாணின் முழல்வீர் தனிநா யகனை  
காணுந் துணையும் கழிவீ ரவிர்நான்  
பூணும் பழியோடு பொருந்து வதோ.”

(சுந்தர — உருக்காட்டுப்படலம்.)

Her mind is yet not free. A thousand thoughts flit across her imagination and she is in the cruellest of dilemmas. Would her Lord reclaim and acknowledge her should she sustain her life till his arrival? She has her doubts on this rather delicate question. She has a free conscience and an unblemished heart. But she is not quite certain as to how *Rama* would view her stay in Lanka. She has purposely prolonged her earthly existence only in hopes of seeing her Lord again. But would he acknowledge her as his wife, nay, would he approach and so much as *touch* her?

---

Away all sensibility; away even life, until the day when He the Lord, could see you. How long am I to remain in suspense and anxiety heavily laden with inexpressible grief and blame?

“அறையிருங் கழலவற் காணுமா சையால்  
நிறையிரும் பலபக னிருதர் நீணகர்  
சிறையிருந் தேனையப் புனிதன் நீண்டுமோ ”

(சந்தர — உருக்காட்டுப்படலம்.)

Musing thus, she accuses herself of a lack of knowledge of the essential attributes of the chaste woman, who would end her life if ever through any untoward event, she is separated from her husband. She thinks that she is perhaps the solitary exception who so shamelessly stuck to her life under the circumstances. Hence she bewails.

“சொற்பிரி யாப்பழி சுமந்து தூங்குவேன்  
நற்பிறப் புடைமையு நாணு நன்றரோ  
கற்புடை மடந்தையர் கதையு ளோர்கடாம்  
இற்பிரிந் துய்ந்தவர் யாவர் யானலால்.”

(சந்தர — உருக்காட்டுப் படலம்.)

And she resolves to end her wretched existence which is perhaps the best thing to do under the circumstances.

(i) In that big city where crowds of princes wait at the gates eagerly expecting the audience of the mighty hero, who wears the single amulet significant of valour on his leg — would that great hero of far-reaching fame and of a spotless character condescend so much as to affectionately meet me, nay at least to touch me ?

(ii) It is strange that I should still be supporting a life which is devoid of all pleasure. An undying stigma will ever attach to my name and of what avail then is my respectable descent and modesty. I have not come across a single instance in legend or story, where a woman has survived separation from her spouse. I am the only unfortunate exception.



‘ஆதலா னிறத்தலே யறத்தினுறு.’

(சுந்தர — உருக்காட்டுப் படலம்.)

It is a different passion altogether—the passionate grief of a woman for her departed lord—that Kamban portrays in Kausala's lament for Dasaratha. It is here quite natural for the wife to describe in minute detail the several accomplishments of her lord and how as Fate would have it, she was so unfortunate as to be deprived of such a gem of a husband. It is the expression of the sincerest soul-stirring grief which Kamban thus describes. The pang of the loss is most affecting.

“திரையார் கடல்கு மூலகின் றவமே திருவின் றிருவே  
நிரையார் கலையின் கடலே நெறியார் மறையின் னிலையே  
கரையா வயர்வே நெனைத் தருண லயனே யெனினென்  
றுரையா விதுடா னழகோ வுலகே மூடையா யென்னும்.”

(ஆயோத்தியா — நகர்நீங்கு படலம்.)

We find yet a different expression altogether of one's gratitude and well-wishes for his benefactor in the lines where Sita blesses Hanuman when she hears that he was bound by cords. Hanuman was bound hand and foot and dragged to the court of Ravana. There, at the instigation and evil suggestion of wicked counsellors, fire was set to his long tail.

When the news reaches the ears of Sita, she is plunged into a bottomless abyss of grief.

(i) Hence it is but right and proper that I should die.

(ii) You were an embodiment of virtue, dauntless valour, wisdom, and righteousness; I entreat you to just open those sweet lips of thine and comfort me. Don't you see that I am lamenting and wasting away with poignant grief?

“வேர்த்தா ஞாலந்தாள் விம்மினாள் விழுந்தா ளழுதாள்  
வெய்துயிர்த்தாள்.” (பிணிவீட்டுப் படலம்.)

She perspired very profusely, sorrowed, sobbed, fell down, wept bitterly, and was in the deepest anguish.

She wished with all her heart that no ill should befall the divine Messenger of hope who brought her happy tidings of her beloved Lord. Hence her soul speaks out in its simplest strains of music. The close combination of music and subjectivity in these lines show what a perfect artist Kamban was, in that he could find out the soul's deepest thoughts, and give true expression to the same. She now invokes the sympathy of Agni (God of Fire) himself.

“தாயே யனைய கருணையான் றுணையே யேதுந் தகைவில்லா  
நாயே யனைய வல்லரக்கர் நலியக் கண்டா னல்காயோ  
நீயே யுலகுக் கொருசான் று நிற்கே தெரியுங் கற்பதனிற்  
றாயே னென்னிற் றொழுகின்றே னெரியே யவனைச் சுட  
[லென்றாள்.”]  
(சுந்தர — பிணிவீட்டுப் படலம்.)

(i) She perspired profusely, sobbed, fell prostrate on the ground, cried, and panted for breath.

(ii) You are kind to all without exception even as a mother is towards her children. Could you not therefore lend a helping hand in the extermination of the Rakshasa hounds? You are the one great witness of all that goes on in this vast Universe. Hence you know whether I am of a spotless character or not. And as I am a chaste lady, I implore you not to burn him (Hanuman).

The poet's abiding note in the following is pathos.

Pathos. Kosala laments that Dasaratha's death was

due to the banishment of his son—and that in this he resembled the first rate cobra, the plantain tree and the bamboo, all of which die on account of their issue.

“நோயு மின்றி நோன்கதிர் வாள்வே லிவையின்றி  
மாயுஞ் செல்வ மக்களி னாலோ மறமன்னன்  
காயும் புள்ளிக் கற்கடநாகங் கனிவாழை  
வேயும் போன்ற னென்று மயங்கா விழுகின்றாள்.”

(அயோத்தியா — தைலமாட்டுப் படலம்.)

And the tenderest pathos is seen where Sita requests minister Sumandira to remind her sisters to take particular care of her own sweet parrot. Sita was not then in the very best of circumstances, to bestow any thought on her parrot. She was bound for the forest with Rama, and the future was all dark and obscure. But the poet strikes the most natural chord here.

Sita was a simple, innocent, high-minded lady, to whom the whole world was nothing in the absence of her Lord.

And the best environment which she would gladly wish for, was the company of Rama. As such, she was in the

Should the great Dasaratha die on account of his son? No disease or arrow killed him. The cobra, the plantain, and the bamboo, perish as soon as their offspring have come into being. It is very unfortunate that king Dasaratha also should die solely on account of his issue. Thus lamenting, he fell down and swooned.

cool shade of the supreme love of the Lord of her heart. It cannot therefore be said that she did not understand her situation aright, when she entrusted the care of her favourite bird to her sisters. On the other hand it should be noted that her motherly love returned to her a thousandfold at the thought of the sweet bird. It was the milk of human kindness that drew from her such divine sympathy for the inarticulate bird. This was a perfectly natural feeling to one of her simple and sweet disposition.

“பொன்னிறப் பூவையுங் கிளியும் போற்றுகென்  
றன்னுமென் றங்கையர்க் குணர்த்துவா யென்றாள்.”

(அயோத்தியா — தைலமாட்டுப் படலம்.)

But the material world which is too much engrossed in its own immediate surrounding to bestow any thought on an object, which, howsoever it may be deserving of our best sympathy and protection on account of its beauty and the life throbbing within it, is yet separated by distance, is not capable of understanding at once Sita's magnanimity of heart. Hence it is that Sumandira speaks of Sita's care for the “golden-hued bird” as

“அறிவிலாத் துயர்.”

(the sorrow of an innocent heart.)

---

Please remind my sisters about the bird of golden\* hue and the parrot which I have left behind and tell them that I requested them to take particular care about the birds.

Kamban's passages of sublime pathos draw no tears from the eyes of the reader, so deep or so sweet, as those that fall from the eyes of the poet himself, as he describes how Sumandira received Rama's orders to return to Ayodhya, and convey his respects to his old father. The aged minister who had served the Emperor long and faithfully cries pitifully that he should ever have lived to convey to his old master, the heart-rending news of the departure of his affectionate son, whom he had begot after great penance and rituals religiously observed and performed.

The poet puts into his mouth these words.

“அங்கிமேல் வேள்விசெய் தரிதிற் பெற்றரின்  
 சிங்கவே நகன்றதென் றுணர்த்தச் செல்கேனே.”  
 (அயோத்தியா — தைலமாட்டுப் படலம்.)

Again it was quite natural with the aged Emperor to think over and over again of the one great mistake in his life, the shooting of the boy (Sulochana) in the forest. While out hunting one day, he shot dead a Brahman youth, by sheer mistake. It was an accident but a serious error on his part. He thought that it was therefore the result of his own past deeds that culminated in the sad catastrophe of Rama's departure to the forest and his own unabating gloom. It is therefore in most pathetic strains, expressing the tumult and anguish of his innermost soul at the mere thought of the fatal error and its

How shall I go there now to unfold the unhappy tidings of your departure? How shall I inform him that the lion of a son whom he begot by performing a penance and a sacrifice, has departed (to the forest)?

dire result, that Dasaratha recounts the whole past beginning with the simple statement which he put forth before the aged and blind parents of the deceased victim of his irrevocable arrow.

“ஐயா யானோ ரரசு நயோத்தி நகரத் துள்ளேன்  
மையார் களபந் துருவி மறைந்தே வதிந்தே னிருள்வாய்  
பொய்யா வாய்மைப் புதல்வன் புனன்மீண் டிடுமோ  
[தையின்மேல்  
கையார் கணைசென் றதனாற் கண்ணிற் றேரியக் காணேன்.”  
(ஆயோத்தியா — நகர்நீங்கு படலம்.)

Perhaps the most pathetic of all the statements of the poet is the one where he himself mentions the departure of Rama accompanied only by his loving wife and Lakshmana. He uses the most simple expression which shows the sympathy of the poet for his hero. He was thus strongest when he was dealing with the simplest human emotions in the simplest language.

---

(i) Sir, I am a King. I live in Oudh (Ayodhya). I penetrated into the dark forests and lay in wait for a hunt. The sound of water rushing into the goglet which your son carried to a deep spring, resembled the sound made by elephants when they drink in water through their trunk. Hence I let go my arrow thinking that it was an elephant that I was shooting. But alas, I regret I ever shot that arrow for the missile has now fatally wounded an innocent lad who was your only hope in this world.

“தன்ன தாருயிர்த் தம்பியுந் தாமரைப்

பொன்னுந் தானுமோர் தேர்மிசை போயினான்.”

(அயோத்தியா — நகர்நீங்கு படலம்.)

The poet has to describe the extreme anguish of heart and mental tribulation of Dasaratha as he heard Despair. of Kaikeyi's stout refusal to arrive at a conciliatory attitude with regard to her hard requests. He could not do it in a word or two. He has to convey to the reader a picture, a real and vivid picture of the aged King of Kings who now crouched upon the ground, if, by so doing at least, he could avert the greatest calamity that could befall him. The poet himself is much affected and he artfully brings out the past greatness of the king and his present distress. The King was at one time the greatest general in war and had won laurels on many a battlefield.

“வீரியர் வீரம் விழுங்கி நின்ற வேலான்.”

(அ — கைகேசி சூழ்வினைப் படலம்.)

But now he lay on the ground soliciting a favour at the hands of a woman. And the poet pathetically describes the state of despair and extreme helplessness to which he was reduced. Dasaratha was at a loss to know any way out of the difficulty. He was sunk in bottomless despondency. He clapped, and bit his hands in despair and regretted that he

(i) His brother who was dearer to him than his own life, and his sweet consort, mounted on the chariot with him and all the three departed to the forest.

(ii) A valiant king who has vanquished many a fierce foe on the battlefield.

could not on any account deviate from the righteous path of strict virtue.

“கையொடு கையை புடைக்கும் வாய்கடிக்கும்  
பொய்யுரை குற்ற மெனப்புழுங்கி வாடும்  
நெய்யெரி யுற்றென நெஞ்சழிந்து சோரும்  
வையக முற்று நடந்தவாய்மை மன்னன்.”

(அயோத்தி — கைகேசி சூழ்வினைப் படலம்.)

Kamban again is true to nature when he says that the women of Ayodhya stood still and motionless as they deeply took to heart the departure from their midst of the eldest son of their beloved Sovereign.

“கரும்பன மொழியினர் கண் பனிக்கிலர்  
வரம்பறு துயரினான் மயங்கிய கொலாம்  
இரும்பன மனத்தின ரென்ன நின்றனர்  
பெரும்பொரு ளிழந்தவர் போலும் பெற்றியார்.”

(அயோத்தியா — நகர்நீங்கு படலம்.)

(i) The king of a vast country who was true to his plighted world would once wring his hands in despair; and at another time bite his lips. Again he would regret in a low moan that he could not retract a promise once given; thus did the great King pine and waste even as does the ghee which comes into contact with fire.

(ii) The ladies possessed of a dulcet voice stood with their eyes wide open without suffering them to wink even once, probably overcome with boundless sorrow. They stood still as though they were not concerned about the exile of Rama into the woods, and as if their hearts were fashioned of steel. In short, they resembled people who had lost their all.



If the poet could describe horror and dismay so very aptly and truly, he could equally well portray Ecstasy. the opposite feeling of ecstasy. Nowhere is he the master of his art so much as when he describes the mental state of Bharata as he received the glad tidings of Rama's return.

“வேதியர் தமைத்தொழும் இவந்தரைத் தொழும்  
தாதியர் தமைத்தொழும் தன்னைத் தான்னொழும்  
ஏதுமொன் றுணர்குற திருக்கு நிற்குமாற்  
காதலென் றதுவுமோர் கள்ளின் றோற்றமே.”

(யுத்தகாண்டம் — மீட்சிப்படலம்.)

It is very praiseworthy that the poet here compares the feeling of ecstasy born of whole-hearted love and affection to the pleasing reverie of one who has taken intoxicating liquor.

Bharata was plainly disgusted with his life shorn of love and happy surroundings. • He was destined to Disgust. rule the country under very unpleasant auspices and against his will. It was without his knowledge that his mother brought about his accession to the throne under peculiarly distressing circumstances. The crown was, as it were, forced from the unwilling hands of the aged Emperor. The thing once compassed could never be recalled. Kaikeyi,

---

(Bharatha) would bow *in successive turns* the Brah-  
mans, Kings, servant maids and his own self. Sometimes  
he would stand quiet and at other times he would be active.  
He seemed to have been intoxicated with the feeling of  
immense joy.

sinner as she was, brought about an event which her son would fain keep off. His disgust and heartiest contempt for his mother is most admirably described. The poet puts such expressions as the following in the mouth of Bharata himself.

“என்றுன் பாவிக் கும்பி வயிற்றின் னிடைவைகி”

“பன்னருங் கொடுமனப் பாவி பாடினான்”

“கடியவள் வயிற்றினிற் பிறந்த கள்வனேன்”

(அ — பள்ளியடைப் படலம்.)

He was plainly dissatisfied with his mother for the  
Conflict of feelings. “மாயா வன்பழி”, the irrevocable fatal blunder which she had committed. He was himself not a willing tool in the hands of his mother. The whole thing was compassed behind his back. And the tumult of feelings which rose within him was really very great. There was a big storm raging in the region of his warm heart which beat quickly and in sympathetic harmony with that of his brother Rama. His feelings therefore rose in righteous revolt against his mother. The poet was really seized with the *divinity of Bharata's soul* and he brings out the turbulence within him, as he (Bharata) points out to Kukha his mother, his own mother, who, with the best of intentions, failed to recognise the noble heart that beat within her son's bosom. His natural

(i) Great sinner as you are, I was unfortunate in having been in your detestable womb.

(ii) I shall hie from hither ; I shall never more be in the company of this great traitor with heart of flint.

(iii) I am the false traitor born of a witch.

love for the woman who brought him up, is completely set aside by the superior love he bore his brother. This feeling is enhanced in intensity as he contemplates upon the wickedness and the selfish character of his mother's design. Thus he says of Kaikeyi his mother, whom he describes as the root cause of all the mischief.

“படரேலாம் படைத்தாளைப் பழிவளர்க்குஞ் செவிலியைத்  
தன் பாழ்த்த பாவிக்  
குடரிலே நெடுங்காலங் கிடந்தேற்கு முயிர்ப்பாரங்  
குறைந்து தேய்  
உடரேலா முயிரிலா வெனத்தோன்று முலகத்தே  
யொருத்தி யன்றே  
இடரிலா முகத்தாளே யறிந்திலையே லிங்கினு  
ளென்னை யீன்றுள்.”

(அயோத்தியா — குகப்படலம்.)

It is a different kind of conflict which raged in the minds of the ministers of the court of Dasaratha, when they heard of the Emperor's determination to retire from the throne and install his son thereon. They loved Rama and they also regretted Dasaratha's absence. The poet compares the state of mind of the ministers to that of the cow which regrets for two calves at a time.

I am surprised that you have not yet recognised my mother in this group; you may identify her by her calm countenance and unruffled complexion, at a time when the whole world is pale as a sheet on account of immeasurable sorrow.

She is the root cause of all the calamities that have recently befallen our family; she is the guardian mother rearing in her lap the dread child of calumny. She has rendered my life tasteless and devoid of cheer; and I am groaning under the heavy weight of a wretched existence for the sole reason that I was for a long time in her contemptible womb.

“இரண்டு கன்றினுக் கிரங்குமோ ராவென விருந்தார்”  
(அயோத்தியா — மந்திரப்படலம்.)

And the feeling at once of pleasure and regret — pleasure on hearing of Rama's coronation and regret for the Emperor's renunciation from domestic life — is keenly felt by Kausala whom the poet thus describes,

“சிறக்குஞ் செவ்வ மகற்கெனச் சிந்தையிற்  
பிறக்கும் பேருவ கைக்கடல் பெட்பற  
வறக்கு மாவட வைக்கன லானதால்  
துறக்கு மன்னவ னென்னுந் துணுக்கமே.”

(அயோத்தியா — மந்திரப்படலம்.)

Kamban describes the sentiment of love and its kindred emotions with much grace, refinement, and sweetness. It is never the passion of love, but the subtle emotion and the spiritual side of love that is portrayed in the Ramayanam.

(i) The ministers were plunged in sorrow when they thought of the King as well as of his son, even as a cow would feel for the bereavement of her twins (calves).

(ii) The general gist of it is :—She was in an ocean of bliss when she heard that her son would soon be enthroned as king. But this ocean of happiness evaporated away when she learnt that her Lord would renounce the world. It may be translated as :—The apprehension that the King would renounce family life when he installed Rama on the throne, was even as the great internal heat in the entrails of the earth's crust which boiled away as if by magic the cool waters of the ocean of happiness which she was enjoying in the hope of seeing her son anointed on the coronation day.

In sincerity, tenderness, and elevation of thought in this particular, he takes rank with the greatest poets in Tamil literature. He enters into the thoughts of men and his delineations of character bear a tinge of his imaginative fire. The love which Dasaratha bore Rama, is brought out in its fullness and entirety when Visvamitra asks the Emperor to leave Rama with him for some time. It is the instinctive love of the father for his son which afflicts the king at this juncture. Kamban therefore compares the words of the sage to a shaft which enters a wound.

“எண்ணிலா வருந்தவத்தோ னியம்பியசொன்  
மருமத்தி னெறிவேல் பாய்ந்த  
புண்ணிலாம் பெரும்புழையிற் கணனுழைந்தா  
லெனச்செவியிற் புகுத லோடும்.”

(பால — கையடைப்படலம்.)

He lost that which he got after a very long time. He is therefore now in very much the same position as he was before the birth of his son.

“கண்ணிலான் பெற்றிழந்தா லென்வுழன்றான்  
கடுந்துயரம் காலவேலான்.”

(பால — கையடைப்படலம்.)

The love of a person for a brother overweighs all other considerations. And hence when Bharata goes out to see

(i) When the words uttered by Viswamitra renowned for the performance of several difficult penances, fell upon the ears of the King, the latter felt a sensation akin to one who is treated for a deep gash of wound in his body caused by the piercing of an arrow, by cauterization with red hot iron.

(ii) He felt such an anguish as would be felt by a blind man who got his sight at once by a miracle and as soon lost it.

Rama he does not consult astrologers as to the auspicious time for meeting him.

“பொழுது நாளுங் குறித்திலன் போயினான்.”

(அயோத்தி — பள்ளியடை.)

In describing the great sorrow of the queens of Dasaratha for their lord, the poet exclaims that love is a sentiment which is rather hard and exacting.

“அன்பிற் றறுகண் பிரிதுண்டோ.”

Equal in degree is the love which Sita bore Rama which is amply testified by her demeanour when she came to know of Rama's departure to the forest. She does not sorrow at all for the loss of the kingdom which Rama sustained. Nor does she take to heart the fact that he will henceforth live in remote jungles. But she pined secretly at the mere thought of her lord's words that she may happily stay at home, while he repaired to the forest.

“நாயகன் வன நண்ணலுற் றானென்றும்

மேய மண்ணிழந் தானென்றும் விம்மலள்

நீவ ருந்தலை நீங்குவென் யானென்ற

திய வெஞ்சொல் செவிசுடச் சேம்புவாள்.”

(அயோத்தி — நகர்நீங்கு படலம்.)

(i) He never summoned his astrologers to advise him as to the most auspicious hour and day for setting out.

(ii) Is there a more exacting sentiment than attachment or affection?

(iii) The fact that her husband was exiled into the forests and that he lost his territory never moved her to sorrow. But the hard words “you need not feel sorry. I shall depart” pierced her heart and she sighed in grief.

When she was alone and in the *asoka* grove she heard through Hanuman of Rama's grief for his forced separation from her. Sita was moved deeply to hear that her lord's love remained unimpaired during the long months of her separation from him. She sorrows that her lord should thus grieve on her account and she experienced mixed feelings of grief and pleasure.

“அன்பினு னிவ்வரை யுணர்த்த வாரியன்  
வன்பொறை நெஞ்சினன் வருத்த முன்னுவாள்  
என்புற வருகினள் இரங்கி யேங்கினள்  
தன்பமு முவகையுஞ் சுமந்த வுள்ளத்தாள்.”

(சுந்தர — உருக்காட்டு.)

It is again the mother's love for her son that Kosala feels as she scans from a distance the figure of Rama approaching her on the eve of his departure from Ayodhya. He came into her presence without his usual ornaments and other paraphernalia pertaining to the Royal prince. On the other hand, her disappointment was very keen and bitter when she learnt that her son's coronation had to be put off. It is therefore in exceedingly pathetic strains that Kamban describes the arrival of Rama at the portals of Kausala's palace.

When she heard these words from the loving messenger, she thought about the state of mind of Rama, who, she heard, was then much agitated about her separation. She was overpowered with very joy on hearing the constant love that Rama bore her, but at the same time the thought of his distress at her separation clouded her joy. Thus she experienced both joy and delight at the same time.

“குழைக்கின்ற கவரி யின்றிக் கொற்றவெண் குடையு மின்றி  
இழைக்கின்ற விதிமுன் செல்லத் தருமம்பின் னிரங்கி யேங்க  
மழைக்குன்ற மனையான் மௌலி கவித்தனன் வருமென் றென்று  
சுழைக்கின்ற வுள்ளத் தன்னாள் முன்னொரு தமியன் சென்றான்.”  
(அயோத்தியா — நகர்நீங்கு படலம்.)

The love which people bore their Sovereign, their loyalty towards the Royal house, and their intimate and heartfelt sympathy and love to Rama could not better be expressed than by stating, as Kamban has done, that they loved him better than they would love their own sweet life and drinking water.

“உண்ணு நீரினு முயிரினு மவனையே யுவப்பார்”

(அயோத்தி — மந்திரப்படலம்.)

The way in which the poet describes Rama addressing his loving wife, just when they were entering the forest, amply testifies to the fact that the poet's real teacher was nature, and that he had very firm belief in her soothing influence.

(i) She was eagerly awaiting the arrival of her son in all magnificence of Royal State soon after the coronation with waving fans, white canopy of victory and a crowned head. But alas! she saw quite a different form approaching her. Rama approached her, a lonely individual, with no retinue or attendants with him, but his own fate which preceded him as a bodyguard, and his virtue which shadowed him with regret from behind.

(ii) They regarded him with more affection and love than they would regard their own life or drinking water.



No misfortune in life could shake that belief and the poet's interpretation of scenes from Nature is very exquisite; for instance when Rama and Sita proceeded to the forest he does not make them bemoan their lot in life. On the other hand, with a powerful and vivid imaginative feeling he describes how Rama addressed Sita and showed her all the beautiful objects around. He addresses his queen in most endearing and passionate language. My darling, my sweet lyre, paragon of women, thou type of womanhood, thou more beautiful than the dancing peacock, thou woman with voice like quail, are some of the choicest expressions which Rama uses with regard to Sita. And herein the suggestive thought of the poet gives us room to reflect that Sita scans minutely the several natural objects, when it became quite appropriate for Rama to refer to her deer-like eyes; that she pointed out to some other object as he refers to her soft hands; that she spoke out, when he refers to her dulcet voice; and so on. Moreover, the chief point which arises for consideration in this connection, and one which would always endear us to the Emperor of poets, is his true interpretation of Nature. She was to him a soothing influence amidst the distracting vicissitudes in life. In this sublunary world full of intrigues, machinations and plots, Nature alone stands as the best friend of man. The temptation of Kooni, and the indomitable obstinacy of Kaikeyi were too much for the poet himself. So when the crisis was past and griefs were ended he seeks consolation and comfort in a contemplation of the beauty of Nature. All discordant voices were for the time swallowed in the sweet and merry chirping of birds and their "woodnotes

wild", in the softly running forest brooks, the green trees and the happy denizens of the air. The love of Nature returns to him again and he sees in her the best friend of man. He derived for the time a genuine pleasure therefrom, and forgot all the cares and anxieties which had violently shaken his sympathetic frame.

Therefore this restoration of man to the dominion of the senses after a life full of difficulties and pitfalls marks an important point in the epic, and this mood of the poet stimulates us to consider that faculty in him which made him see objects as they were seen by particular individuals on particular occasions, and give a felicitous expression to the same.

### III. IMAGINATION.

It has been held that poetry is but the language of the imagination. It is the poet's imagination that gives poetry a distinct impress of his individuality. The true poetic temper is that where the poet's soul reaches a state of high exaltation. He experiences an aching sense of pleasure or pain which he tries to express. And the language in which he couches his thoughts will be in complete accord with the heightenings of his imagination. The poet is "born again" as it were, as he contemplates upon objects through what may be called poetic spectacles; and he then lives in a different atmosphere altogether, where every object floats before his vision not as they would appear to the man in the street, but in a different form.

Kamban describes that the ditch surrounding the big fort of Ayodhya was filled with swans, crocodiles, lotus flowers, and fish. His imagination forthwith travels on and he recognizes in these objects the paraphernalia of the king, namely, white umbrellas, elephants, horses, and arrows respectively.

“ஆளுமன்னம் வெண்குடைவி குலங்களா வருங்கராக்  
கோனெலா முலாவுகின்ற சூன்றமன்ன யானையாத்  
தாளுலாவு பங்கயத் தரங்கமுந் துரங்கமா  
வாளும்வேலு மீனமாக மன்னர்சேனை மாணுமே.”

(பால — நகரப்படலம்.)

In the above stanza his sense of colour and intensity of feeling give warrant for the boldest imagination and they make up for the disproportion in the objects also. Likewise in Neervilayattuppadalam, the poet's imagination represents objects not as they are, but as they were moulded by other objects and feelings. He describes woman plunging into the water to enjoy a refreshing bath. The lotus flowers in the tank are also immersed into the water on account of the commotion caused by the dashing of waves and then rise up. The poet thinks that the flowers try to hide themselves, as they consider that their beauty is nothing before the fair appearance of such heavenly damsels.

The living animals and flowers in the ditch around the fort passed to and fro in the water even as the army of the Emperor would proceed on a march; the swans, crocodiles, lotus flowers, and the fish, resembling in form, colour and nature, the paraphernalia of royalty, respectively — the white umbrella of victory, the elephants, the cavalry, and the infantry, swordsmen, and spearmen.

“தள்ளி யேரடி யலைதடு மாறலால்  
தெள்ளு நீரின் முழுகுசெந் தாமரை  
புள்ளி மானனை யார்முகம் போல்கிலா  
துள்ளி நாணி யொளிப்பன போன்றவே.”

(பால — நீர்விளையாட்டு )

The tall flags on the high walls of the fort of Ayodhya wave aloft. To the poet's eyes they seemed to invite as it were, the Sun to take a little rest in the path of his incessant journey throughout the worlds.

The whole Nature seemed to lament the departure of Rama to the forest. Not only Dasaratha and his wives, but the birds, cats, children, cows, young calves, and horses, seemed to cry out for Rama. The poet interprets their natural cry into a sympathetic grief for Rama. He uses very simple language to convey the impression that they produced on his mind. For he was determined to see things as they are and express his thoughts without the least ornamentation. His tone is therefore quite natural, simple, and unaffected. And it was the poet's imagination which presented quite ordinary things in an unusual aspect and coloured by his own mood on particular occasions.

As the ladies with fair faces surpassing the lotus flowers in beauty plunge for a bath, the lotus creeper is dashed from side to side on account of the great disturbance in the surface of the water. And as the lotus creeper is disturbed in its place, the flowers too are drawn into the water and as quickly come up. One may say that the lotus flowers themselves felt ashamed at their own worthless beauty as compared with the surpassing beauty of the ladies, and that out of shame they tried to hide themselves in the water.

Thus the approach of Kaikeyi before Rama is compared to the soft but firm steps of Death before the soul.

“தாயென நினைவான் முன்னே கூற்றெனத் தமிழன் வந்தாள்”  
(அ—கை—கூ.)

The rise and setting of the Sun and the moon, light and darkness, were invested with a wonderful witchcraft for the poet. They gave him sanction for the boldest thoughts which first passed through the strong furnace of his imagination: and they came out in their brightest light of shining poetry. The colouring which he assigned to the several objects in nature are entirely his own. The poet states that even Dame Darkness was ashamed of the conduct of Kaikeyi in forcing her will upon Dasaratha, and that therefore she passed away unobserved by men, and before the approach of dawn.

“வாணி லாநகை மாத ராள்செயல் கண்டு மைந்தர்மு னிற்கவும்  
நாணி னுள்ளென வேகி னுணளிர் கங்கு லாகிய நங்கையே”  
(அயோத்தியா — கைகேசிகுழவினப்படலம்.)

On the morning of the day succeeding that on which Kaikeyi obtained her two boons, the poet recognizes the great ire of the sun in his deep-red hue.

(i) He thought that his own mother was approaching him but the solitary figure who accosted him was no other than Pluto himself

(ii) Darkness sped fast. It seemed as if she (Darkness) was ashamed to face men, when yet the vile deed perpetrated by one of the fair sex possessed with a pair of rows of pearl-like teeth, was still fresh in their minds.

“பாப முற்றிய பேதை செய்த பகைத் திறத்தினில் வெய்யவன்  
கோப முற்றி மிகச் சிவந்தன னொத்த னன்குணக் குன்றிலே”  
(அயோத்தி — கைகேசிசூழ்வினப்படலம்.)

Pitch darkness is compared to the unholy mind of the tempter Kooni and the setting of the Sun on the day on which Rama repaired to the forests, is interpreted by the poet to mean the Sun's rapid flight, away from the sad scene.

The rise of the Sun presents a different aspect altogether on the day on which the coronation of Rama was to come off. The deep-red hue of the Sun seems to represent the central stone in Rama's diadem.

But the rising of the Sun after the death of Dasaratha and the departure of Rama, is interpreted otherwise and as seems best under the circumstances. He rises in the eastern horizon, just that he may rule the land which was then bereft of the Emperor and his son, and hence had no ruler or guardian.

“வானே புக்கானரும் புதல்வன் மக்க ளகன்றூர் வருமளவும்  
யானே காப்ப னிவ்வுலகை யென்பான் பேரல வெரிகதிரோன்”  
(அயோத்தி — ஸதலமாட்டுப்படலம்.)

(i) The sun shone with a brightened hue in the sky. It would appear that his complexion was blood-shot on account of his ire against the woman who was so inimical to the interests of the brightest scion of his race.

(ii) The Emperor who was a bright scion of the Solar race is dead and his sons have left the capital. The land is thus bereft of a king and hence I have to reign the realm (though from above).

Elsewhere the poet informs us that the rising and setting of the Sun typifies the endless births and deaths of man.

The setting of the Sun is in another place imagined to be his hasty flight to the sea to enjoy a bath.

He saw women plunging into water, so he too went to enjoy a bath in the sea. (உ)

“மாளி னோக்கியர் மைந்தரோ டாடிய,  
ஆன நீர்வினா யாடலை நோக்கினான்  
தானு மன்னது காதலித் தானென,  
மீன வேலையை வெய்யவ னெய்தினான்.”

(பால — நீர்வினாயாட்டு.)

The sheen of the moon is compared to the path of strict rectitude.

His similes and other figures of speech are characteristic.

Simile.

He does not go the whole length of exhausting his comparison, but leaves the reader room to reflect and understand. He obtains his result by a delicate touch. Sometimes when he is unable to give an effective comparison from real nature he draws a picture from his own imagination. Thus he compares the beautiful complexion of Rama to the blossoming lotus in the dewy clouds.

In describing how Rama and Lakshmana guarded the hermitage of Viswamitra when the latter performed his

As he (the Sun) witnessed the ladies with deer-like eyes bathe merrily with their spouses, he also desired to enjoy a refreshing bath. Hence he repaired to the western ocean (meaning, the sun set).

sacrifice, the poet says that the brothers protected the sacrificial fire as the eyebrows protect the eyes.

“கண்ணினைக் காக்கின்ற யிமையிற் காத்தனர்”

(பால — வேள்விப்படலம்.)

A little thought would suggest to us how they guarded. The lower portion of the eyebrow is fixed, while the upper one moves and comes in contact with the former. Just so, while one of the brothers was posted stationarily before the gates of the hermitage, the other went round and round; and in his course came in contact with the stationary sentinel. The same suggestiveness is apparent in all of Kamban's similes. He compares the swift running of the horses to the swift revolutions of the Indian potter's wheel.

He is capable of expressing himself in such a way as to bring the reader along with him and make him feel as he himself felt. On the eve of the marriage of Sita and Rama the would-be couple were impatient to see each other and converse. But they were separated by a barrier in the compulsory marriage ceremony. Here Kamban states that each of them was like the thirsty traveller who finds a barbed wire fence all round a tank which he cannot therefore approach to quench his thirst. The same simile is taken to give the reader an idea of the perturbed state of mind of Sita when she only *saw* Rama on her return from Lanka but found it impossible to approach him in consequence of the stern words of rebuke he addressed her.

---

They guarded the sacrificial fire as the eyelids guard the pupil of the eyes.



The quickly brightening face of Sita as she heard from the mouth of Hanuman about Rama's victory over Ravana is thus described.

“ஒரு கலைத்தனி வெண்மதி நாளொடும்  
வரு கலைக்கு வருமறு மாணுற  
பொரு கலைக்குலம் பூத்தது போன்றன  
பருக லுற்ற வழுது பயந்தநாள்.”

(யுத்த — மீட்சி.)

It were impossible to find a better comparison for the face of Sita beaming with delight. It seemed as though the waning moon waxed to be full moon all of a sudden.

The dark bright colour of Kukhan's skin is compared appropriately to oiled darkness.

“எண்ணெயுண்ட விருள்  
புரை மேனியான்.”

(அ — கங்கைப்படலம்.)

Sometimes, he piles comparison upon comparison in order to produce a vivid impression of an object. Thus he says of Rama's complexion.

“மையோ மரகதமோ மறிகடலோ மழைமுகிலோ ”

(அ — கங்கைப்படலம்.)

i. On the day on which the happy tidings reached her ear her face beamed with joy and it appeared as if the solitary moon of her countenance suddenly waxed into its full brilliance on *one day* instead of reaching that stage by degrees as the moon (planet) does.

ii. The colour of his skin was dark and shiny as though oil was smeared over a dark hue.

iii. Say whether it is any black paste, or an emerald, or the blue sea or the watery cloud that confronts my vision.

In describing the agony of Kosala when she heard of Rama's departure, the poet compares her to the invertebrate and boneless insect suffering extreme pain in the scorching heat of the sun. She is also compared to the person who has lost the hard-acquired nectar, the serpent which has lost its bright light — giving stone, and the *anril* (அன்றில்) bird which has lost its mate.

“மருந்திழந் தவரின் விம்மி மணிபிரி யரவின் மாந்தி  
அருந்துணை பிரிந்த வன்றிற் பெடையென வரற்ற லுற்றான்.”  
(அயோத்தி — தைலமாட்டு.)

One favourite simile of Kamban is to state that the bereaved felt as much pain as the cow bereft of its calf would feel. He uses the simplest and easily suggested similes. He never travels far in search of them; they come to him naturally and he accomplishes his results. Thus he says that the people of Ayodya who heard that Rama's coronation was not to come off as they had anticipated, grieved immensely, and that their hearts melted like ghee which approached a flame. On the same occasion, the women who pined and grew restless on account of their mental anxiety and moved about aimlessly in grief, are compared to the flower creepers which are tossed to and fro in a strong wind.

---

Her grief was very poignant even as the sorrow felt by those who have lost the cup of life-giving nectar given to them; or the gloom cast over the serpent which had lost its ruby or the perplexed feeling of the *anril* bird which had become separated from its mate.

It will thus be seen that the best point in Kamban's similes is that they are quite natural and not far fetched. They grow as it were out of the strong imagination of the poet and are surcharged with his own characteristic, namely, simplicity.

The power of looking at the world through a poetic atmosphere can neither be learnt nor taught. Suggestive imagination. This atmosphere known as imagination vivifies poetry and makes it a real power. In the subtle magic of this suggestive force, Kamban stands unrivalled. True poetry has been held to signify the excess of the imagination of the poet over and above the actual ordinary impression of an object. If so, Kamban writes true poetry and his imagination is of the highest order. To express quickness of some thought or action, he sometimes inverts the natural order of words. He makes use of such a device in the following expressions.

“எழுந்தனன் பொருக்கென”; “போயதெம் பொருமல்”;  
 “வருதுந் தாரணி”; “வீழ்ந்தன ன்டிமிசை”;  
 “இழிந்துபோ யிரதம்”; “கொணர்மின் சென்று”.

The poet says of Dasaratha that he left his mortal frame on earth. In so saying, he uses a peculiarly happy expression to convey the idea that the King was a strict follower of truth.

“உரியமெய் நிறுவிபோ யும்ப ராயினான்.”

i. (He) rose abruptly ; our grief has left us ; we shall incarnate into the world ; he fell down at his feet ; he jumped down from his car ; fetch and go (i.e.) go to fetch.

ii. He left his body (Truth) here and going up to Heaven became one of the celestial angels.

The Emperor is referred to as “ஆணை மன்னவன்” (the truthful Monarch).

Other felicitous expressions of Kamban which are worth noticing are,

“ஒருங்கிய விரண்டிடற் குயிரொன் றுயினார்” ;

“பிரிந்தவர் கூடினாற் பேசல் வேண்டுகோ” ;

“பிரிவினுஞ் சுடுகோ பெருங்கா டென்றான்”.

Dasaratha is said to have led an austere life of truth and virtue in domestic life.

“மனையில் மெய்யெனு மாதவம் புரிந்தவன்”

Similarly he is called

i. It would appear that there was only one soul (life) in the apparently divided (two) bodies.

ii. If friends who have not met for a long time, come together at a time, how could they begin conversation at once? Verily they would be wrapt in blissful contentment at their long-wished-for meeting.

iii. She (pertinently) enquired “would the life in the forests be more miserable than the life in the city spent in the absence of my lord from my side?”

iv. He performed the sacred and perhaps the hardest penance of Truth in his *domestic life* though penances are usually undertaken only in the ascetic life.

“கடைபோக மெய்த்த வேந்தன்”

“மெய்யின் மெய்” — “மனிதன் வடிவங் கொண்ட மனு”.

The poet expresses the commonest expressions current in the Tamil world and makes his meaning clear thereby.

“துக்கநின் றறிவினைச் சூறையாட”

“கைதுடைத் தேகவுங் கடவையோ”

He uses words and phrases just appropriate to the context. Hanuman shows the ring of Rama to Sita. She sees it, and the poet who wishes to convey her cheerfulness at the time calls her வாணுதலி, meaning *bright-faced*.

Kaikeyi wished to communicate the king's order to Rama. The poet uses very appropriate expressions just to suggest to the reader what was to follow.

“பெண்டிரிற் கூற்ற மன்னாள் பிள்ளையைக்

கொணர்க வென்றாள்.”

(ஆயோத்தி — கைகேசிசூழ்வினைப்படலம்.)

i. The monarch who was true to his word till his last moment. He was the embodiment of the exalted quality of a man's character, viz., Truthfulness; (மெய்) means body or truth according to the context in which the word is used.

ii. He was the ancient sage Manu come back to life in a human form.

iii. His grief plundered away his wisdom.

iv. Is it just that you should now wash your hands clean of the business?

v. That Devil (Death) among women enjoined the bystanders to go and fetch her son (Rama).

Beauty in an epic is to be found in the plot, in the events, and in the characters. The beauty of the story and of the events of the Ramayana are recognised facts. We have only to see how Kamban has handled the several characters and marked off their individuality. It is ideal beauty that is everywhere portrayed in his references to the hero and the heroine. The poet also makes use of the unbeautiful element to act as a foil and heighten the beauty of the beautiful. His reference to Sita sitting amidst Rakshasa women is a typical example.

The magnanimity and high-mindedness of Rama are as deep and profound as Sita's sensitive chastity and sublime purity.

Rama is beautiful both internally and externally. His large-heartedness is apparent in the words of consolation which he addressed to his mother. Therein he requested her to consider the fourteen years of his banishment as fourteen days. He further rejoices personally that by going to the forest, he did a distinct service to his father, that he thus maintained his father's reputation as a respecter of truth and virtue. Moreover he had the satisfaction of knowing that his own brother Bharata is to rule for him. He said that he would obey the words of Kaikeyi with as much regard as if they were those of Emperor Dasaratha himself.

“மன்னவன் பணியன் ருகி னும்பணி மறுப்பனோ வென்  
பின்னவன் பெற்ற செல்வ மடியனேன் பெற்ற தன்றோ.”  
(அ—கை-கு.)

His facial expression did not therefore change a whit. It glowed with satisfaction, and in its brilliance and splendour, even surpassed the beauty of the fresh lotus flower.

“அப்பொழுது தலர்ந்த செந்தா மரையினை வென்ற தம்மா.”  
(அ—கைகேசி சூழ்வினை).

He was specially distinguished for his high principles of conduct which he translated into active practice. In the pursuit of his noble principles and in the discharge of his sacred duty by his truth-loving father, he would face every danger or inconvenience with calm composure. The difficulties of passing into the dark jungle would never deter him from the even path of virtue. Whenever he was asked to name the gifts he desired most, he took advantage of the opportunity that presented itself, not for his personal behoof, but for the advancement of the material condition of his dependents. The *Devas* and sage *Baradvaja* severally asked him to name a boon that he wanted. He always requested them to pronounce their hearty benedictions on his monkey followers, and bless them that wherever they might tarry, the mountains, forests and rivers might afford them honey, fruits and water in plenty.

i. I would most heartily obey your commands, even if it were not the order of the Emperor. For I consider the wealth and happiness enjoyed by my brother to have been enjoyed by me.

ii. In the beauty of its colour and freshness it even surpassed the lotus that has just blossomed.

Equally remarkable is the boon that Rama sought of Dasaratha who descended from Heaven to meet his victorious son. He requested his father to acknowledge as his queen and son respectively, Kaikeyi and Bharata, whom he had renounced in wrath at the conduct of the former.

When he thus requested his father to reclaim them, the whole universe with one voice praised Rama as *Varadha* meaning benefactor. He did not take to heart the doings of Kaikeyi, but when the opportunity came, he forthwith tried to redress her grievances, and those of her son. In keeping with his usual humane spirit, he told Dasaratha that his mother and brother were never guilty of any wrong towards him, but that he was himself to blame in having accepted the crown, the wearing of which was in various ways productive of sin on account of the many inevitable errors of omission and commission in the administration of a great state.

“ஊன் பிழைக்கிலா வுயிர்நெடி தளிக்கு நீளரசை  
வான் பிழைக்கிது முதலென தாள்வுற மதித்தி  
யான் பிழைத்ததல் லாவென யின்றவெம் பிராட்டி  
தான் பிழைத்ததுண் டோவென்ற நவன்சலந் தவிர்ந்தான்.”  
(யுத்த — மீட்சி.)

“It was I who erred and not my mother who bears so great an affection towards me. I erred in supposing that it was an easy task to govern the millions possessed of living souls in a perishable frame. The high duty of governance is an exceedingly difficult one. The task of the ruler is not a bed of roses. I owe it to my mother that she so kindly freed me from the sin which otherwise I would have wrought if I were anointed King and ruler.” When the departed soul of Dasaratha heard this, his ire abated immediately.



He gratefully thanked Hanuman for all the trouble he took to help him (Rama). He deplored that the vexations of his life were but the consequences of his deeds in a previous birth; but said that the only consolation he had in such distress, was the friendly service and love of Hanuman.

“தீவினை யாம்பல செய்யத் தீர்விலா

வீவிலை முறைமுறை விளைவ மெய்ம்மையா

னீயிவை துடைத்து நின் றளிக்க நேர்ந்ததால்

ஆயினு மன்பினு யான்செய் மாதவம்.”

(யுத்த—மீட்சி.)

Sita is no less large-hearted than Rama. Her beauty is but the outward reflection of the unblemished spirit within. Her kindness, sweet affable disposition and gentleness towards inferiors are without parallel. She would not think ill of even those who had tormented her. When Hanuman requested her permission to lacerate the wicked bodies of the Rakshasa women, who night and day teased and cruelly vexed her, she implored him not to take serious notice of their actions, as they were not more cruel at heart than Kooni, and as all their acts were done only at the instance and under the immediate orders of Ravana. So she requested Hanuman to leave them alone. She again

It is a universal truth that the inevitable consequences of one's deeds in past births follow his footsteps in successive births and that he reaps what he has sown already; I have suffered enough, and I think that perhaps I might have done a remarkable act of virtue in some previous birth, for, it was perhaps the happy reward of such a conduct on my part that has brought you hither as a Saviour to free me from my mind's load of anxiety.

blest Hanuman who brought her glad tidings of her lord and said that the only adequate remuneration for his labour of love, which she could think of, was to prostrate and bow before him.

“நின்னையென்றலையினும் ஏழ்வேதகுந் தன்மையோய்.”  
(யுத்த — மீட்சி.)

Of the other characters in the epic, besides the hero and the heroine, the most important is Hanuman, Hanuman. the messenger of hope and the benefactor of mankind. He is the personification of Super-human strength, high rectitude and nobility of spirit. He finds his real pleasure in service. The poet uses his best art in all his references to this character. He writes the epic after first duly invoking this omnipresent deity in the Ramayana. Hanuman's beauty internal and external, is seen throughout. He has a slim figure to all appearances but he is also capable of drawing up his stature to towering heights. A man of very

“You have been so kind to me that I do not find any other means of expressing my heart-felt gratitude towards you except by bowing down before you (worshipping you with my head, literally.)” The Indian method of salutation or greeting is known as *Anjali* which comes from two words meaning that which melts the heart of the receiver. The more devotional form consists in raising the hands above the head and bringing the palms together which act signifies that the devotee pays his homage, his entire being to God. The respectful and loving greeting or salutation consists in bringing the palms of the hands together at or near the chest and bowing respectfully — This is respectful obeisance done to elders and those whom we regard with affection.

few words and courageous spirit, he impresses us with his colossal strength and steadfastness of aim. He is a well informed scholar. He never bandies about but comes straight to the point. He enters into the thoughts, and feelings of others and answers them most appropriately. In a word, he is a messenger of divine love towards humanity, and he inspires hope and confidence into the minds of the suffering. He is always a friend, in need and could be relied upon in all emergencies. He strikes terror into the hearts of his enemies by his prowess in the battlefield and he has always his aim and purpose ever in front. He never forgets what he was told. Alike for Rama, Sita, and for Bharata, his assistance in most critical times has always been of the greatest benefit.

His words of encouragement to Sita are characteristic.

“வெள்ள மேழுபத் துளதால் வீரன் சேனை யிவ்வேலைப்  
பள்ள மொருகை நீரள்ளிக் குடிக்கச் சாலும் பான்மையதோ.”  
(சுந்தர — உருக்காட்டு.)

“The great warrior has seventy Vellams (a number denoting several millions) of army under his command and if each soldier in the army should only drink a handful of water from the ocean, the waters of this roaring deep would be found insufficient.” Sita dreaded the great obstacle of the ocean between her and her lord. Hanuman encourages her by stating that Rama has an army of several millions of soldiers who would dry away the ocean if only they take into their heads each to drink a handful of water. This gives Sita a very encouraging opinion of the might behind Rama's back in the inevitable war with the Rakshasas.

For a person of his great powers, he is comparatively very humble. But he is always very resourceful and bold. The Rakshasas thought that he was but a small monkey. They bound him hand and foot and dragged him along the streets. He suffered himself to be so dragged, if for nothing else, at least to see Ravana in person and apprise him of his master's valour. He described himself as the ambassador of *Rama* who possesses the unconquerable bow.

“விலிதன் தூதன் யான்.”

(I am the messenger of the warrior with the bow).

He also mentions the purpose of the incarnation of God on earth. It was, he said, to put down vice and raise virtue.

“அறந்தலை நிறுத்தி வேத மருள்சுரந் தறைந்த நீதி  
திறந்தெநிந் துலகம் பூணச் செந்நெறி செலுத்தித் தீயோந்  
இறந்துக நூறித் தக்கோ ரிடர்துடைத் தேக விண்டு  
பிறந்தனன் நன்பொற் பாத மேத்துவார் பிறப் பறுப்பான்.”  
(சுந்தர — பிணிவீட்டுப்படலம்.)

His sturdy common sense is nowhere seen better than where he introduces himself to Sita as the messenger from Rama, and to Bharata as the servant of his brother who yearned to see him (Bharata). He enters into the mind of Rama and states —

Vishnu who blesses with immortality those devotees who pray at his golden feet incarnated into the world in order that men may be taught to walk in the path of virtue and right conduct, that law and order as expounded in the Vedas may be established in the land and that virtue may be rewarded and vice punished adequately.

“கண்டனன் கற்பினுக் கணியைக் கண்களால்”

(சந்தர — திருவடிதொழுத படலம்.)

These words are pregnant with meaning. And as if to amplify the thought contained therein, he again describes the state of the mind of Sita, thus —

“இற்பிறப் பென்ப தொன்று மிரும்பொறையென்ப தொன்றும்  
கற்பெனும் பெயர தொன்றுங் களிநடம் புரியக் கண்டேன்.”

(சந்தர — திருவடிதொழுத படலம்.)

Here he pays a glowing tribute of praise to the unblemished character and sweet innocence of Sita.

In the same manner, he greets Bharata who was about to plunge into the fire.

“ஐயன் வந்தன னூரியன் வந்தனன்

மெய்யின் மெய்யன்ன நின்னுயிர் வீழினு

லுய்யுமே யவன் — — — —”

(யுத்த — மீட்சி.)

His descriptions and statements are remarkably brief and compact. When Sita requests him to recount the deeds of Rama, he began to narrate only those events that transpired

i. I saw with my own eyes (Sita) the lady who was an ornament of her sex in the possession of that sterling quality of character, chastity”.

ii. I observed the happy concord of the qualities of distinguished descent, patience and virtue, the living reality of these abstract qualities in the person of Sita.

iii. Rama is come! Your brother has arrived! If you who are a shining ornament of Truth should die, surely, Rama would never survive such a loving brother.

after the hunt of the deer. For Sita knew everything which happened so far, and it was therefore superfluous to begin at the beginning again. He always ignores details in such narration. Likewise, he recounts to Bharata all that transpired after Rama left Chitrakootaparvatha, for Hanuman knew that Bharata was present with Rama so far, and that therefore, the previous incidents need not be related.

The beauty of Kausala's high worth and unimpeachable character is seen in her acknowledging the parts of Bharata which she says were of a higher order than those of her own son Rama himself. But for the fact that the coronation of the second prince in the Royal family is not sanctioned by custom, otherwise, the selection of Bharata, is, in her opinion, not open to any objection.

The simplicity, straightforwardness and the beauty of the inner spirit of Sumitra whose heart is a shrine of virtue and of lofty ideals, are nowhere more excellently portrayed than where she directs her son Lakshmana to do his best service unto Rama and to look upon him as his master. She further orders him to return to the country after the fourteen years of banishment are over and accompanied by Rama; otherwise he was to end his existence along with his brother. In a word, her motherly advice and charge to her son was to the effect that he should closely follow Rama like his shadow and do him all service to the best of his power and faithfully as a devoted servant.

“பின்னும் பகர்வாள் மகனே யிவன் பின்செ றம்பி  
 யென்னும் படியன் றடியா ரின்னேவல் செய்தி  
 மன்னுந் நகர்க்கே யிவன் வந்திடின் வா வதன்றேல்  
 முன்னம் முடியென்றனள் பாள்முலை சோர நின்றள்.”  
 (அயோத்தி — நகர்நீங்குப்படலம்.)

Kamban loved a little argument in verse. But he never sacrifices his poetry for the purpose. The argument and the poetry form one complete whole where the subtle reasoning of the former is embossed in the more beautiful artistic finish of the latter. And we cannot separate one from the other without injuring both. In Vali Vadham (where Vali questions the righteousness of the fight of Rama with his foe, who is only a beast of the forest, and the answer of Rama to his questions), this characteristic of the poet is well seen in its exalted and most finished form.

#### IV. ART IN POETRY.

The Ramayana as written by Kamban, may be called an *Epic of Art*, as distinguished from the *Epic of Growth*. The latter is mere history, a catalogue of events and circumstances. But the former though based on some fact of past history, yet bears the individual impress of the poet in the treatment of the story. The poet who is divinely wise analyses the subject first of all ;

---

She addressed her son and said “you should wait on your brother as a devoted servant would do and not attend on him as a brother. Follow his lead wherever his feet may roam and return hither in his company. But if by some mishap he is unable to return safely, end your existence before he does.

and when he repeats the story in his own words, it becomes steeped in his characteristic colour and the temper of his mind. It is then that it could be styled an epic of art. The old story is there as gold in a jewel. But the setting of the precious stones upon the gold, which makes it the admired ornament that it becomes thereafter, is entirely the poet's own work. In an epic of art we never miss the individual thought of the poet.

Further we understand from the preface to Kamba Ramayanam that the poet closely heard the story of the Ramayana at the hands of Sanscrit scholars throughout the night, and that on the next morning he gave out in Tamil verses the story he had heard on the previous night. This fact distinctly indicates the analytical and critical faculty of Kamban. He did not set himself to mere versifying. He wished to write *poetry*. A versifier has only to choose words. But a true poet has to gather and analyse his facts first and then choose words. Kamban would not trust to time and circumstance, that somehow words would come to him of their own accord when once he sat to write. He took his own time and was busily engaged all the while. It may therefore be said of the Ramayana which is his best work that

“It is not the hasty product of a day  
But the well ripened fruit of wise delay.”

Surely, it can easily be surmised that the ‘hasty product’ of (Kamban’s brother-poet) Ottakoothar, cannot stand comparison with the epic of art that the Emperor of Poets wrote. And that was why this versifier tore to pieces his own



unworthy production, which could never live. But Kambar, it is said, prevented him from tearing the whole of his work and took what portion yet remained. This is clear proof of Kambar's nobility of character, and it further shows that the great poet did not count among his vices, if he had any, the proverbial jealousy of the versifier.

The art that Kambar exhibits throughout his monumental work is of the rarest kind. He approached the subject with a mind full of facts carefully analysed, and with profound thought and sincere feeling.

And if it were only for his delineation of the temptation of Kaikeyi by (Mandarai) Kooni, he is destined to take rank with the greatest of poets in any part of the globe. The temptation is very gradual. But every step and every argument of Kooni are distinctly in advance of her design and in the end she gains over Kaikeyi as if by magic. She was nursing bitter feelings of revenge against Rama for his having caused her pain by accidentally hitting her hunchback with an arrow when he was playing with an arrow as a child, and it was to satisfy her old grudge for the Emperor's first son, that she now approached Kaikeyi. But in her arguments, we cannot find a single trace of any motive or intention behind. Everything seems to be done by Kooni, only for the advancement of her Royal mistress. And the artful temptation is most beautifully described by Kambar. The Queen who originally shunned the temptress as an irresponsible old hag, was at last persuaded to such an extent as to even

withstand all of Dasaratha's entreaties, with heart of steel.  
The woman who once said,

“இராமனைப் பயந்தவெற் கிடருண்டோ”

(அ—மந்தரை சூழ்ச்சிப் படலம்.)

was at last made to roll on the ground restlessly.

“பூ வுதிர்ந்ததோர் கொம்பெனப் புவிமிசைப் புரண்டாள்”.

(அ—மந்தரை சூழ்ச்சிப் படலம்).

And Kamban's art is best seen in his description of the process of such a successful temptation.

All of Kamban's descriptions are realistic and true. He never travels far, but pitches at once upon the right thing to be described and does it well.

The words that Kooni addresses Kaikeyi are characteristic. She begins by saying that a great calamity is about to befall her Royal mistress and that she is as heedless of it, as the moon is before the eclipse.

“பிணங்குவான் பேரிடர் பிணிக்க நண்ணவும்  
உணங்குவா யல்லே நீ யுறங்குவா யென்றாள்.”

(அ—மந்தரை சூழ்ச்சிப் படலம்).

i. No misfortune could ever befall me who possesses a son like Rama.

ii. She rolled on the ground as a flower-twig from which the flowers had fallen down.

iii. You resemble the moon which is quite indifferent till the last moment when Raghu (serpent) comes in to eclipse her. There is danger ahead which is sure to ruin your prospects and yet you sleep (foolishly) without taking active steps in time to avert the calamity.

The poet makes Bharata, who returned from the country of Kekaya, enquire into all the circumstances that brought about the sudden death of Dasaratha down to the smallest detail. A person naturally distressed at the news of an irreparable bereavement, would be most anxious to know all details and he would brood upon all the circumstances that brought about the sad incident, hear and re-hear them; in such a state of mind, a person finds not only some consolation, but a definite occupation for an otherwise despondent spirit, in the very recapitulation of such details. The soul of man, in such circumstances, is, if the expression be permitted, melancholy curious. And Kamban whose experience of the world and men was very great, dwells upon this particular trait in human nature, to a marked degree.

The poet's descriptions are simple, concise, and to the point. They are never overcharged with ornament. He always keeps close to truth. Thus the several acts of service which Kukhan can do for Rama, are truly stated. The King of hunters says that he could bring honey from high mountains, and flesh from the hunt. He knows the several paths and by-ways in the jungle. He could build huts and cottages at a moment's notice. He could fetch water from great distances and tread the forests fearlessly. He has a large retinue of hunters who are perfect in the hunt. The statements are all quite appropriate and are such that would fall from the lips of a hunter.

Art is shown in short descriptions of great events. The poet describes the departure of Rama from the country.

“சுற்றிய சீரையன் தொடர்ந்த தம்பியன்  
முற்றிய வுலகையன் முளரிப் போதினும்  
குற்றமின் முகத்தினன்.”

(அயோத்தி—நகர் நீங்கு).

How beautifully does the poet here describe the real nature and inward beauty of the hero of epic? He does not feel the slightest sorrow that he has to leave the fair city of Ayodhya with its huge walls, beautiful streets, lofty buildings etc., and retire into the gloomy forest full of wild beasts. The beaming countenance of the hero is an index of his contented heart, which can adapt itself to all circumstances and be happy.

He is followed by his brother Lakshmana. The poet states further on that the women of the city espied the brothers through the windows in their houses. This statement is at once true and simple.

Elsewhere, he describes confusion in war. A dry catalogue of events would not make good poetry. But a true description of facts as they appeared before the poetic vision of the writer, would form excellent art. The following description given of the state of the warriors on the battlefield is realistic. It brings before our mind's eye as no other description would, the real nature of the fight that went on between Hanuman and the *Kinkarars*, (Ravana's retinue).

He wore a hermit's dress round his loins; he was accompanied by his brother; there was a playful smile on his lips and his countenance (far from betraying any sorrow) was cheerful and in its beauty and freshness surpassed the blossoming lotus flower.

“பறைபுரை விழிகள் பறிந்தார் படியிடை நெடிது படிந்தார்  
பிறைபுரை யெயிறு மிழந்தார் பிடரொடு தலைகள் பிளந்தார்  
குறையுயிர் சிதற நெரிந்தார் உடரொடு குருதி குழைந்தார்  
முறைமுறை படைசு ளெறிந்தார் முடையுடன் மறிய முறிந்தார்”  
(சுந்தர—கிங்கரர் வதைப்படலம்).

Likewise a description of spears, arrows, etc., which warriors carried to the battlefield would be out of place in an epic of art. But if it should give an idea of the immensity of arms and the strength of the enemy, it would be good poetry. Kamban artfully combines description and art in the following stanza.

“தோமர முலக்கை கூர்வான் சுடர்மழுக் குவிசந் தோட்டி  
தாமரத் தின்ற கூர்வே நழுவொளி வட்டஞ் சாபம்  
காமர்தண் டெழுக்கள் காந்துங் கற்பனங் கால பாசம்  
மாமரம் வலயம் வெங்கோன் முதலிய வயங்கி மாதோ”  
(சுந்தர—சம்புமாலிவதை).

Again the following description of the panic-stricken people of Lanka when the whole city was on fire is graphic.

i. They were deprived of their drum-like eyes, and they fell flat on the floor; they lost their sharp white fangs in the battle and their heads were severed from the trunk; their half-dead mangled bodies were pierced through and through, and the intestines and blood were squeezed out of their bellies; but they came on in ever increasing numbers, and were as swiftly repulsed; and they lay maimed and writhing on the battle ground.

ii. The weapons which the warriors carried—the discs, the long pestles, the sharp spears, the shining ploughs, the javelins, the long hooks, the arrows, the ropes, the shoulder blades, and the mailed armour, — clashed with one another producing a hard dry sound as the army advanced.

“மருங்கின் மேலொரு மகவுகொண் டொருதனி மகவை  
அருங்கை யாற்பற்றி மற்றொரு மகவுபின் னரற்ற  
நெருங்கி னொரொடு நெறிகுழல் சுறுக்கொள நீக்கி  
கருங்கடற் றலை வீழ்ந்தன ரரக்கியர் கதறி.”

(சுந்தர—இலங்கை யெரியூட்டு).

His statements are remarkable for their simplicity. They are plain and true descriptions of facts. What is more natural than that the grief-stricken Dasaraatha should state and reiterate with panting breath that Kaikeyi counted the banishment of Rama as one of her boons?

Art in  
statements.

“என்மா மகனைக் காணே கென்ற னென்ற னென்றன்.”

(அயோத்தி—நகர் நீங்கு).

Again the state of his mind is well portrayed in his interrogation of Kosala who was nursing him in the last moments of his life.

“வண்றிண் சிலைங் குரிசில் வருமே வருமே யென்றன்.”

(அ—நகர்நீங்கு).

i. Several panic-stricken women, carrying their babies on their waists and holding another child by the hand, while the elderly children ran after them weeping, rushed to the sea and with dishevelled tresses plunged into the waves and were soon lost to sight.

ii. She asked, she asked, she asked — that my dear son should be exiled into the forests.

iii. He asked “Would our dear son return bow in hand? Would he return?”

When describing the saints and sages the poet gives a true idea of the life of the saint in the forests. He does not omit a single appurtenance of the Rishi and yet he does not sacrifice art to statement of facts.

“குடையின் னிமிர்கோலன் குண்டுகை யின்னழரிச்

சுடையின் னுரிமானின் சுருமனன் மரநாரின்

உடையின் மயிர்நாலு முருவின் னெறிபேணும்

நடையின் மறைநாலு நடநவி றருநாவான்”.

(அயோத்தி—வனம்புகுபடலம்).

Similarly when the poet refers to the most auspicious event in the life of the hero, namely his marriage with Sita, he uses very simple language. No elaborate detail is dwelt upon and nothing that does not come within the scope of the subject is described. Nor does he indulge in a lengthy statement. He simply says that Janaka held out the hands of Sita and gave her away in marriage to Rama, and that he advised his son-in-law to lead the life of a *Grahastha*. In this simple speech, decidedly “more is meant than meets the ear.”

---

i. He carried with him an umbrella, a long staff and a water bowl. His hair was tucked up on his pate and he had an overcoat of skin while he girded the barks of trees round his loins. His very gait represented the even path of right conduct while his lips were ever muttering the hymns of the Four Vedas.

“கோமகன் முன்சன் கன்குளிர் நன்னீர்  
 பூமகனும் பொருளும் மென நீயென்  
 மாமக டன்னெடு மன்னுதி யென்னுத்  
 தாமரை யன்ன தடக்கையி னீந்தான்.”

(பால—கடிணப்படலம்).

In *Thatakaivadhappadalam*, he conveys to the mind of the reader an idea of the easy victory which Rama gained over Thataka. He says that *nobody saw* when and how Rama *touched* his bow but that everybody *heard* the weapons in the hands of the Arakki being smashed to pieces. Likewise in (கார்முகப்படலம்) *Karmukhappadalam* the poet says that *no one saw* when Rama *approached* the mighty bow, but that all of them *heard* the thunder of its action.

The poet's descriptions are more often minute to the smallest detail, wherever such details would Minuteness. serve to enhance the importance of a character.

He never forgets to mention Rama's performing the *Nithyakarma* (daily ablutions and Vedic prayers) both at sunrise and at sunset.

He is a master at climax. He puts one thing over another in complete accord with the thought of the individual character and in a moment reaches the supreme point of agony or ecstasy to be described. Climax.

King Janaka stood before the Royal bridegroom and said “I betroth my daughter to you in sacred marriage. From this day forwards may you live as man and wife in peace and harmony, even as wealth and the Goddess of Prosperity go together.” With these words he poured the deliciously cool water into the bridegroom's hands in token of his handing over his fair daughter to the tender care of Rama.



On hearing of the banishment of Rama, Kosala's mind staggered and she fell.

“எங்கினு எரிளத்தா டிகைத்தான் மனம்  
வீங்கினுள் விம்மினுள் விழுந்தா ளரோ.”

(அயோத்தியா—நகர்நீங்கு).

The poet's characteristics of brevity, simplicity, and easy intelligibility are pretty well seen in his Brevity. many recapitulations of the preceding incidents, throughout the Ramayana. Kausika's description of Rama and his parentage to Janaka, Hanuman recounting the golden deeds of Rama on two particular occasions mentioned above (to Sita and to Bharata), are fair examples of this trait in the art of Kampan.

The poet always adjusts sound and sense. The audacious, awe-inspiring, and defiant tread of Thataka, as Sound and Sense. she advanced towards Rama is thus described.

“சிலம்புகள் சிலம்பிடை செறித்தகழ லோடு  
நிலம்புக மிதித்தன ணெளித்தஞ்ஞி வேலைச்  
சலம்புக வனற்றரு கணந்தகனு மஞ்சி  
பிலம்புக நிலக்கிரிகள் பின்னொடர வந்தாள்.”

(பால—தாடகைவதை).

i. She grieved, she wasted, she became confused, she sighed, she cried, and she fell down.

ii. She trod the forest with the velocity of a whirlwind uprooting hills and big trees by the current of air disturbed by her swift march, and wherever she planted her feet, adorned with anklets containing mountains in place of pearls and stones, the earth became depressed admitting the waters of the ocean to run into the depressed valleys. Even the cruel deities of the forest quaked with fear and hid themselves into the bowels of the earth.

In the *Attruppadalam* of Balakandam the poet wishes to impress upon the reader the vast distance travelled by Rama and the quickness with which an otherwise weary journey was done. He gains the result by his art. The sound of the words which are closely packed, at once conveys the impression sought to be produced.

“பெருந்திரை நதிகளும் வயலும் பெட்டிறு  
மரங்களு மலைகளு மண்ணும்.”

The complacency and quick despatch of Sita as she entered the fire prepared to receive her, and the immediate quenching of its heat, are most graphically described. Here too, it is the sound which accomplishes the result.

“பாய்ந்தனன் பாய்தலும் பாலின் பஞ்செனத்  
தீந்ததவ் வெரியவள் கற்பின் நீயினால்.”

(யுத்த—மீட்சி).

The majestic gait of Rama is thus described.

“மாகந்தமு மகரந்தமு மளகந்தரு மதியின்  
பாகந்தரு நுதலாளொடு பவளந்தரு மிதழான்

i. Big rivers in full flood, extensive fields, forests, mountains and plains.

ii. She plunged into the flames which instead of scorching her body became extinguished and were rendered innocuous on account of the glowing fire of her chastity.

iii. Rama possessed of coral lips and a bright forehead resembling the crescent moon, walked with a stately tread, majestic and graceful. Rama in company with Sita resembled the pleasant walk of a he-elephant with a she-elephant and the flash of lightning inseparable from the dewy cloud (Lightning, significant of Sita—Cloud, of Rama's colour.)

மேகந்தனி வருகின்றது மின்னோடென மிளிர்பூண்  
நாகந்தனி வருகின்றது பிடியோடென நடவா.”

(அ—கங்கைப்படலம்).

We get an idea at once of the vast sheet of deep water in the Ganges, the difficulty of fording it, the strength of Kukhan's army of hunters, and his stout determination to fight to the bitter end against the enemies of Rama, from the peculiarly jumping sound of the following stanza.

“ஆழ நெடும்புனல் கங்கை கடந்திவர் போவாரோ  
வேழ நெடும்படை கண்டு விலங்கிடும் வில்லாளோ  
தோழமை யென்றவர் சொல்லிய சொல்லொரு சொல்லன்றோ  
வழமை வேட னிறந்தில னென்றெனை யேசாரோ.”

(அ—குகப்பலம்).

The lofty language in which Lakshmana expressed his resolve to dare the whole world if necessary for the righteous cause of his brother, is characteristic. Defiance and resolution are the ideas conveyed by the sound of the words in

---

Would those be able to *cross* the deep Ganges? Am I such a coward as to be afraid of the sight of an army of elephants? Should I not bear in mind Rama's greeting that I am his friend? O! what would the world think of me and of my prowess if I do not meet these enemies in battle? Would they not scorn the fool of a hunter who did not face death in the circumstances? (The word *ஏசாரோ* is characteristic and appropriate when uttered by a hunter.)

“விண்ணாட்டுவர் மண்ணவர் விஞ்சையர் நாகர் மற்றும்  
எண்ணாட்டுவர் யாவரு நிற்க வோர் மூவராகி  
மண்ணாட்டுநர் காட்டுநர் வீட்டுநர் வந்த போதும்  
பெண்ணாட்ட மொட்டே னினிப் பேருலகத்து ளென்னு.”  
(அ—நகர் நீங்கு படலம்).

Hanuman's words to Sita staying in Lanka, are encouraging. He gives her a good idea of the vast army under the command of her lord and of his (Hanuman's) own prowess. Subsequently when Sita informs him of her determination, to end her life if she is not liberated within a fixed time, Hanuman says that such a contingency as her demise shall never come to pass. In the sound of the stanzas in this connection we seem to hear the words from the lips of the ambassador himself, and the light springing movement of the verse connotes that the sagacious ambassador leapt for joy that the deliverance of Sita was a pronounced fact and that her return back to her lord was only a question of time.

“நல்லோய் நிண்ணை நலிந்தோரை  
கொல்லே மெம்முயிர் கொண்டங்கே  
எல்லோருஞ் செல வெங்கோனும்  
இத்தோ டொப்பதி யாதுண்டே.”

(சந்தர—குடாமணிப்படலம்).

i. Whether I have to face the celestial angels or the terrestrial giants or the devils from hell or the united armies from the eight different directions or even the ire of the Trinity, I vow that I shall meet them all in open combat and extinguish womandom, and remove the word “woman” from the language out of my disgust for Kaikeyi.

(ii) Benign lady! If we do not even at the risk of our lives kill outright all the enemies who have disturbed your peace, and if my lord too were to fail to achieve a victory, the stigma attached to our valour would never be effaced.

A vivid impression of the peremptory and urgent orders which Ravana issued to his subordinates to extinguish the great fire that was doing havoc in the guarded city of Lanka, is conveyed by the concordance of sound and sense in

“ உண்டநெருப்பைக் கண்டனர்பற்றிக்

கொண்டணை கென்ற னண்டரைவென்றான்.”

(சுந்தர—இலங்கையெரியூட்டு).

Perhaps the most expressive stanza wherefrom we are enabled to understand the beauty of the character of Chathrugna, is that, where he deplores about Baratha's resolve to jump into the fire, leaving the care of the kingdom to his humble self. We seem to hear therein the slow and deep breath of Chathrugna, his effort in expressing his thoughts which so crowd in upon him, and his disgust with his wretched self for having been asked to administer the Kingdom in the absence of his loving brothers.

“காளு நில்மகளைக் கைவிட்டுப் போளுனைக் காத்துப் பின்பு  
போளுனு மொருதம்பி போனவர்கள் வருமவதி போயிற் றென்ன  
வாளுத வுயிர்விடவென் றமைவானு மொருதம்பி யயலே நாண  
தியானுமில் வரசாள்வெ னென்னேயில் வரசாட்சி யினிகேயம்மா.”  
(யுத்த—மீட்சிப்படலம்).

i. Ravana the conqueror of the Devas cried out “Extinguish the fire, every one of you as much as he could.”

ii. Among the three brothers of Rama, one had accompanied him into the forests to reign in deserts rather than suffer his separation in the town; and now another brother has determined to end his earthly existence, as Rama had not returned by the appointed date. Should I not be ashamed in their presence to be offered the crown and kingdom?

Throughout the Ramayana of Kamban, we never miss the central thought of the poet. This central thought is no other than that

“There is no armour against fate” expressed in the line,

“வென்றவ ருளரோ மேலே விதியினே.”

His thought bears the characteristic oriental cast, derived from a knowledge of the Vedas and of the Upanishads. Hazlitt says, “Dante seems to have been indebted to the Bible for the gloomy tone of his mind.” It may similarly be said of Kamban that he is much indebted to the many ancient works on Hindu philosophy for his belief in fatality and the optimistic view of the ultimate good. Everywhere Kamban deplores the never failing results of a man's former deeds. Dasaratha, Rama, Sita, Baradwaja and Vasishta speak of ஊழின் செயல் and விதிதரும்கவை.

(The result of one's own fate; the ills which fate brings on men).

And minister Sumandira observes that the course of the life of any person is mainly dependent upon the nature of his past Karma.

“ஊழ்வினே வசத்துயிர் நிலையென் றுன்னினான்.”

The same idea is found throughout.

“கன்மத்தை ஞாலத்தவ ராருளரே கடப்பார்”

(சுந்தர — உருக்காட்டுப்படலம்.)

- (i) All of us alike are subject to the law of Karma.
- (ii) It is impossible to escape Fate.

Thus did Kamban strive hard to find out a clue to the mystery of pain and suffering that exists in the world, and he found it in the inevitable destiny of things.

As Kamban believed in pre-ordination, he had a still stronger belief in the “divinity that shapes our ends.” And the divinity with Kamban was no other than the Universal Soul which is the very origin of things. The many references which Kamban makes to this Soul or *Moola Purusha* in his greatest work, is proof sufficient to show that in poetry, the sublime was ever within his reach. He was always of a contemplative nature. And in the high flights of his thoughts he more often attempts at a solution of the greatest and most difficult of all riddles, the riddle of the Universe. He always advocates the conquest of self, and the passing the boundary line of the *Gunas* namely Harmony, Motion and Inertia.

Dasaratha thus expresses his desire to conquer self —

“ஐந்தொ டரதி முப்பகை மருங்கற் வகற்றி.”

The several hymns in praise of *Srīman Narayana* and the *Adi Moolam* in the *Ramayana* are the best specimens of the poet's moral philosophy. He always strove to find unity amidst diversity and harmony in discordance. He was of a very pious disposition himself. And his work bears the strong impress of oriental philosophy. We can nowhere come across such an exposition at once complete, devotional,

---

I wish to conquer the senses and the three great desires (Earth, wealth and woman) and renounce domestic life.

and practical, of the religion of the Vedanta, and withal so very astonishingly concise for the searching investigation made, as we find in the Brahma Sthuthi in Mitchippadalam, where the essence of Vedantism is expressed in a most lucid form.

“ஓங்காரப் பொருடேருவோர் தாமுன்னை யுணர்வோர்  
ஓங்காரப் பொருளென் றுணர்ந் திருவினை யுகுப்போர்  
ஓங்காரப் பொருளா மன்றென் னாழி சென்றலும்  
ஓங்காரப் பொருளே பொரு ளென்கலா ஷரவோர்.”

(யுத்த — மீட்சி.)

The superiority of Kamban's art is best seen in his strong imagination and in the dramatic effect it sometimes produces. He comes near Shakespeare or Aeschylus in that he has a passion to make the hero and other characters, wherever possible, speak for themselves. The dramatic imagination shown by the poet is of the highest order. It is significant that in the beginning of Ayodhya Kanda, the poet should make Dasaratha casually mention the victory he had won over Sambarasura. It was on that occasion that Kaikeyi drove his chariot and for which service he granted her two boons to be had of him at any time. And as every one knows, the granting of those gifts to Kaikeyi in the form desired by her, hastened the death of the Emperor. There is therefore, a sad prognostication, a prophetic vein in the poet, who puts into the mouth of Dasaratha these words in the beginning of *Mandirappadalam*.

Only those who have understood the significance of the mystic *Aum* would escape the effect of their deeds and attain salvation; though ages may elapse, those who have not taken pains to understand the meaning of *Aum* would ever be entangled in the wheel of birth and death.



“பஞ்சின்மென் றளிரடிப் பாவை கோல்கொள  
வெஞ்சினத் தவுணர் தேர் பத்தும் வென்றுளேற்  
கெஞ்சலின் மனமெனு மிழுதை யேறிய  
அஞ்சுதேர் வெல்லுமீ தருமை யாவதோ.”

Equally significant is Dasaratha's words to his guru in the beginning of *Ayodhyakandam*.

“அறத்தினூங் கினிக்கொடி தெனலாவ தொன்றியாதே.”

And truly did the Emperor (the great martyr to Truth) sacrifice his life and the happiness of his son at the altar of hard *Aram* (Duty or Dharma).

The quality of such subtle magic of suggestive force is a distinct trait of Kamban.

Kamban was an adept in the use of a large number of literary devices. The most important of such Word-Painting devices is his inimitable word-painting. The facts that the Tamil language is a classical language, that it has words to express any and every phase of feeling or emotion, every thought from the highest speculation of the Vedantist to a passing mood of the man in the street, are clearly brought to light in this great masterpiece of Kamban. He knew the value of words and the mutability of their meaning from good to bad, and hence he used them to

(i) I do not think it is impossible to conquer the mind which rides in a chariot drawn by five horses (five senses) especially as I had once routed ten chariots of Asuras, with no other help but that of my wife Kaikeyi to drive my car.

(ii) Nothing is harder and more exacting than truth.

\* *Classical* in the sense that it could thrive independently of the aid of other languages.

great advantage in his immortal work. For example, he would refer to Kaikeyi as கோடியாள் to convey two meanings, viz., that she was as slender as the flower creeper; and that she was a bad woman.

He uses words most appropriate to the context. In such places where after a particular event the poet wishes to convey an idea of the unbounded love of Rama towards all, he uses the following words in referring to the hero.

வாதன், பெருந்தகை, வள்ளல், கருணையுள்ளத்தான், etc.,

He refers to Sita as ஏழை (poor lady), when she instantly came and seized the hands of Rama who was about to leave for the forest.

The poet enters into the feelings of men and uses only such words as would have most naturally fallen from the lips of particular persons under specific circumstances. Thus he refers to Dasaratha's importunate entreaties to Kaikeyi.

“மண்ணே கொண்ணீ மஹைய தொன்று மறவென்றான்.”

The word மஹையது in the above line denotes the banishment of Rama which his aged father was loathe even to give expression to. The same feeling is well brought out in

“பரத னன்னது பெறுக” in *Mitchippadalam* where அன்னது means recognition of Bharatha as his son, which the

(i) One who gives whatever he is asked; magnanimous King; large-hearted monarch; benignant soul; etc.

(ii) You may, if you want, acquire the earth; but pray forget the other boon.

(iii) Let Bharatha get the boon you mention.

Emperor was always reluctant to do. Throughout the Ramayana, Dasaratha refers to Kaikeyi only as கேகயன் மகள் meaning the daughter of the king of the Kekeya territory, and not as his queen, which is expressive of his bitter scorn and hatred of her.

Kamban's diction is of the rarest kind. Words of common occurrence are invested with deep meaning, and daily speech is imbued with inexhaustible sense. The question with him was not what a word would mean by itself, but what it would connote on a special occasion. He chooses every word with the scrupulous care of a connoisseur of precious stones. He knows the great value of condensation and he is nowhere hampered by the necessities of the *Virutha* metre to travel beyond and use meaningless words or words elaborating the same idea. He has therefore been styled the master of the *Virutha* metre.

Redundancy and superfluity are conspicuous by their absence in his work. Conciseness is the primary virtue of his poetry. He suggests more by sound and symbol than by conventional words and set phrases. His verse may be compared to a closely built edifice where you could not pull out one stone without injuring the structure thereby. Every word in a line has its function to serve. He squeezes words to their utmost capacity and wrings out from them last drop of meaning which they could possibly possess. His style is as close-wrought as that of Milton's. Hence the expression *Kamba Ramayanam* in common parlance has come to be almost synonymous with elaboration and profundity in a nutshell.

The poet's sympathy for his characters and for objects in Nature show the versatility of his heart. Sympathy. And it has been held that large sympathies mark off the distinguished poetic genius from the rank and file in the field.

Dante's description of the bird

\* ".....who midst the leafy bower  
Has in her nest sat darkling through the night,

With her sweet brood; and to bring home their food;"  
and Kamban's description of the *Anril bird*, the feeding elephant, the bee, etc., show the sympathy of great poets for such objects in Nature.

Kamban's sympathy is very strong with regard to the hero and the heroine. He treats them as he would treat any other ordinary man or woman. But he does not make them suffer in the forests. Wherever they go, they are greeted by loving faces. His sympathy for Rama is best shown in his simple statement of Rama's departure to the forests. He states that he was accompanied by his brother and by his wife and that the only armour which he took with him were his wife's chastity, his love of truth, and his invincible bow.

“தையறன் சுற்புந் தன்றகவுந் தம்பியும்  
மையறு கருணையு முணர்வும் வாய்மையும்

---

\* Cary's translation.

(i) The substance of the stanza is given in the preceding line.

செய்யதன் வில்லுமே சேமமாகக் கொண்  
டையனும் போயினு னல்லி னுப்பணை.”

(அயோத்தி — தைலமாட்டுப்படலம்.)

He would not make the pedestrians in the forest suffer in the hot sandy plains; but just then makes the dewy clouds give out their treasure.

“குழுமி மேகங்கள் குழறின குளிர்துளி கொணர்ந்த.”

(அயோத்தி — வனம்புகுபடலம்.)

Kamban gives expression to his own experiences in the world, whenever he had an opportunity to introduce them. This makes the study of his work the more interesting. He says of bride Sita that she ogled Rama during her marriage;

“கைவளை திருத்துபு கடைக்கணி னுணர்ந்தாள்.”

(பால — கோலங்காண்படலம்.)

He introduces popular proverbs and expressions into his verses.

“அஞ்சி லம்பதி லொன்றறி யாதவன்” meaning “As wise at fifty as at five” is a typical example.

He was of opinion that it was always impossible for

(i) All of a sudden the clouds gathered and poured forth rain from heaven.

(ii) She bent down her looks and while ostensibly adjusting her bangles, scanned Rama from head to foot.

(iii) Several suggestive interpretations are possible in this line where சிலம்பு means anklet, mountain bow, etc. according to the context; another example of the suggestive force of Kamban.

men to fathom the mind of the fair sex and gauge their true character. He makes Sita herself express the view.

“பங்கயத் தொருவனும் விடையின் பாகனுஞ்  
சங்கு கைத்தாங்கிய தரும மூர்த்தியும்  
அங்கையி னெவ்விபோ லனைத்து னோக்கினு  
மங்கையர் மனநிலை யுணரவல்லரோ.”

(யுத்தகாண்டம் — மீட்சிப்பட்டலம்.)

There is another important fact which is worth more than a passing notice. Kamban was a true citizen imbued with the ideas of lofty and *loyal citizenship*. Hence he has an admiration and reverence for royalty and nowhere is his regard for the king more admirably portrayed than where he tells us how the people of Ayodhya viewed the action of the Emperor when he directed the banishment of Rama.

In a quite different situation altogether but with the same purpose and end in view, Shakespeare, the poet of all time, has achieved a brilliant result by putting into the mouth of the ideal King Henry V the words,

“O hard condition! twin born with greatness,  
Subject to the breath of every fool  
Whose sense no more can feel than his own wringing.”

(Henry V — Act IV Sc. 1).

Brahma born of the lotus flower, Siva who rides on a Bull, and Vishnu who has the Conch in his hand, are omnipresent and omniscient. But it is doubtful, whether even *they* could divine a woman's mind, though they are able to see everything as easily and as effectively as they would scan a gooseberry on their palm.

Likewise Kamban states that the citizens of Ayodhya without understanding the real feelings of Dasaratha gave free expression to the unfounded statement that the old king doted over Kaikeyi to such an extent as to make his reason captive *for the nonce*. On these premises, they dilated upon the supposed weakness of the king and began to talk in the following vein.

“ஆதி யரசி னருங்கே கயன்மகண்மேல்

காதன் முதிரக் கருத்தழிந்தா னாமென்பார்.”

(அயோத்தி — நகர்நீங்குபடலம்.)

It may be observed here that in the word “ஆமென்பார்” Kamban scornfully derides the ignorant people as every loyal citizen is bound to do.

Kamba Ramayanam has also another important feature about it which is particularly noteworthy. It Custom and Civilisation. is a great store-house of information as regards ancient Dravidian customs and civilisation. Mention is made therein of the four kinds of defences around a city—one of water, one of land, one of mountain and the last of forest—

“நீரரண், நிலவரண், மலையரண், காட்டரண்.”

The poet describes also the many public halls (மன்றுகள்) and meeting places. (அம்பலம்). We also understand that embracing one another was a very common custom at meeting

(i) The old king is infatuated with love for the fair daughter of Kaikeyi, and as an uxorious husband he has bade adieu to his commonsense.

or at parting of relatives and friends. Rama embraced Hanuman out of gratitude.

“என்றுரைத் தனுமனை யிறுகப் புல்லினான்.”

(யுத்த — மீட்சி.)

In *Mitchippadalam* it is said that Dasaratha embraced his sons as well as Sita out of affection.

It was then a very common custom with women suspected of unchastity, to clear their character by the ordeal of fire ;

‘நங்கை மற்றநின் கற்பினை யுலகுக்கு நாட்ட  
அங்கி புக்கிடென் றுணர்த்திய வதுமனத் தடையேல்  
சங்கை யுற்றவர் பெறுவது முண்டது சரதம்  
கங்கை நாடிடைக் கணவனை முனிவுறக் கருதேல்.”

(யுத்த — மீட்சி.)

The importance of this work is still further enhanced by the valuable common sense and practical Commonsense. knowledge embedded therein. The poet gives us homely advice upon several subjects and particularly on the value of time, the dignity of patience, the victory of truth, and the efficacy of prayer.

i. Saying this, he held Hanuman close to his bosom in a hearty embrace.

ii. Daughter ! do not grieve that your chastity was put to a severe test by your being directed to prove it before a fire. It is the custom to prove so whenever there is any doubt about a woman's conduct. So you had better not entertain any but the most pleasant feelings towards your lord who owns the extensive lands watered by the Ganges. (The Ganges is here significant of purity.)



In several places the poet impresses upon the minds of the reader that words of introduction should always be brief and circumstantially intimate. (ரோமபாதரிஷி) Romapatha Rishi, introducing Dasaratha to (கலைக்கோட்டு முனிவர்) Kalaikottu Munivar whom he requested to visit Ayodhya to perform the famous (புத்ரகாமேஷ்டி யாகம்) Puthrakameshti Yaga, introduces the Emperor to the Sage in the following words,

“புறவொன்றின் பொருட்டாகத் துலைபுக்க

பெருந்தகைகன் புசுழிற் பூத்த

வறமென்று திருமனத்தான். ....”

(பால — திருவவதாரப்படலம்.)

This Emperor is the lineal descendant of a Great Emperor who has won undying fame by mounting upon a scale pan and by sacrificing his own life to save the life of a poor dove. [The allusion here is to the life of Emperor Chibi of the Solar race to which Dasaratha belongs. Once the fame of Chibi for righteous administration and virtue reached the ears of the Celestial Beings and they took it into their heads to test the truth of the statement. Indra the King of the Angels took the form of a dove and Yama the God of Death took the form of a hawk. The hawk pursued the dove who approached Chibi while he was in state, and sought his protection. When the hawk demanded its rightful prey, Chibi refused to leave the dove, stating that he would give its weight of flesh from his own body. This the hawk agreed to. The scales were brought and the Court Surgeon was requisitioned, and he applied the knife to the King's body and took the flesh out of it. The dove was placed on one pan and the flesh from the King's body in another. But even when the last slice was cut from the body and placed on the pan, the dove was the weightier. Chibi despaired that he had not enough flesh to give equal in weight to that of the dove. At last a thought struck him and he mounted the pan and stood there to be killed by the hawk; and to his great satisfaction and to the wonder of all present, the pans were just equal. He was thus ready to sacrifice his own life rather than leave the dove to the mercy of the hawk. The Devas were satisfied. They blessed the Emperor and he regained his flesh. As he had stood such a severe test of his virtue, his life has become a fitting theme for the poets].

He thus predisposes the Munivar in favour of the Emperor by recounting Dasaratha's distinguished lineage, remarkable for its disinterested benefactions, and the manner in which the present incumbent in the Royal Office the Emperor himself, was occupying the throne and discharging his duties with credit to himself and to his great forefathers.

When Kausika fixes the day for Sita's marriage, he addresses the King thus ;

“வாளையுக் ளக்கயல்கள் வாவும் தின் மேதி  
மூனேழுது கைக்கிழிய மூரிய வரான்மீன்  
பாளேவிரி யக்குதிகொள் பண்ணைவள நாடா  
நாளையென வுற்றபக னற்றவ னுரைத்தான்.”

(பால — கோலங்காண்படலம்.)

The king was about to celebrate a notable marriage, and there is here a peculiar felicity in the above stanza, in the Rishi making mention of the great fertility of his dominion and of its vast resource.

Likewise, Hanuman who conveyed to Sita the happy news of Rama's victory, danced for joy and said,

“எழைசோபன மேந்திழை சோபனம்”

(யுத்த — மீட்சிப்படலம்.)

(i) King! possessed of a fertile territory where the stems of the arecanut palm sprout out owing to the violent push given to the tree by the fat fish in the paddy-field which jump out when the heavy feet of the grazing she — buffaloe presses against their back; to-morrow is an auspicious day for performing the marriage.

(ii) Hail! lady! all good! hail!

He did not for even one moment keep Sita in suspense but forthwith congratulated her on her lord's victory, before she ever questioned him on the subject.

Even more remarkable and noteworthy are the words of Hanuman to Rama, when the former returned from his search after Sita. Therein he first of all informed Rama that he saw Sita with his own eyes, gave him an idea of the unblemished character she bore in the interval, and then enters into other details.

“கண்டனன் கற்பினுக் கணியைக் கண்களால்  
தெண்டிரை யலைகட லிலங்கைத் தென்னகர்  
அண்டர் நாயகவினித் துறத்தி யையமும்  
பண்டுள துயரமென் றனுமன் பன்னுவான்.”

(சுந்தர — திருவடிதொழுதபடலம்.)

Sita who requested Hanuman to convey her news to Rama, asked him to remind her lord as to how he (Rama) once dealt with Kakasura who was guilty of an indecent assault upon her.

“ஐயநின்சர ணஞ்சர ணென்றவ னஞ்சி  
வையம்வந்து வணங்கிட வள்ளன் மகிழ்ந்தே ,

(i) I saw with my own eyes the lady who is the ornament of her sex, the lady who is the living example of chastity and virtue; I saw her in the island of Lanka in the midst of the southern ocean. Lord of the Heavens! Bid adieu to all doubts about her existence and take heart and be cheerful,

வெய்ய வன்க ணிரண்டோடு போகென விட்ட  
தெய்வ வெம்படை யுற்றுள தன்மை தெரிப்பாய்.”  
(சுந்தர — சூடாமணிப்படலம்.)

This is not only suggestive of a request and a reminder from Sita to Rama, but at the same time it happily conveys in time to Rama the staunch belief of his queen Sita, that her lord would surely redress her wrongs and deal with the enemy effectively.

## V. STYLE

The style of Kamban may be considered ‘*successful*’ when we remember the famous definition of Hazlitt that “a successful style is that which gives the extreme characteristic impression of the thing written about.”

It has a natural simplicity and grace about it. The poet is a master of the lyrical form and his most effective touches are always made with the greatest ease and simplicity. His language is wonderfully spontaneous and charming. Like Chaucer he always combined form and melody. And like that of the “Father of English Poetry” his skill in narrative has rarely been equalled if not surpassed in any other work

---

When Kakasura was found guilty of an offence, my lord (Rama) threw only a blade of sacred grass upon him (Kakasura). This blade was too much for the poor enemy and though he fled to several regions, the arrow pursued him still. Wherever he went, he sought the protection of the Gods in vain, and at last he took refuge at the feet of my lord himself. My magnanimous husband pardoned his enemy and let him go with only one of his eyes shorn, as the arrow of Rama could not be spent in vain and without an aim.

in Tamil literature. The only great works in Tamil with which Kamba Ramayanam may be compared are Jivaka Chin-tamani, and Kanda Puranam. But the artistic style where every work is a library of valuable thought is Kamban's own *forte*. He treated about all subjects, like flowers, fruits, wine, youth, love, beauty, sports, festivals, frolic, etc. His power of describing natural scenery is unique. His vision was ever comprehensive and his thought profound.

His rhythmic effects are natural and are never artificial. There is an intimate correspondence between form and matter in his poetry. He is ever the poet of exquisite finish. He played upon the Tamil language as upon the indigenous *Vina* touching all chords and spots. Sometimes his lines are very simple. But their simplicity should never blind our perception of the artistic form therein.

His style is neither turgid nor diffuse. His lines are always weighty and full of meaning, but at the same time, they are quite simple. They run as the nectar-like language, Tamil, ought to run.

“Though deep, yet clear, though gentle yet not dull.”

He disdained no literary device that could be pressed into the service of his art. But he was always the master and not the servant of such artifices. He could wield his pen in such a way as to give an indelible impression of his originality. Further he is impressively eloquent in his dialogues. His lines are remarkable for the mellifluous music in them.

It was given to this great poet to enlarge the bounds of poetry to such a degree as to include within its scope thoughts of a sublime nature. He could write most admirably, as in *Satagoparantadhi* in the style of the metaphysical imagination. In conclusion, his style has all the principal characteristics of a master mind, namely, grace, clearness, strength and copiousness without redundancy.

His success in poetry is due in a large measure to his deep Learning. learning. He was the most learned of Tamil poets. His work is a veritable museum of all thoughts, expressions, and ideas found in ancient Tamil literature. Words and expressions which we find in ancient classics are used by Kampan most appropriately (e. g.) நேடுவார், ஏமுற, ஆரழல், வாலுனைப்புரவி, வேழமுத்து, முத்திவித்து, கங்கைவார் சடைக்கற்றையன். These words and expressions go to show the scholarly reading of Kampan and they are evidence of his study of the Kural, the Pathupattu, the Purananuru, Chintamani, Tevaram, etc. It were impossible and superfluous to give many illustrations from this great epic which would go to show the deep scholarship of the author. But the following example is a typical illustration.

“ஊழிற் பெருவலி யாவுள மற்றொன்று  
சூழினுந் தான்முந் துறும்”

(குறள்).

“சூழ்வினை நான்முகத் தொருவர்ச் சூழினும்  
ஊழ்வினை யொருவரா லொழிக்கற் பாலதோ.”

(அயோத்தி — நகரீங்கு.)

The deeper and more extensive the study of Kamban is, the more marked is his unassuming nature and modest demeanour. Humility is his characteristic virtue. He always held that the quality of a modest manner is the becoming ornament of the truly learned man. He translated his opinion into active practice in his own life and conduct.

The line

“கடிய மாசுணங் கற்றறிந் தவரென வடங்கி,”

(அ — சித்திரகூடப்படலம்.)

fairly sets forth the poet's view that a modest manner marks off the really great. The hero of the Ramayana is a typical example of true humility. His words of address to Sage Baradwaja when the latter praised him for his valour and true greatness are significant.

“மின்னையே ருடையி னானும் விரைமலர்த் தவிசி னானும்  
நின்னையே புகழ்தற் கொத்த நீதிமா தவத்தின் மிக்கோய்  
உன்னையே வணங்கி யுன்ற னெருள்சமந் துயர்ந்தேன் மற்றிங்  
கென்னையே பொருவு மைந்தன் யானலா தில்லை யென்றான்.”  
(யுத்த — மீட்சிப்படலம்.)

Kamban is a critic as well as a poet. He had his splendid theory of poetry and that theory as a living force was closely entwined with his actual practice of it. He *exhibits* all the beauties of good literature like,

(i) The mountain serpents were quiet in their repose (as modest as the truly learned are.)

(ii) Sage! your spotless ascetic life and penances are such as would be appreciated by the Gods, Siva and Brahma, themselves. I am proud of the fact that I have always regarded you and that I have been prospering by virtue of your blessings and well wishes.

“சுருங்கச் சொல்லல்” “விளங்கவைத்தல்”, etc.

(Brevity).

(Clearness).

Kamba Ramayanam has an elaborate propriety about it which distinctly distinguishes it from the works of others. Kamban is unrivalled in the subtle force of suggestion, which was the direct result of his extensive learning.

To him poetry was its own reward. The charming power of his language, the concentrated and intense epithets that could never be forgotten, the sweetness and strength of his diction, are standing evidences of the poet's great critical faculty.

One who runs cannot therefore read and understand Kamban. He demands the close and assiduous study of the specialist. He could sometimes be intelligible and forcible on a first reading. But his language is ever rich, subtle and strongly suggestive. If he is sometimes difficult to understand, the very pleasure of understanding him is ample compensation for the toil.

## VI. MOTIVE AND MESSAGE.

If Kamba Ramayanam is an epic of art it must contain some important lessons for humanity. The poet teaches great lessons and reveals the true nobility and soothing influence of Nature. A conscious scheme and motive are necessary to constitute an epic of art. Kamban had something to say about Nature, woman, life, administration, duty, morals, and religion. And he delivers his message in his monumental work in *accents bold*.



He held that women were a help to man in the arduous struggle of life and that chastity and true devotion to the husband were the chief ornaments of the fair sex. Sita is an embodiment of all the best womanly qualities.

A high moral tone pervades her words to Hanuman in reply to his request to allow him to carry her safe on his shoulders to her husband.

“வேறு முண்டிரை கேளது மெய்ம்மையோய்  
ஏறு சேவிகன் மேனியில் லாவிடை  
ஆறு மைம்பொறி நின்னையு மாணெனக்  
கூறு மிவ்வுறுத் தீண்டுதல் கூடுமோ.”

(சந்தர — சூடாமணிப்படலம்.)

Likewise her words to Rama who chastised her for her stay in Lanka, are significant. They show what the nature of a wife's devotion to her husband should be.

“ஆதலிற் புறத்தினி யாருக் காகவென்  
கோதறு தவத்தினைக் கூறிக் காட்டுகேன்  
காதலிற் சிறந்ததொன் றில்லை தக்கதே  
வேதநின் பணியது விதியு மென்றனள்.”

(யுத்த — மீட்சிப்படலம்.)

(i) Truthful messenger! There is one other reason why I should decline your offer with thanks. You are an animal of the male sex with all the sensory organs complete. Hence I should not even touch you, as the only member of the male sex who could touch me is my lord.

N. B. — This is refinement of the highest order and could never be thought to be squeamishness of which trait Sita is absolutely innocent.

(ii) Therefore I am persuaded that I need not live any longer to prove my unblemished character to any other living soul. For if you are not convinced of my spotless character, my life would be rendered unhappy and I do not therefore desire to prolong my life any longer. And even as I die, I shall end my existence as you command me to do. For I obey your commands as Vedic commandments.

Rama had a high sense of duty which is worthy of admiration. When he was asked by his father to take up the reins of administration, he obeyed his father's words and consented to perform the duty that was imposed upon him by his birth.

“தாதை யப்பரி சுரைசெயத் தாமரைக் கண்ணன்  
காத லித்தில னிகழ்ந்திலன் கடனிதென் றுணர்ந்து  
யாது கொற்றவ னேவின னதுசெய லன்றோ  
நீதி யெற்கென நினைந்துதன் பணிதலை நின்றான்.”

(அயோத்தியா — மந்திரப்படலம்.)

In the words of advice which Dasaratha's family guru addressed Rama on the eve of his coronation; in the words of the hero of the Ramayana to Vali the monkey-king, who quarrelled with a brother; and in the words which Rama addressed Vibhishana at the time when the latter took charge of the crown and dominion of Ravana, the poet gives a complete idea of morals, administration and duty. And where Bharata protests his innocence to Kosala stating that if ever he had a guilty conscience, he may be visited with dire consequences and that his fate may be the same as that of the wicked and of the ungodly, we have a complete catalogue of all acts which should be avoided, beginning with,

When his father commanded him to accept the crown, he neither coveted nor disdained the honour; but he thought that it was his duty that he was now called upon to perform. And with this sense of duty that *he should obey whatever the sovereign commands him to do*, he stood before his father ready and willing to take further instructions.

“அறங்கெட முயன்றவ னருளி னெஞ்சினன்  
பிறங்கடை நின்றவன் பிறரைச் சீறினான்  
மறங்கொடு மன்னுயிர் கொன்று வாழ்ந்தவன்  
துறந்தமா தவர்க்கருந் துயரஞ் சூழ்ந்துளோன்.”

(அயோத்தியா — பள்ளியடைப்படலம்.)

The poet's own character and his ideas of the excellence of a strictly moral character and the evil consequences of an immoral conduct in life, and his belief in destiny, are pithily expressed in his lament for his son who came to grief and an early grave, owing to his thoughtless love for the Royal princess whose hand he foolishly aspired to.

“மட்டுப் படாக்கொங்கை மாணர் கலவி மயக்கத்திலே  
கட்டுப் பட்டாயென்ன காதல்பெற்றாய் மாரன் கையம்பினால்  
பட்டுப் பட்டாயினுந் தேறுவையே யென்று பார்த்திருந்தேன்  
வெட்டுப் பட்டாய் மகனே தலைநாளின் விதிப்படியே.”

Kamban further held the optimistic view that all human suffering was but the merciful preordination of a great God, intended for the moral elevation of man. He believed that

(i) Let my fate be that which is the lot of persons who prevent a charity; who are hard-hearted; who scorn others without reason; who plunder and kill mercilessly; who plot wickedly against the peace of sages and saints.

(ii) I had ever fondly hoped that as you grew older and older your wisdom and good sense would also grow in proportion and that you would scorn the evil ways to which you had all along been given. But alas! My wish has remained only a pious wish and has not been realised. You have succumbed to the temptations of youth and have this day and so early in your life fallen a victim to such evil pursuits.

“There is a soul of goodness” in every act of God though some of them are considered by us to be evil.

In Visvamitra's address to Rama, we have a significant reference to this aspect of God's purpose and His great aim in making man suffer in the world.

“இவ்வண்ண நிகழ்ந்த வண்ண மினியிந்த வுலகுக் கெல்லாம்  
உய்வண்ண மன்றி மற்றோர் துயர்வண்ண முழுவ துண்டோ  
மைவண்ணத் தரக்கி போரின் மழைவண்ணத் தண்ணிலே யுன்  
கைவண்ண மங்கு கண்டேன் கால்வண்ண மிங்கு கண்டேன்.”  
(பால — அகலிகைப்படலம்.)

## VII. INFLUENCE.

It remains to speak of Kampan's place in Tamil literature. Kampan was the most stimulating force of his age. His verses are remarkable for suggestive compactness of thought and they are informed with a noble spirit expressing itself in classic grace. The Ramayanam is his masterpiece. He explored the rich fields of Valmiki and returned therefrom laden with a plentiful harvest of the best and noblest thoughts in literature. Though his great work purposes to be a translation, still it is *not a mere translation*. The story has been treated in an exceptionally elaborate and original manner.

---

Prince more beautiful than the azure sky ! I saw the virtue of your *arm* in the fight with the giantess Thatakai and I have seen the virtue of your *feet* in this incident of regenerating a stone into a beautiful heavenly damsel. These facts shew that whatever you do, your acts are always directed to do only good to humanity.

Dryden in his preface to the Fables says, "I grant that something must be lost in all transfusions, that is, in all translations." But in Kamban's translation of Valmiki, the old story has gained much and lost little. He begins with

“பித்தர் சொன்னவும் பேதையர் சொன்னவும்\*  
பத்தர் சொன்னவும் பன்னப் பெறுபவோ”

a short and sweet statement in his introduction, which could very well be read with Shakespeare's famous lines on the imagination of the poet beginning with

“The lunatic, the lover and the poet.”

The originality of Kamban is amply testified by the current popular sayings “கம்பவிசித்திரம் and கம்பகுத்திரம்.” (Marvellous literary excellence of Kamban) while his influence in literature is very well expressed in the remark “கம்பர் வீட்டுக் கட்டுத்தறியுங் கவிசொல்லும்.” (Even the very pillars in Kamban's house would talk in verse.)

Suddenly out of his obscure youth, the ward of an Ovachan flashed into fame and astonished the whole Tamil world by his extraordinary learning and critical faculty. Kamban had great gifts. He was a force in literature. The very eminence to which he attained served as a standard of judgment in literature. He possessed a daring and graphic imagination and his poetical powers would have matched him with the very best. He had a genius for using words, as if he himself had made them.

---

\* The utterances of lunatics, the ignorant (woman), and the devotees could not bear examination.

He was a very busy man. Poetry was the business of his intellect. He wished to write the Skanda Puranam also; and his saying,

“காந்தமென்னுங் கடலைக் கச்சியப்பன் என்னுங்

கனிநு கலக்கிற்று.” (Kachiappa has exhausted the treasures of the deep ocean of Skanda), sums up in a nutshell the valuable criticism of a great poet on the monumental work of another equally great.

By his exhortations to the agriculturists in *Yerelupadu* (ஏரெழுபது viz., seventy verses in praise of the plough) he whipped the farmers into activity and made them feel a genuine pride in their calling. He was quite free from petty jealousies and was always ready to recognise and appreciate worth in others. He was a very useful guide to, and a friend of, minor poets. He was of opinion that such poets had a distinct sphere of action in the world and that great literary giants could never afford to ignore or slight them. He was a respecter of the feelings of others. He requested *Ottakoothar* not to destroy his Ramayanam and incorporated a portion of that poet's work with his own. This shows that Kampan could find delight in the fame of others also. This admirable trait in him, and his hospitality and large-hearted magnanimity endeared him to all. He encouraged literary aspirants. Once when his own *Adappakkaran* or betel leaf carrier received a present from the King for successfully composing a stanza, Kampan congratulated him on his fortune and remarked that the truly learned could find patrons everywhere.

Kamban was a great poet honoured by the sovereign and by the public as poet laureate of the Royal Court. So great was the regard which the sovereign had for him that he gave the poet a palanquin of burnished gold and richly caparisoned in cloth of gold studded with pearls. Wherever the poet went out, he always travelled in the palanquin which was given him as a mark of royal favour, and when on the palanquin, he did not travel enjoying ease, comfort and pomp, but performed the noble task of discoursing on literary and other topics. People would then flock to catch a glimpse of the great national poet and as they thronged through the streets and shouted with enthusiasm, the procession would assume great importance. And wherever the streets were too narrow for the pedestrians around the palanquin, they would unavoidably encroach upon the adjoining rich fields of paddy and tread heavily upon the fields. The king knew that such a procedure would cause loss to the agriculturist and hence he told off a special staff of karnams to follow the poet wherever he went, whose business would appear to be to note down on cadjan leaves with their pointed style the locality and the exact extent of the cultivated land thus spoiled by the pedestrians. These portions were marked off as “கம்பர் போன வழி,” i.e., the route which Kambar took, and the proportionate assessment was also remitted (“கண்டு கழிந்தது”). It is understood that the expression “கம்பர் போன வழி கண்டு கழிந்தது” meaning “the route of Kamban seen and assessment thereon remitted” is still to be seen in the village accounts.

In the age of such a great national poet we should naturally expect that the name and fame of other minor poets

should be shadowed by the very genius of Kamban. But this was not so. In English literature Pope was so prominent and great in his age that the minor poets never approached his genius. And further, Pope himself had a great contempt for other modest members of his craft which attitude is well reflected in his *Dunciad*.

But unlike Pope, the author of the Ramayana in Tamil, had a great affection for other minor poets in his age. That is why the names of Ootakoothar and other poets have been handed down to posterity with all their glorious heritage. The minor poets of his age looked upon him as their spokesman and patron and not as a formidable and jealous opponent whose enmity would cost them their living. Whenever an opportunity presented itself he put other poets before him and requested the sovereign to recognise their deserts and reward them adequately for their scholarship.

In addition to such sterling qualities of head and heart, Kamban had a warm appreciation of the robust commonsense of the ordinary man in the street and always found that even others who did not take up the literary profession had something to teach the man of letters. An anecdote is characteristic.

Once Kamban travelled far into the interior of the country and when he was crossing a field he heard the familiar song of the labourers at the Indian picotta. When he came very near the well from which the water was baled out to the fields he heard the words “மூங்கிலின் னிலைமேல்” (*moongilin ilaimale*)

The meaning of the expression (மூங்கிலின் னிலைமேல் etc., *Moongilin ilaimale*, etc.) is “The dew atop the blade of a bamboo leaf.”



uttered by the man baling out the water and was eager to know what he would next say as that line was incomplete. But by that time the water in the well was all baled out and it was growing dark; so the men left their work and Kamban could not divine the sense of the incomplete song without knowing the next line. So he stayed all night near the well and awaited the arrival of the men next morning; and when they came and applied themselves to their work, the man baling out the water remembered where he had left the previous day, and began shouting out “தூங்கிடும் பனிகீர்” (*Toongidum pani neer*).

Kamban wondered at this concordance of rhythm in the short and sweet lines which were pregnant with meaning. And he appreciated not only the sense but also the rhyme (Moongilin and Toongidum) and admired that in the country the speech of the men was exquisite and scintillated with mother wit and wisdom. This shows the great poet at his best as a broadminded genius; sympathising with minor poets; and as a warm friend of the layman who exhibits an inborn knack of talking well or singing clearly.

His high ideal of poetry served as a beacon-light for others to follow. It may here be stated without any fear of contradiction that it is absolutely impossible for any artist to lay down the rules of his own art with more precision, critical acumen and judgment than Kamban has done with regard to his own art (page 4).

He held that learned men were absolutely necessary, for the prosperity and well-being of any country. It was such men, he said, who serve as teachers of the masses and that

their influence for good was immeasurably great; for they were the main springs of virtue and morals in the world.

“ ஏகம் முதற் கல்வி முளைத்தெழுந் தெண்ணில் கேள்வி  
பாகம்முதற் றிண்பணை போக்கி யருந்தவத்தின்  
சாகந்தழைத் தன்பரும்பித் தரும மலர்ந்து  
போகங்கனி யொன்று பழுத்தது போலுமன்றே.”

(பால—நகர்நீங்கு படலம்.)

He was ever kind in his words. His advice was sought on many occasions by the king and by the public. The king had a high regard for the poet whom he admired and literally worshipped. The poet's influence in literature is therefore lasting and permanent, and his immeasurable greatness in literature depends not upon purple passages here and there, but on a work written throughout in letters of gold.

What is analysis, what is criticism, in the presence of the divine art, that Kamban exhibits? He was moreover a lover of the country and of the rural tracts. He was a patriot and he loved his language more than his life. His many references to Tamil are exquisite, and they go to show his warm admiration and love for an ancient tongue. He puts these words in the mouth of Rama.

The potent seed of education and sound learning grows into a big tree with its huge trunk and branches of learned discourses; and as the green leaves of devotion and penance shoot forth, the buds of universal love and regard appear and as these blossom into the flowers of charity and right conduct, they bear the delicious fruit of happiness in this life and in the life beyond the grave.

“இதுதமிழ் முனிவன் வைகு மியறநு குன்றம்.”

(யுத்த—மீட்சிப் படலம்.)

Rational admiration, which forms a cardinal factor in good poetry will be seen in Sita's enquiring Wonder in Poetry. Hanuman as to how he was able to cross the immeasurably wide ocean. Kamban excites the reader's sympathy by a true depiction of Nature. For these qualities of his, which are clearly marked, he is destined to take rank with the greatest of the world's poets. In his own language he will be seated on the same pedestal with *Tiruttakka Devar* and *Kachiappa Sivachariar*.

One other fact which is closely associated with this great poet is his influence on the institution of Patronage. This institution was a power for good in the days of Kamban. Somehow, it was not without its drawbacks also, and the poet of an independent spirit was sometimes not equal to the task of gratifying a patron.

The usual patrons were of course the Tamil Kings. But Kamban made a wholesome departure in accepting the aid of an agriculturist Sadaiyappa Vallal for writing his masterpiece wherein he gratefully remembers his patron. Kamban elsewhere disowned patrons.

Two eras therefore meet in him. He once accepted patronage and he also discarded it. His famous Venba (verse) which he uttered when he fell out with his patron is as curt

---

Mark! this is the mountain where the father of Tamil Grammar *Akashya* resides.

and independent in tone as the remarkable letter of Johnson to Lord Chesterfield.

“ மன்னவனு நீயோ வளநாடு முன்னதோ,  
உன்னையறிந்தா தமிழை யோதினேன்—என்னை  
விரைந்தேற்றுக் கொள்ளாத வேந்துண்டோவுண்டோ  
குரங்கேற்றுக் கொள்ளாத கொம்பு.”

This sounded in clarion notes the advent of democracy in letters and the birth of a generation of people appreciative of the poet's worth.

A great national poet, a true son of the Goddess of Tamil, a well read scholar, and a great critic, Kamban will always remain a permanent force in Tamil literature. A true benefactor, a man of simple habits and profound thoughts, a great moralist, a straight-forward citizen loyal to his king and patron, he is ever the glory of the Tamil country. The mention of his name cannot but stir feelings at once of admiration, and love in the minds of every Tamilian.

And even to day, the memory of his name and fame is respected throughout the Tamil country and the Kamayana which he had sung is read by the Tamilians over and over for delight, pleasure and profit. And in the small village of Nattarasankottai, three miles to the east of Sivaganga in the

Are you the only patron of learning in this wide world? Did I ever read Tamil in the hope that I would be patronised by you? Is there any king who would not gladly welcome me to his Court? Do you not know that it is in the nature of monarchs to welcome poets into their court and take genuine pride in being their patrons?

new Ramnad District of the Madras Presidency, and far enough from the bustle of ordinary life, the mortal remains of this immortal poet, who had, with abiding gratitude, immortalised the fair name of his patron Sadayappa Vallal in his great masterpiece of art, lie beneath a modest slab which is pointed out even by the children of the locality as the place wherein is enshrined the remains of Kamban. And when a child in the neighbourhood is first admitted into a school, the father of the child makes it a point to go to this place sanctified by the remains of Kamban, and make his child go round the stone and drink a mouthful of water rendered holier by having the dust round the stone dissolved therein, in the well cherished hope that his child may prosper well if he commences his education under such auspices as the drinking of the wisdom of the great national poet.

This fact is a weighty testimony to the great love and regard in which this poet is held throughout the Tamil land.

And as "Poetry is the stuff of which our life is made," and as further,

"We live by admiration, hope and love  
And even as these are well and wisely fixed  
In dignity of being we ascend,"

a genuine admiration of the poet born of intimate acquaintance with his great work is ever a delightful circumstance to be encouraged.

It would therefore be speaking only the bare truth when we say of Kamban and of his Ramayanam,

“ Then read from the treasured volume  
The poem of thy choice.  
And lend to the rhyme of the poet  
The beauty of thy voice.”

“ And the night shall be filled with music  
And the cares that infest the day  
Shall fold their tents like the Arabs  
And as silently steal away”.

---



